

Southeast Area Advisory Council Minutes

Date: 20 January, 2004

Location: Deep Creek Middle School.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Boyd Crouse.
2. Those in attendance were: Mr. Luis Borunda, Mr. Stephen Crum, Ms. Shawtair Thompson, Ms. Bonnie Saul, Mr. Bill Bafitis, Ms. Corina Cotsaris, Ms. Sandra Skordalos, Mr. Boyd Crouse, Mr. Bob Kemmery, and Mr. Bob Berkshire.
3. Mr. Mathew Joseph, Liaison Officer from the County Executive's office, was the guest speaker. Mr. Joseph spoke of the county Executive's work relative to the Southeast area. Some of the highlights he presented included:
 - a. Mr. Smith has spent a great deal of time on the east side of Baltimore County due to the heavy amount of damage that Hurricane Isabelle inflicted.
 - b. Mr. Smith is deeply committed to the revitalization of the east side of the county. This revitalization is heavily dependent upon the maintenance of a strong school system. Mr. Joseph noted that many of the Southeast Area Schools have special needs due to the large number of "at risk" students in this area. Some of the initiatives that he has supported include doubling up of the school resource officers, sending experienced retired teachers into challenging schools, providing alternative schools to remove disruptive students from the classroom and the establishment of smaller learning communities within some of our larger schools.
 - c. County Executive Smith delights in showcasing the good works of local schools such as Mars Estates and Deep Creek Middle School for rewarding students for good behavior as a result of the PBIS program. He has also displayed artwork from Patapsco High School in his Executive Office.
4. Mr. Joseph then took questions from the audience.
 - a. Question: Recently, money was given to many schools for renovations, however none was given to any schools in the Southeast Area, why?
Answer: Schools are renovated with the oldest schools being done first. This takes politics out of the process.
 - b. Question: Why isn't there a better communication process between developers and the county so that the school system can be proactive in their enrollment projections? Answer: Presently monthly meetings are

held to discuss development projections and thus we are able to make more accurate enrollment projections.

- c. Question: What is being done to get certified and experienced teachers into challenging schools? Answer: An increase in salary is being proposed for all teachers. An effort to hire experienced teachers is also being implemented. The “Great Beginnings” program brings together new teachers (December graduates) with experienced teachers in order to provide a mentoring period and hopefully decrease the number of first year teachers who quit the teaching profession after one year or less.
5. The business meeting began at 8:20 p.m.
- a. Starlab, an inflatable structure that is used to teach students about space exploration, will be at Featherbed Lane Elementary School along with two Astronauts, both who are graduates of Baltimore County Schools. This lab will come to all schools in the county.
 - b. The student handbook is now available in Spanish. Inserts are available for several other languages also.
 - c. A new program is being developed to help “at risk” schools. This program is called “Smaller Learning Communities”. It attempts to group students into smaller learning units (for example, all 9th graders) in order to improve not only their academic skills but also their sense of belonging. It is hoped that these learning communities will link academics with individual student goals. By doing this, attendance tends to rise and drop-out rates tend to go down.
 - d. The next meeting will be February 17th at Oliver Beach Elementary.
 - e. Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m.