



Board Meeting

October 16, 2000

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

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

Board of Education President **David H. Galbreath** called the open session of the Board to order on Monday, October 16, 2000, at 7:10 p.m. in the auditorium of Edgewood High School. He directed that a roll call be taken, resulting in all Board members reporting present. Board Member **Karen L. Wolf** moved and Board Vice President **Eugene C. Chandler** seconded that the agenda be approved as presented. The motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Galbreath led those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Suzanne Procell of Banyon Road in Edgewood, president of the Deerfield Elementary School PTA, expressed her gratitude to the Board for its decision to fully fund the \$50,000 fourth tier busing funds for Deerfield. She said the Board had fulfilled its "role model" obligation in keeping the commitment it had made. She added that she realized it would be difficult to find the necessary funding but the Board had showed itself to be a "promise keeper."

Deb Merlock, a parent of an Edgewood Middle School sixth grader, said her son is enjoying a "great experience" at the school which she described as "warm, caring and challenging." However, she said parents had been "dismayed" at the situation involving the growth of mold and mildew at the school, adding that she realized with 40,000 students to account for, the school system has a huge responsibility. But, she said, parents needed to be informed so they could make

the tough choices for their children. Mrs. Merlock said her son has serious health issues which could be exacerbated by the conditions at the school. She urged the system to take steps to ensure air quality at all schools in the school system. Mr. Galbreath reminded those present that there have been 25 new schools built or additions/renovations completed involving the addition of air conditioning over the past 15 years and there is the same six employees in the heating/air conditioning unit of the system's Facilities Management department.

Mark Wolkow, president of the Edgewood Middle School PTSA, said he was representing himself in supporting measures to ensure indoor air quality in all schools. He said there had been major issues at two other schools prior to the Edgewood Middle School situation. Mr. Wolkow said all those connected with the school system need to work with funding authorities to provide the necessary money to do consistent air quality testing.

OLD BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

TRANSPORTATION FOR HARFORD WOODS COMMUNITY

Superintendent **Jacqueline C. Haas** reviewed the situation involving parental requests for bus transportation to be provided for the Bel Air High School students who live in the Harford Woods community. She said citizens had come to the Board in March, pointing first to a distance issue, disputing the 1.5 mile minimum length from school to qualify for busing, and then introducing the issue of safety along the walking route. In the June Board meeting, Board member **Robert B. Thomas, Jr.** had asked for information on the issue and a motion to waive the Board's policy to allow for busing for Harford Woods students failed in a 3 to 3 tie vote.

Council Member **Michael Geppi**, who represents the Bel Air area, addressed the Board, saying that he was representing his constituents, asking the Board to waive its policy, not on distance, but on safety issues. He said there had been 21 traffic accidents along the route the students take from their Harford Woods homes to Bel Air High; and that there were 328 traffic violations at a traffic light along the route. Mr. Geppi mentioned that an adult employed at the Council office had been struck by an automobile at the intersection. Board Member **Robert S. Magee** asked Mr. Geppi what actions had been taken by the Bel Air Police to make the route safer. Mr. Geppi responded that a camera was being used at the intersection resulting in the violations being issued to motorists. The issue of crossing guards was raised.

Karen Redding, one of the parents who has been asking for transportation in the area, said she had spoken to the Bel Air Police who had offered no

suggestions to make the route safer. She added she is taking part in a carpool to avoid her child from walking the route.

Sherry Hare, another of the parents involved in the request, said a student had been struck by a car along the walking route and urged the Board to do something to protect the lives of the young people.

Debbie Razicka said she has a ninth grader at Bel Air High School and a graduated senior who spoke to the Board in March, and added she doesn't know what "it will take to wake people up" to the fact bus transportation is needed for students in the area.

Mr. Galbreath asked Mr. Geppi to provide whatever information that has not already come from his office on the walking route. Board Member **Terry R. Troy**, who represents the Bel Air area, thanked Mr. Geppi for his efforts on behalf of his constituents. In response to her questions, Mrs. Haas said it would cost between \$4,000 and \$6,000 to provide a bus for the area high school students. Mr. Thomas said that, with the fiscal constraints of the current budget, such a request should be built into next year's budget if it is to be considered. Mr. Galbreath said he feels the Board needs to hear from the system's Transportation Office about other areas of the county which may have similar, or more severe, transportation issues. Mrs. Wolf urged that the issue be placed on the Board agenda next month. Board Member **Thomas D. Hess** said he feels any student who resides on the opposite side of Rt. 924 (South Main Street) or Rt. 1 (the Baltimore Pike) should be included in any move to bus students in the area.

APPROVAL OF COMPREHENSIVE MAINTENANCE PLAN

Director of Facilities Management **Jeffery Ayers** told the Board that a recent report citing potential problems with boiler pressure vessels was the result of the report of the inspection of those vessels having "crossed in the mail" with those who prepared the report. He said there are no issues with the vessels. The report on the Comprehensive Maintenance Plan had been reviewed by the Board last month. Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler and Mr. Hess, the Board approved submission of the plan to State Department of Education authorities by a 7 to 0 vote. In response to a question, Mr. Ayers said the system currently has ten technicians in five separate teams which do preventative maintenance of mechanical systems.

PRESENTATIONS

SCHOOL SAFETY/SECURITY REPORT

Assistant Superintendent of Education Services **Bernard F. Barnes** presented a summary of what has been done by the school system to ensure safety and

security for Harford Public School students. Dr. Barnes said that, following the Columbine High School shootings in April 1999, Mrs. Haas formed a committee composed of leading law officials in the county which made several recommendations, many of which have been implemented. He said the group had recognized there are "no quick fixes" to ensure safety/security for students and staff. Dr. Barnes said the issues of backpacks, drug sniffing dogs, metal detectors, phone hot lines, reporting of weapons, and a number of other issues have been explored. He said that a citizens advisory committee on safety/security had been formed. He pointed to a recommendation by the Board that the committee, which has dwindled in active membership, should be restructured with additional members and a more specific charge. Acting on the motion of Mrs. Wolf and the second of Mrs. Troy, the Board voted unanimously to endorse the restructuring of the committee. Mr. Thomas said he has concerned that there is not sufficient after school hours control of who has access to school buildings and recording of those who are in the building. Mrs. Haas said there is a cost associated with having greeters at the front doors of schools. A second recommendation of the superintendent to have the cost of badging all itinerant administrators, teachers and other school employees be added to next year's budget was deferred until a later meeting.

PARAMETERS AND CHARGE FOR CONSULTANT TO STUDY COUNTYWIDE SCHOOL BOUNDARIES

The Board received a report from the Superintendent which summarized the movement toward hiring a consultant to make recommendations for countywide redistricting. Mr. Thomas' motion to hire a consultant, provide parameters for the consultant, and create a policy for procedures that would lead to regular review of a realignment policy that would maintain enrollment capacity alignment be initiated was passed by the Board at its September 25, 2000 meeting. In addition, the superintendent presented the Board with a summary of points made during the October 11, 2000 Board work session on managing growth/balancing enrollment at North Harford Middle School. The proposed parameters would: define state-rated capacity/operational capacity and convey to the consultant; distance, community issues used in defining boundaries/feeder systems; consider assigning students close enough to walk to a school to be assigned to that school first; phase in consultant recommendations; keep student cohorts together through secondary school where possible; class size Board goals should be preserved; and more opportunities for student participation in extracurricular activities in smaller sized high schools. The proposed charge is that the Board would hire a consultant to study school enrollments and projections across the county without regard for the present established boundaries. Upon completion of the study of enrollment patterns and projections, county growth, and other vital local information and documents, the consultant should develop recommendations for the placement of individual school attendance boundaries based on the filter of the Board specified parameters. Recommendations for school attendance boundaries should strive to

achieve a more equitable distribution of students across all areas of the county. The hired consultant should develop policy parameters and recommendations for the process of regularly reviewing the alignment between established optimum capacity and yearly September 30 enrollment data. The Board is due to take action on the proposal at its October 23, 2000 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

BOARD ACTION ON REQUEST FOR WALKING TRAILS AT BEL AIR HIGH SCHOOL

In response to a request by the Bel Air Town government to create a series of walking trails on the exterior of the Bel Air High/Middle/Homestead-Wakefield Elementary school campus, acting on a motion made by Mrs. Wolf and seconded by Mrs. Troy, the Board directed that the school system participate on a committee of all those involved to explore the possibilities of such a system. The action, which passed unanimously, also directs that Mrs. Troy participate as the Board's representative on that committee. School system Assistant Superintendent for Operations **Joseph P. Licata** reported that the proposal would have trails leading to each of the schools, a situation which could cause security concerns for the schools.

METAL DETECTORS

A proposal by Mr. Thomas to initiate metal detectors as a pilot at two Harford County Public high schools no later than January 1, 2001, with a report to the Board on the use of those detectors by July 1, 2001, was tabled by a subsequent 6 to 1 vote (Mr. Thomas dissenting). The motion by Mrs. Wolf, which was seconded by Mrs. Troy, is intended to allow for public discussion of the proposal. Student Representative to the Board **Daniel Purcell** said the use of metal detectors would create an atmosphere in the schools leading to the belief that they are unsafe. He said there has been no reason to believe the metal detectors are required. Mr. Galbreath agreed, pointing out that some schools have as many as 50 outside doors. Mrs. Haas said that law agencies, after at first providing support for portable metal detectors, had backed off on that suggestions. She said as recently as an annual meeting with law enforcement officials the preceding Friday, agents from all local police groups had renewed their opposition to the use of metal detectors as being impractical. Mr. Magee asked to have statistics from the superintendent concerning the presence of weapons in school buildings over the past ten years. He said use of metal detectors could limit freedom of movement by students and questioned whether conditions had changed in the schools which would, at this point, warrant the use of metal detectors. Mr. Hess said a "community dialogue" is needed on the topic, and suggested that there be a work session devoted to public comment and Board discussion on the issue.

WORK SESSIONS

The Board entered into discussion on the scheduling of work sessions this school year. The decision was made to hold the next work session on Monday, October 30, from 7:00 until 9:00 p.m. at a site to be determined (subsequently, Mr. Galbreath said the site will be North Harford Middle School). A schedule of meetings will be established and communicated to the public at a later date.

FALLSTON HOSPITAL SCHOOL SITE

Mr. Thomas said he had talked with County Executive **James Harkins** about Mr. Thomas' suggestion that the soon-to-close Fallston General Hospital be converted into a middle/high school. Mr. Thomas said that Mr. Harkins had said there are "other plans" in the works for use of the hospital and that the issue of it being involved as a middle/high school is no longer under consideration.

CONSENT AGENDA

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Wolf and the seconds of Mrs. Troy and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler, the Board voted unanimously to endorse items on the Consent Agenda including: Approval of Minutes for the September 25, 2000 meeting; approval of the Monthly Report on Personnel – including those who have left the school system, those who have been placed on leaves of absence, or those who are newly employed; and Transfer of School Bus Contracts.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Due to the lateness of the hour, the Superintendent's Report was postponed until the October 23, 2000 meeting.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Thomas said he was incensed over an editorial in the local newspaper "Bad Civic Lesson" on what the editorial interpreted as a "gag order" on Board members speaking to the news media. Mr. Thomas said it has been tradition that the Board speaks as one voice on a majority of issues through its president or his/her designee. He said that members of the Board had been concerned about comments he had made which were reported in the newspaper. Mr. Thomas said there had been no public or private vote on a "gag order" and that it was a "protocol" issue. Mr. Galbreath said that he or other members of the Board are free to speak on issues as individuals. Mrs. Troy said she agrees with Mr. Thomas that the Board president should speak for the Board. Mr. Hess urged that Board members read "The Sun" editorial on "Zero Tolerance."

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Wolf and the second of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting, which was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the Board was slated to be held on Monday, October 23, 2000 in the auditorium of Edgewood High School. Regular Board business meetings will be held at Edgewood High through the December meetings. The January through March regular meetings will be held at Bel Air Middle School, with the April through June meetings to be held at North Harford High School.

MORE INFORMATION

The school system is attempting to prevent duplications and reduce production/ mailing costs of the printed versions of B-Line. Those who are able to access B-Line on line and who would like their copy of the printed version of the document discontinued should e-mail the Director of Public Information: Drmorrison.gs@hcps.k12.md.us; Or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

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).

The Harford County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, or disability in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs.
Inquiries related to the policies of the Board of Education of Harford County should be directed to the Director of Public Information at 410-588-5203.