



Board Meeting

February 14, 2000

Karen L. Wolf, *President*
David H. Galbreath, *Vice President*
Eugene C. Chandler
Thomas D. Hess
Robert S. Magee
Robert B. Thomas, Jr.
Terry R. Troy
Catherine L. Brodo,
Student Representative
Jacqueline C. Haas, *Superintendent*
Secretary/Treasurer

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Education of Harford County met in open session on Monday, February 14, 2000, in the multi-purpose room of Aberdeen Middle School. Board President **Karen L. Wolf** called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., requesting a roll call by the recording secretary. Board Member **Eugene C. Chandler** was absent due to illness and Student Representative **Catherine L. Brodo** was absent due to a prior commitment. The agenda was adopted as printed. Ms. Wolf asked Board Member **Robert B. Thomas, Jr.** to lead those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

The Board unanimously approved two items on the Consent Agenda – minutes from the January 13 work session, January 18 special meeting, January 23 executive session, and January 24 business meeting; and the Monthly Report on Personnel, reflecting those employees who have left the school system, have been placed on leaves of absence, are newly employed or, who are certificated staff who have qualified for tenure based on two years of successful contracted

probationary employment.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Karen Redding of the Harford Woods development in Bel Air said that she is concerned about the safety of her child who walks one-and-one-half miles to Belo Air High School over "busy and dangerous roads." She said, if the Board considers a redistricting which could send middle school students in that area to Bel Air Middle School, it should also consider providing transportation for those secondary students.

Michael Cocco, who lives in the Hampton Ridge sub-division north of Bel Air, spoke against the proposed redistricting of elementary students in that neighborhood from their current school – Prospect Mill – to Hickory Elementary School. He suggested that, if it is necessary to move students from Prospect Mill, that a smaller community be chosen.

Lori Cocco, who appeared with her husband, the previous speaker, said that Hickory Elementary School would be a 113 percent capacity in the Year 2002 if the proposed redistricting is approved. She pointed out that Prospect Mill is fifth highest among the county's 31 elementary schools in the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), while Hickory Elementary ranks much lower.

Kevin Keen of the Hampton Ridge community, a lieutenant in the Baltimore County Police Department, said, if the redistricting is approved, it would be the third time Hampton Ridge has been redistricting. He said the proposal was a "forced fit" and that the proposal reflected "arbitrary results" of the process. Mr. Keen added that Prospect Mill Elementary exceeds Hickory Elementary MSPAP scores by at least ten points in all areas except third grade reading.

David Glenn of Havre de Grace, representing Meadowvale Elementary School PTA, told the Board that, in May, a flashing light will be installed on the hill adjacent to the road leading to the school. He said the proposal to have the light installed had been turned down at first by the State Highway Administration (SHA), but that successful lobbying by a number of people had resulted in a change of position by the agency. He also thanked the Board and the school staff for their continuing efforts on behalf of the proposed renovation of Meadowvale Elementary.

Patrick Galligan, who lives in Edwards Manor, said he had chosen to buy in the community because of the schools to which children in that area would be assigned and resents a pending proposal which would have children in that area transferred to another school.

CONSIDERATION OF COUNTY REQUEST FOR FY 2000 BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Superintendent **Jacqueline C. Haas** told the Board that, over the last two months, County Executive **Jim Harkins** has shared information with various governmental as well as the Sheriff's Office, Harford Community College, and the Harford County Public School System, expressing grave concern about the decreasing revenue stream for county funding. During his State of the County

message on February 8, Mr. Harkins said that the cost of providing services is rising by 7.8 percent while the revenue growth is at 4.2 percent. As a result, the County Executive is asking that all county departments implement a hiring freeze and return three percent of their FY 2000 appropriations. The returned funds would be placed in an account for reappropriation in FY 2001. While the school system is not included in the call for a three percent return and hiring freeze, the County's Director of Administration **John O'Neill** has requested that the Board of Education consider what might be done as a school system to conserve funds in FY 2000 as potential carry over funds into FY 2001. Mrs. Wolf said that Mr. Harkins needs help in two ways: a giveback of funds, and finding ways of enhancing revenues. Board Member **Thomas D. Hess** said the Superintendent should be directed to provide the Board with ways money could be conserved this year and report at the next Board meeting. Board Vice President **David H. Galbreath** said the Board had given more new revenue to fund salaries than all the new money it received from the County last year. He said he commends the Superintendent and her staff for the "very big achievement" of conserving funds last spring during a time which "computer problems" resulted in an unclear picture of the school system finances. Board Member **Robert B. Thomas, Jr.** said the Board finds itself in a difficult position. He said the Board "cannot shirk" its responsibility to help the County Executive out of a financial crisis which he inherited. Mr. Thomas moved and Mr. Galbreath seconded that the Superintendent, at the next regular meeting, present recommendations for budgetary savings not to exceed three percent of the County's FY 2000 appropriation, of no more than \$3.6 million. Board Member **Robert S. Magee** pointed out that most of the FY 2000 funds have either already been spent or appropriated and a three percent cut in total County revenues would represent a far larger percentage of those funds which remain. Assistant Superintendent for Business Services **Robert K. Smith** told the Board that \$1.35 million remains in the undesignated fund balance. (Mr. Smith, the next day, sent the Board a revision of the estimate, reflecting slightly more than \$2 million which remains in the fund balance.) The Board voted 4 to 2 in support of Mr. Thomas' motion, Mr. Magee and Board Member **Terry R. Troy** dissenting.

APPROVAL OF PROPOSED CHANGES – TAX SHELTERED INVESTMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Smith reminded the Board that he and members of the consulting firm Bolton, Offutt, and Donovan had appeared before them to recommend changes in the Tax Sheltered Investment program available to school employees. The consulting firm had identified companies among the list of 28 on the "approved list" which have not been willing to complete the necessary testing associated with the Tax Sheltered Investment program and those with less than 25 participants. Mr. Smith reported that the Superintendent recommends that those companies unwilling to perform limit testing and sign a hold harmless agreement by July 1, 2000 be removed from the list of companies authorized to receive money from school system employees; that employees be permitted one

contribution change per quarter excluding start and stop orders; that those companies who do not have 25 or more participants by July 1, 2000 be removed from the list; that TIAA-CREF and the Westheimer Group: Ferris, Baker, Watts be added to the list; and that employees have until July 1, 2000 to select an approved company from the list. Mr. Hess moved and Mr. Galbreath seconded that the Board approve the Superintendent's recommendations. The Board voted unanimously, 5 to 0 (Mr. Magee was not present for the vote) to support the motion. Mrs. Troy thanked Mr. Smith for holding a meeting for employees during which the options were explained to the 19 who attended the meeting.

PROMOTIONS/APPOINTMENTS

Acting on the motion of Mr. Hess and the second of Mr. Thomas, the Board unanimously (5 to 0, Mr. Magee was not present for the vote) approved the appointment of **H. Andrew Moore II** to be the Director of the Office of Technology and Information Services. Mr. Moore, who is the current Information Management Officer at Aberdeen Proving Ground's Army Test Center (ATC). Mr. Moore, one of 17 candidates for the job, will begin his duties on February 28, 2000.

INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mrs. Haas presented the Board with several pieces of pending legislation impacting education now before the General Assembly. The first is SB 298/HB271, the Compulsory Attendance proposal which would require students to be in school until they are 18 years of age. Mrs. Haas said, if passed, the proposal would require the putting in place of programs for those students who would have dropped out at 16 but would now be in school until they are 18. She said there would be a significant fiscal impact. Mr. Galbreath called the proposal another "unfunded mandate". Mr. Hess said, if passed, there would be a requirement to increase funding and programs in the K-8 grades to make sure those 16 to 18 would be successful in school. Acting on the motion of Mr. Magee and the second of Mr. Galbreath, the Board voted 6 to 0 to oppose the bill.

SB 202/HB288 would require that those school systems which receive 75 percent or more of their funding for construction projects from the State (Harford currently receives 65 percent) would be required to pay "prevailing wages" to those involved in the construction. Assistant Superintendent for Operations **Joseph P. Licata** told the Board the move would increase construction costs by an average of 12.7 percent and would mean an additional \$1.485 million for the Aberdeen High School replacement building alone. He said, since the school system receives \$12 million per year from the State for construction projects and prevailing wage would increase costs by \$1.5 million per year, that would be the equivalent of an elementary school construction

project every five years. Mr. Galbreath said the bill "offers nothing good for us." But, Mr. Thomas said it is "basic politics" that the Governor is supporting the bill and, if the county wants to receive current funding for its projects, a non-support of the bill would result in no funding for the projects. He suggested that, if the Board chooses not to support the bills, they take no position on them. Mr. Galbreath moved that the Board not support the bills. The motion died for lack of a second and the Board took no position on the proposal.

HB 228/SB 508 is the portable communication devices in schools bill which would change state law prohibiting those devices to be carried by students in schools. Mrs. Haas said permitting pagers, cell phones, and other portable communication devices in school would disrupt the educational process, even if students were not permitted to use them. She said monitoring those rules would be difficult and, if they should be stolen or lost, investigations would have to be undertaken by school administrators. The Board took no position on the proposal.

SB 570 would take public funds to pay the tuitions of students who attend schools which the State Department of Education has declared as eligible for reconstitution (failure to show progress on MSPAP). Mr. Thomas moved and Mr. Hess seconded that the Board oppose the bill. The Board voted 5 to 1 to support the motion and oppose the proposal (Mr. Galbreath dissenting).

SB 737 would require character education as part of the school curriculum. Mr. Thomas said he feels it is better left in the hands of those involved with establishing local curriculum to establish course offerings to encourage good character. Mr. Thomas moved and Mr. Hess seconded that the Board oppose the bill. The Board voted 5 to 1 to oppose the legislation (Mr. Galbreath dissenting).

SB 112 is the bill which would mandate the sharing of information with the local school system involving felony drug use or trafficking by students. Mr. Thomas moved that the Board support the proposal and direct that Mrs. Troy represent the Board at the upcoming Senate hearing on the bill. The motion passed 6 to 0.

Mrs. Haas told the Board that Bel Air Middle School will be one of 199 out of 377 schools nationwide to receive an on-site visit from the National Blue Ribbon (School of Excellence) program. The school had been selected as one of ten Maryland Blue Ribbon Schools this past fall. The visit is a prerequisite for schools possibly being named National Blue Ribbon Schools.

Mrs. Haas reminded the Board that it and its Budget Advisory Committee must begin to make plans for possible cuts in the proposed FY 2001 operating budget, pending likely cuts by the County Executive and the County Council in the \$236 million Board proposal. She said a timeline should be established for the

potential cuts.

(Acting on a motion by Mr. Galbreath and the second of Mr. Hess, the Board unanimously approved the switching of consideration of Items H and I in its agenda.)

DISCUSSION OF FOREST HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREA

The Board, at its January 24 business meeting, had notified the public it would take a "straw poll" to determine if members would be prepared to take action on the proposed redistricting to establish an attendance zone for the new Forest Hill Elementary School at its February 28 meeting. Mrs. Troy said that she had been told by Transportation Director **Norman Seidel** that it would be possible to pick up the 27 students who reside in the Forest Lakes Elementary School district, but who attend the Kiddie Academy day care in the proposed Forest Hill Elementary zone, and return those students to Forest Lakes. Director of Elementary Education **Patricia Skebeck** said that 2,124 approved units remain to be built in the Prospect Mill attendance area, and that does not include the Wagner property which has received preliminary approval. She said that the results will be a 111 over capacity situation for Prospect Mill. She said that Hickory Elementary has just 155 units to be built in its attendance area. Mrs. Skebeck said that, for three to five years, Hickory would remain below capacity. She said that the redistricting committee had aimed for a 93 percent capacity at each of the five schools involved, but had not succeeded. She said, if their plans are approved, Hickory would be at 99 percent and Prospect Mill would be at 85 percent to provide for future growth. "We are not wedded to this proposal," she said. Mr. Thomas said he will not be ready to vote on the issue at the February 28 meeting. Mr. Magee said the proposal should be moved to first on the agenda for the next meeting since members of the public have a particular interest in it.

DISCUSSION ON EXISTING SIGNATURE PROGRAMS IN THE EDGEWOOD, JOPPATOWNE AND NORTH HARFORD HIGH SCHOOLS

Mrs. Haas called on Director of Secondary Education **William M. Ekey** who reported that there are a total of 200 students in the North Harford High School agriculture program – 93 in agriculture science, 81 in horticulture, and 62 in floral design; and that the program could accommodate as many as 100 additional students, provided a third teacher is added. He said that there are 40 students now enrolled in the Joppatowne High School Cisco program. There had been 46, but six left at the conclusion of the first semester. It is projected there will be 48 enrolled next year in three teaching periods – the equivalent of one full teacher load (though Joppatowne currently has three teachers sharing the program). It is estimated 100 more could be enrolled with the use of two more staff members. However, that would mean the school's main computer lab would almost entirely be used just for the program. At Edgewood High School, Mr. Ekey said, there are 18 students enrolled in the Academy of Finance and 25

are expected next year with 25 addition for the following year. The total of 50 students, who are being taught by one teacher, could be doubled with another staff member. However, the business education computer laboratory would need to be updated. In summary, Mr. Ekey said, with the addition of four staff members, 250 students could be added to the various programs. He said that some of the additional students would come from within the school involved. Mr. Hess said he would like to see what expectations there are if boundary exceptions were opened up and made available to students throughout the county. On March 13, Board members and selected staff members will visit magnet schools in a nearby county. Mr. Galbreath said it is the success of a program that will draw students to a signature program.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Thomas announced that he has decided not to seek a second five-year term on the Board of Education. He said the decision had been "difficult and painful" and that many elected officials and others in whom he had confided have urged him to seek a second term. He said the final date for application through the Permanent Nominating Caucus process is February 24.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Mr. Magee, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next regular business meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County will be held on Monday, February 28, 2000, at Aberdeen Middle School, in the multi-purpose room, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on Board meetings or other matters affecting the Harford County Public Schools, contact the system's Director of Public Information, 410-588-5203; or call the system's Customer Relations Action Line, 410-638-0022 (which can also be used as a 24-hour-a-day tip line for safety concerns).

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