

Minutes

SW Education Advisory Meeting
Pre-Budget – October 19, 2005
Catonsville Middle School

Council Attendees: Brian Bailey, Elizabeth Lee, Sharon Loving, Sam Macer, Lisa Orens (chair), Christina Parr

Speaker sign up begun approximately 6:00 pm

Student led individual tours begun approximately 6:00 pm.

Public Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm by Lisa Orens.

Attendance: Approx 30 (including 5 principals)

Speakers: 7

Reports: 6

Thanks extended to all in attendance. Explained that council members host with purpose of hearing from the community what is need to help schools operate. Further remarked that if the concern is facilities related, speakers are encouraged to present, but that the issue may be a capital need that would be better heard in the spring. Introductions made to County Board of Education members present: Dr. Warren Hayman, VP; Joseph Pallozzi; Roger Jensen; Gabrielle Wyatt, Student Rep. Additional introductions made: Dr. Christine Johns, Deputy Superintendent; Bob Haines, Deputy Superintendent; Manuel Rodriguez, Assistant Superintendent for SW area; Susan Wilken, Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent for SW area; show of hands for Principals from 5 SW area schools. Other council members introduced with request for perspective new members to contact Lisa.

Speaker: Ann Waters – PTSA, Catonsville Middle*

Request made to consider and recognize need to budget to:

- Staff for smaller class sizes (daughter at Catonsville Middle and some classes exceed 40 students)
- Provide competitive teacher salaries and retirement plans as means to attract highly qualified teachers
- Improve technology needs as all schools, not just those schools with grants
- Support building upgrades (e.g., air conditioning)

Additional request made to ensure acceptable calendar scheduling. As an example, from the months of September through December 2005, only 8 weeks are full weeks of school.

Speaker: Deidre Bacon, PTA Hebbville Elementary*

Request made to consider building upgrades including air conditioning and new window and blinds. History she received is that a reconstruction project three years ago for upgrades including plumbing and windows was overspent so the windows were not replaced. She would like to know where Hebbville is on the priority list as there are now safety hazards such as falling blinds and inoperable windows (cannot be opened to allow air circulation on hot days). She will plan to return in the spring as she now recognizes these to be capital budget requests.

Speaker: Rob Lesnevich – Parent, Hillcrest Elementary*

Called attention to several situations surrounding use of relocatables. Rob has a child in a homeroom in a relocatable and he has received no information regarding procedures for drop-off /pick-up or transitions to and from main building. He witnessed an occasion where a child was locked out of both the trailer and the main building who resorted to knocking on windows in an attempt to gain access. This and other incidents highlight many safety issues surrounding use of relocatables. BOE policy 4007 recognizes the requirement to provide a safe and healthy environment; policy 4413 requires no student be left unattended. Due to use of relocatables, this is not occurring, particularly during times when students leave the trailer to use restrooms located in the main building.

Speaker: Lisa Cellini – Parent, Arbutus Elementary and Arbutus Middle*

Request made to consider air conditioning in both schools. As health related issue, of 915 middle school students, 81 have asthma, 48 have allergies, and 21 are using inhalers during school hours. She will plan to return in the spring as she recognizes these to be capital budget requests.

Speaker: Kelly Dixon – Parent, Hillcrest Elementary*

Request made for boundary change consideration for 18 students to continue education with established peer group by attending Catonsville MS rather than Arbutus MS. For more than 10 years, message has been that there is overcrowding at Catonsville MS; but current reports indicate new communities being built near area otherwise districted for Arbutus are being “promised” that their children would attend Catonsville MS.

Speaker: Veronica Burton – Parent, Woodmoor Elementary*

Tori Curry spoke for Veronica to request funding for building upgrades including replacement windows and doors and new blinds. Current windows do not open to allow air exchange and have peeling seals. Some are Plexiglas, some are frosted while others are clear. Blinds are falling off. The draft under the door in the Pre-K room where the children spend a majority of time on the floor is so bad parents brought in towels to block the cold air. Parent volunteer opportunities are restricted because parents do not want to remain in the building for Back to School night or other events due to inappropriate air temperatures. The concerns expressed regarding air conditioning needs at Hebbville and use of relocatables at Hillcrest were reiterated as issues at Woodmoor. Parent petition submitted containing 342 parent signatures.

Speaker: Elizabeth Lee – Parent, Catonsville Elementary

Concern expressed regarding two issues: building maintenance and air-conditioning need. Maintenance issues include peeling paint, deteriorated carpet and broken toilets. BCPS has 4-6 painters on staff for the entire county. Therefore, a first request would be to provide funding to increase maintenance staff. Second request is capital budget request but expressed concern for loss of parent involvement due to air quality. Specifically, her husband refuses to volunteer due to his asthma. Parents have express willingness to purchase window units but are unwilling to do so because of bureaucratic hassles.

Public meeting adjourned at 7:35pm.

*Indicates report provided by presenter.

Business meeting called to order at 7:57 pm by Lisa Orens

Members in attendance: Brian Bailey, Elizabeth Lee, Sharon Loving, Sam Macer, Lisa Orens (chair); others in attendance: Rob Lesnevich, Joe Pallozzi, Cindy Saathoff, Anne Waters

A. Member discussion:

1. Christina Parr (junior) from Catonsville HS has joined and Nathan Price II (senior) from Western School of Technology will be returning.
2. Received name for students from Lansdowne HS (senior), but still need student (junior) from Woodlawn HS.
3. Other interested persons may include some present.
4. Reported that Anita's term ended in 2004 per Brenda Stiffler.
5. Sam Macer questioned Lisa Orens regarding whether Dr Rodriguez knew he was supposed to be a driving force at meeting for SWEAC. Sharon Loving questioned if this directive should come from Dr. Hairston. Sam responded that he posed the question to Lisa so she can handle the situation how she believed appropriate. Brian Bailey remarked that it was helpful that Susan Wilken was present at the previous meeting and able to respond to questions from the council in the form of a Word document. Sam expressed that he believes either Dr. Rodriguez or Susan Wilken should be present at all meetings. Sharon remarked that she questions Susan regarding her departure after the hearing portion of the meeting and that Susan responded by stating that since she was at the previous meeting, Dr. Rodriguez would remain for this one.

B. Old Business

1. Elizabeth Lee reported that she went to Westchester ES, Catonsville ES, Hillcrest ES, and Westowne ES to distribute flyers regarding the council and the budget hearing. She indicated the office administrator at Hillcrest explained she used to serve on the council and she further suggested contacting principals by phone to solicit members.
2. Elizabeth also reported that she contacted the Magnet Office to secure a speaker for the meeting scheduled for April 2006 but has not had a return call. Lisa indicated the previous speaker from the Magnet Office was David Lukes.
3. Sam provided an update for the November 16 meeting. He sent an email to Patsy Helms office, and Dale Rauenzahn has been assigned as a speaker. Sam would like feedback regarding whether there is a direction toward which the meeting should focus. He indicated that one parent with whom he spoke claims to have not been successful at achieving any change regarding a bully with whom her children have contact; Sam plans to ask her to submit a report. Brian suggested a beneficial topic would include a report regarding the number of incidents reported per year for the SW area involving bullying. Sam further indicated Brian Scriven, Woodlawn MS Principal, is scheduled as a co-speaker to describe how the situation is being handled at that school.
4. Sam has questioned the SW office via email regarding the conflict for the November 16 council meeting and the boundaries meeting scheduled for the same day. He has not had a response and is uncertain who may be present from the SW area office at the scheduled council meeting.
5. Joe indicated that both Sam and Sharon have had their names submitted to serve on the boundaries committee.

C. Follow up on relocatables.

1. Lisa reported she has been in contact with Meg O'Hare as coordinator for the advisory councils regarding whether there are any BOE policies concerning use of relocatables (e.g., who should use them, the type of use that may be appropriate). They are seeking additional information. Lisa believes this should be a topic and will discuss with Meg the possibility of it being the topic for a joint meeting. Sharon suggested that if the use of a relocatable will be long-term, perhaps those used should contain bathrooms to limit the need for transitions, particularly at elementary schools.
2. Joe indicated parents could help by contacting the local government. He briefly explained a current surplus in the budget and suggested petitioning the government to request the funds be used for schools.

D. Other. Elizabeth questioned whether a PTA could purchase air conditioning window units. Lisa explained that in the past when it was offered, it was explained that any work to be done would have to go out to contract in accordance with public school policy and that the process took too long to allow any purchase to occur; however, there was no indication it was prohibited. Joe indicated there are several things to consider, including whether or not the building has sufficient power to support window units. Sharon further indicated that PTA training advised her that equipment is not acceptable spending for a PTA but it would instead require a booster club. Since there are liability issues, any such purchase would have to be gifted to the school (e.g., for maintenance) so the school would have to agree to accept equipment as a gift. Lisa suggested the Education Coalition may also be interested in this topic and that she would contact Dr. Fine's office to see if statistics might be available concerning such things as air quality or absenteeism on high temperature days.

E. Update roster.

1. Lisa reported that Jan Thomas has been suggesting for several years that there be a line item in the BCPS budget for Advisory Councils for such expenses as postage and copies; this would be helpful for such things as distribution of flyers for recruiting new council members.
2. Anne Waters suggested that the council name might be intimidating to anyone unfamiliar with Advisory Councils and that perhaps the focus in a flyer could be "we want to hear from you." Sam further suggested flyers contain a disclosure that minutes are reported to the BOE. As an example, Lisa shared a history of 400+ letters from parents of Catonsville Elementary School that were sent to the SW Office during the year prior to Westchester opening; had she been aware of the council, she believes this would have been an effective method of communication to the BOE as the BOE does hear messages that come through the council.

Business meeting adjourned approximately 8:39 pm.

Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday November 16 at Woodlawn MS.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Loving
Secretary, SW Education Advisory Council