

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 11, 2013

BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVES FY14 BUDGET RECONCILIATION FOLLOWING \$20.2 MILLION SHORTFALL

The Board of Education of Harford County reconciled and approved the school system's fiscal year 2014 (FY14) budget last night due to budgetary constraints causing a \$20.2 million shortfall, of which \$7.7 million was comprised of the negotiated wage package. As a result, the Board of Education was forced to take drastic measures in order to balance the budget.

The FY14 budget, which goes into effect on July 1, 2013, includes revenue-generating strategies, as well as many expenditure reductions. As part of the expenditure reductions, approximately 115 school system positions, including school-based and central office positions, were eliminated to balance the budget. While many of the positions were eliminated through attrition, 46 employees lost their positions as a result of the reduction in force. In addition, the \$7.7 million line item to fund the negotiated wage package was removed.

"Throughout the economic downturn over the last several years, we have worked diligently to protect the classroom, our teachers and our students as much as possible," said Superintendent of Schools Robert M. Tomback.

"Unfortunately, as the largest portion of a school system's budget is dedicated to staffing, of which approximately one-third are teachers, we are at a point where it became impossible to escape staffing reductions that many of our neighboring school systems have faced over the past few years."

In order for the Board to be in compliance with State regulations, as well as the provisions of the negotiated agreement with Harford County Education Association (HCEA), notifications commenced this morning to all employees whose positions were eliminated due to a reduction in force. Per state regulation (COMAR 13A.07.02.01), notification must be completed no later than June 12, 2013, which is 15 days following the final budget action by the County Council. As stated in the HCEA contract, certificated teachers whose positions are eliminated will be placed on a recall list for a period of two years.

In addition to staff reductions, several revenue-generating strategies were adopted last night in order to balance the budget. Three amendments were passed resulting in fees for student participation in athletics and school activities, as well as an increase in field trip transportation rates. However, exemptions to this fee were approved for students of Harford County Public Schools teachers, students on free and reduced meals (FaRMS) and students of active duty military personnel. Some of the notable budget reduction amendments approved last night were:

- Countywide consolidated bus stops for middle and high schools (no change to school schedules);
- Consolidated/depot stops for magnet programs; and
- Four additional elementary schools (not yet identified) placed on fourth tier bus service, which will alter their school day schedule to 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

To review all of the budget reconciliation amendments, please access the [Board Report on the Approval of the FY14 Unrestricted Budget](#). In addition, a complete [list of athletics and activities](#) subject to the new fee for participation is available on the school system website.

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“The Board of Education has continuously approved a needs-based budget and made necessary cuts over the past several years in an effort to minimally affect the classroom,” stated Harford County Board of Education President Rick Grambo. “Unfortunately, the time has come where tough decisions were necessary to balance the current budget; however, it is our hope that the adjustments we made will help to ease the burden as we know we will be faced with the same plight in future years.”

Details surrounding many of the amendments adopted last night are currently being developed. Parents and the community will receive ongoing communication throughout the development process to ensure a clear understanding of the adjustments and the impact on their families. Any questions regarding the FY14 budget should be directed to budget@hcps.org.

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