

North West Advisory Council Pre-Budget Report
October 18, 2005

The North West Advisory Council held a hearing on the BCPS Operating Budget on October 18, 2005. The format has been changed this year to allow for another hearing in the spring on the Capital Budget. Since this was the first year for this change, we heard testimony on both budgets at this hearing. The different budget suggestions are both incorporated into this report, but we have divided them into the two budget areas. We have also tried to prioritize the items in each category to show those items that we felt were the most pressing to the community. Several people who testified did thank the Board of Education for items that had been included in the past budget.

The Council assured the people who testified that the information would be shared with the entire Board of Education. The Council would like to thank School Board Members, Joe Palozzi, Joy Shulman, and Student Member Gabrielle Wyatt for joining us for the evening as well as Deputy Superintendent Chris Johns. Also the council would like to thank Dr. Scott Gehring and Katherine Barnes from the North West Office for their help with the evening. Members of the North West Advisory Council present were Michael Franklin, Susan Katz, Noel Levy and Abby Beytin.

First we will address the operating budget issues.

- Teacher salaries and the need to increase them.
Several people spoke to this issue. If we want to stay competitive and attract and retain highly qualified teachers, we will have to address this issue.
- Staffing concerns including, an assistant in every kindergarten class, smaller class sizes in the primary grades, and staffing formulas that are flexible to meet the needs of our diverse schools.
Some kindergarten classes have 23 to 29 students and no assistant. Research shows that the earliest grades are the most crucial and can make the most significant positive change in a child's educational life. The kindergarten classes should be smaller and have assistants to utilize this most important educational opportunity. A more flexible staffing formula for example extra guidance counselors in a particularly needy population should be able to be accessed. One size does not fit all.
- More Special Education Resources and teachers
With inclusion needs, more special education resources are needed to address the needs within a classroom. Time for collaboration between teachers, assistants to offer one on one time with students, and the ability and time to reteach those students struggling with concepts are all crucial for the success of the inclusion model.
- More Advanced Placement Courses especially at Milford Mill Academy
Milford Mill in particular needs more AP classes to encourage the students to achieve at high levels.

- More Gifted and Talented Resource teachers
Gifted and Talented resource teachers are necessary to help highly able students achieve at their fullest potential.
- More French teachers for the Wellwood program
The French magnet has been very successful and the students in the rest of the school would be well served if they too had access to French. Learning a foreign language is a proven way to increase student learning in all areas
- A Performing Arts Magnet for the west side of town at Milford Mill Academy
The Carver Arts Center cannot address all the needs for this popular magnet program. Milford Mill is a school where an Arts Center for the western part of the county can be supported.
- Career and Technology program support
As always the career and technology program provides necessary training and real life experiences that are invaluable to many of our students in a multifaceted educational system.
- Musical Instruments
The instruments in many schools are in deplorable condition. Our least financially able students do not get the benefits from the program that our students who can afford to rent an instrument receive. We need to ensure that good working musical instruments are available to all our students.

Next we will address the Capital Budget Issues.

- A new Owings Mills Middle School
This was definitely the hot topic of the evening. The community has been fighting for this new middle school for decades. The fact that Owings Mills, a targeted growth area for Baltimore County, does not have its own middle school is inconceivable. The neighboring middle schools have been overcrowded for a long time with no end in sight.
- Air Conditioning at non-air conditioned schools
Imagine working and being productive in a space that is well over 90 degrees for hours on end. We want the best from our students and staff but do not give them the best in facilities or even just okay facilities to achieve those goals. Milford Mill Academy had their exhaust fans removed so air conditioners could be installed. The air conditioners never were installed and now it is hotter than ever because there is no ventilation.
- Parking lots additions especially at Campfield Early Childhood Center
There are not enough spaces for the staff let alone the parents at Campfield and Scotts Branch. This has created an unsafe environment for students.
- Covered Walkways from outer buildings especially at Scotts Branch
It is bad enough that the students have to use outer buildings for classes, but to have to walk outside in an uncovered area during all types of weather is an unnecessary burden on them.

- Science Lab updates at Milford Academy
Milford Mill has antiquated science labs. If the students are to perform to their best abilities, they should have science labs that will help them to fulfill that goal. Since several of the safety features built into science labs are not available or not working at Milford Mill, than safety is also a huge concern.

Included with the report are the testimony sheets of anyone who testified and submitted their testimony as well as anyone who submitted written testimony only. Members of the council have met and discussed the issues addressed at the hearing to determine what we felt the main issues of the evening were. We thank the Board of Education for the opportunity to share the community concerns with the Board members.

Respectfully submitted by,

Abby Beytin, chair