

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
April 23, 1987

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Thursday, April 23, 1987, at 8:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Marilyn J. Praisner, President
 in the Chair
 Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo
 Mr. Blair G. Ewing
 Mr. Bruce A. Goldensohn
 Mrs. Mary Margaret Slye

Absent: Dr. James E. Cronin
 Dr. Robert E. Shoenberg
 Mr. Eric Steinberg

Others Present: Dr. Harry Pitt, Deputy Superintendent
 Acting in the Absence of the Superintendent
 Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

Re: ANNOUNCEMENT

Mrs. Praisner announced that Dr. Cronin had extended his apologies. His daughter was visiting, and he planned to spend the evening with her. Dr. Shoenberg was out of town on business.

Re: ANNUAL MEETING WITH MCCPTA

Dr. Pitt reported that they had had a workshop with selected schools having projects working with the community to improve student performance. The meeting was cochaired by MCPS and MCCPTA and was outstanding. He commended MCCPTA for its work in this area. Mrs. Vicki Rafel, president of MCCPTA, thanked Dr. Pitt. She stated that this was an exciting program which offered schools the opportunity to get together and share ideas.

In regard to the facilities process, Mrs. Mary Ann Bowen said that they thought the process was positive even though it meant a great deal of work on the part of the cluster coordinators and the communities. Mrs. Praisner stated that the Board would agree and letters of thanks had been sent to the coordinators. They had known when they adopted the policy that it would call for a lot of work. She thanked the staff and community for their cooperation and praised the work of the coordinators.

Mrs. Bowen thought that it probably was time to look at the role of the cluster coordinator and the excessive workload on this position. Mrs. Praisner asked if they were suggesting a change in the facilities policy, and Mrs. Bowen replied that they were not. Mrs. Bowen felt that the involvement of the area office staff in working with the clusters had gone well. Mrs. Cordie Goldstein explained that they were suggesting that the report of the associate

superintendent should go back to the clusters for their information. The October 6 facilities presentation had gone well, but they thought that the superintendent's comments could be stronger indicators of the direction he would be proposing.

Mrs. Praisner asked about the concern about the public hearing agenda and the suggestion that civic associations be given a separate time with municipalities. She thought they might have to add a sentence that the amount of time allotted to civic associations would be determined by the Board officers. Mrs. Bowen thought this might be included in a cover sheet sent out by the superintendent. Mrs. Praisner suggested that the policy might still have to be amended to show the process rather than the exact amount of time. In regard to the two boundary task forces, Mrs. Bowen suggested that in the future they consider the timeline used by the Northeast task force although they did not see a future need for task forces. Mrs. Praisner explained that the reporting dates on the up-county task force had been moved up because of the desire of the community to have boundary decisions made earlier.

In regard to citizen participation on task forces, Mrs. Bowen said that members would like to have more guidance from professional staff regarding the drawing of boundaries. Mrs. Goldstein said that while the area associates had been designated as facilitators, the citizen members would like to see more direction and guidance from them. Mr. Ewing noted that he appreciated it was not appropriate for the Board to ask people to make decisions that should be made by professionals, but on the other hand if an area superintendent said what he or she thought should be done, there was the suspicion that the process had been rigged from the start. Mrs. Goldstein explained that they were talking about the feasibility of options. There was no point in having a citizen group work on an idea if the idea was not feasible. Dr. Pitt explained that even here there was a difficulty because if staff said an idea was not feasible, their presentation of that issue had to be carefully balanced so that the community did not think their idea was being rejected out of hand.

Mrs. Goldstein stated that one positive thing had happened through this process which was that a lot of respect had been generated for the school system and its planning office. Mrs. DiFonzo reported that she had heard from an administrator who had participated in one of the task forces. He did not think there was a possibility of agreement, and he was amazed that the final vote was almost unanimous. Mrs. Slye commented that from her discussions with task force members she had the sense that these more recent activities were a much more collaborative process between MCPS and the community. She thought that next time it would be helpful if staff came in with the basic statistical work. Mrs. Praisner recalled that when she had participated on a task force in the mid 1970's and staff had done the groundwork, some citizens accepted it and others did not.

Mrs. Rafel stated that she was pleased to hear that the Board was concerned about taking schools out of the Adequate Public Facilities

Ordinance. Mrs. Praisner reported that the Board had just had an agenda-setting meeting, and on the May 12 agenda there would be a discussion of the Adequate Growth Policy and other issues in relation to this.

In regard to Northwood, Mrs. Rafel reported that they had testified that Northwood was not needed as a holding facility. Mrs. Praisner said that April 29 was the date for CIP action; however, she had been told this had been rescheduled until after May 1 to allow the Board time to make a decision on the use of Northwood. She said that the Board had asked Phil Rohr to work with county staff to develop an agreement. The Board had received copies of that document which had been referred to its attorney. The Board would have to schedule a meeting with its attorney to find out if such an agreement would bind the Board and future Boards. Yesterday the Board had received a letter from the county executive stating that the agreement was acceptable to him and that he would sign it. He was awaiting the Board's decision.

Mr. Ewing explained that the Board had asked the staff to provide a recap of how the students would be housed during various renovations. It was his view that the Board should hold a public hearing on this issue before making a decision. Because the time was running out on the Council resolution, Mrs. Praisner hoped that the Council would understand that the Board might have to ask for an extension. She explained that they had asked their attorney whether a public hearing was necessary because this was a facilities decision and there was a possibility of litigation. Mrs. Dianne Smith asked if people could send their comments in, and Mrs. Praisner replied that this would be fine.

Mrs. Rafel reported that the Germantown Elementary PTA had a concern about work being done on Route 118 adjacent to the school. This brought up the issue of having a contact person in MCPS regarding construction near schools, shopping centers, etc. Mrs. Praisner asked Dr. Pitt to consider designating such an individual and to let the Board and MCCPTA know the name of that person.

Mrs. Rafel stated that they were concerned about the current policy on fund raising. Mrs. Praisner pointed out that the date on this policy was 1960. Mrs. Janet Garrison said they were concerned that the policy was out of date, and if you read the policy it appeared that the PTA's were responsible for all fund raising, which was not the case. They were also concerned because some principals appeared to put pressure on PTA presidents to participate in fund raising. She asked that staff take a close look at this policy. Mrs. Praisner thought that MCCPTA should be involved in the review of this policy, and Dr. Pitt agreed. Mrs. Rafel pointed out that they also had to look at fund raising for football stadium lighting. It seemed to Mrs. Garrison that whatever policy they adopted had to be made known to the PTA's and the principals. Mrs. Rafel reported that the PTA was now trying to rewrite its handbook on fund raising. Mrs. DiFonzo said that when her children were in elementary school there was no

door-to-door fund raising, but shortly thereafter it started. It would be difficult for schools accustomed to these extra funds to do without them.

Dr. Pitt said that the other issue was booster clubs raising funds because they were not part of the PTA. Mrs. Garrison said that the bottom line was that PTA's had to have funds to run, and they did feel pressure from the principal that their first obligation was to provide for the school program. Mrs. Slye commented that this could become a self-perpetuating activity that took them away from the primary purpose of the PTA -- to support the schools. She admired the willingness of MCCPTA to tackle this issue through its handbook. Mrs. Jean Mallon suggested that they had to look at what was appropriate for the PTA to buy. Some people said they should be buying textbooks and others said not. Dr. Pitt commented that this had been a topic of discussion for a number of years. The problem was that a school staff might be gung-ho to implement a program and suggest that if the PTA supplied more textbooks they could be more successful. The problem was, teachers would ask for more no matter what the level of funding was. The Board had asked staff to look at fund raising, and as a consequence the budget contained more money for materials of instruction, but even with that, there would always be a push at the local level for more materials.

Mrs. Garrison pointed out that some communities were able to provide more funds for their school. Mrs. Rafel stated that someone had suggested that the more affluent schools adopt the less affluent schools. Mrs. Slye thought that there were a lot of schools that would consider sharing their resources.

In regard to the operating budget situation, Mrs. Rafel thought the Coalition had done a spectacular job, but one of the frustrating things was to have all that effort put down. From the perspective of the Coalition, they had helped get the information out to the community and the people saw the issues for themselves. She was concerned about the amount of the budget shortfall and its potential impact on the school system. She asked if a cut list had been developed, and Dr. Pitt replied that he had had preliminary discussions with the area superintendents about the loss of staff at the secondary level and had asked them to meet with high school principals.

Mr. Goldensohn reported that the Board had not met to discuss the budget cuts. Mrs. Praisner said that the Council had stated that the school system could run "lean and mean," but the Board was trying to explain that there was no way they could absorb these cuts. Dr. Pitt added that the cut was \$20 million which included \$8 million of some services which brought them into existing programs. He said that improvements included the magnet program and the Richard Montgomery IB program, but he emphasized that no decision had been made about these programs. After the Council made its final decisions, the superintendent would make recommendations to the Board and the Board would debate and decide these issues.

Mrs. Praisner commended the PTA and the Coalition for the superb job they were doing. She remarked that the evening of the Council's budget hearing she had been overwhelmed when she walked into Richard Montgomery's auditorium. The thousands of people present were there with a sense of dedication, and it was unfortunate that this was not recognized by the Council. She also complimented the MCPS staff for the outstanding job they had done in preparation and defense. She hoped that the Board would be given one final opportunity to defend the budget before the Council acted and suggested that representatives of the Coalition might wish to attend this meeting. Mrs. Rafel commented that one of the most exciting things to come out of this was the Coalition. It consisted of a whole range of groups which previously had had no communication, and they were finding support in unexpected places in the community including the NAACP, the Grey Panthers, NOW, and the unions.

Mr. Goldensohn said that it was unfortunate that there were eight people in the county who were not listening. He thought that the Coalition was doing the best job that had ever been done by the community.

In regard to the Richard Montgomery program, Mr. Ewing explained that he strongly supported the program. The problem was not whether the Board would fund the program but where they would cut elsewhere to do this. For example, did they increase class size to fund the magnet schools and the IB program? Not doing the IB program was another choice.

Mrs. Rafel remarked that the MCPS staff had been very impressive. They had been receptive to the work of the Coalition and provided the Coalition with time and information at all levels, here in the central office and out in the schools. She hoped that communities would not find themselves fighting each other about the cuts. Dr. Pitt thought that knowledgeable people in the community might be upset by budget decisions made by the Board but would understand why these hard decisions would have to be made. Dr. Ann Rose pointed out that they had a different political system now, and she suggested that it was necessary for the Board and the staff to consider how they were going to deal with a situation that would be with them for the next several years.

Mrs. Slye remarked that the most upsetting part of the process was that the views of citizens appeared to be disregarded. She thought it was important that citizens talk about this and decide what to do about it. Mrs. Praisner said that next year the situation would be different because the Board would not be negotiating. If the county executive gave them a mark in public, the Board would be able to comment on the effects of the agreements and population growth. Last December they received their mark two days before the superintendent's preliminary budget was released. She said that citizens might start saying there was something wrong with the way the process was working. There was something wrong with eight people agreeing with the same thing as the number one priority. They might wonder what had happened to checks and balances and independent

entities with different charges and responsibilities and what had happened to the county executive and Council working together but not necessarily agreeing.

Mrs. Smith remarked that up until this point the community had been led to believe that they could ask for any kind of program they wanted and the dollars would be found. The community saw these services as needs, but the Council saw the services as a wish list. They had to ask themselves if they were wishing for some things or were they satisfying their needs. She said the County did not have the funds they used to have and had to decide what their true needs were. She said that another frustration was not knowing where their focus in education was. She felt that the process used did not provide an opportunity for the public to share their frustration with the Board's budget as presented, and she suggested that next year the whole approach had to be different including PTA involvement.

Mr. Ewing stated that they both had to think about some radically different approaches because the traditional way of getting funding was not working. It seemed to him that the result might be that it was time for school people to become involved in the election of Council members, which they had not been in the past. He thought that future budgets should be much more thematic. The budget had always included programs they felt were worth doing, but they had to be clearer about their direction as noted by the Commission on Excellence. The Council had claimed they did not understand what the Board was doing and why. The Board had to do a better job of justifying direction for the entire school system, and a better job of justification would help in generating more public support.

Mrs. Martha Rosacker suggested they think about a different way of involving the public and PTA in the budget process. She was not sure there was merit in doing another survey, but she thought that fall forums to discuss budget issues might be useful. The Board could let the public know what everything cost. For example, they could cite how much it cost to reduce class size. Mrs. Praisner thought it might help if they had a process which allowed people to be knowledgeable in the early fall. If they were not negotiating, they would have briefing sessions and discuss where they were going with their priorities, meeting individual student needs, and planning for growth. She said there also had to be some maturing of dialogue with the PTA's. She agreed that they did need to look at thematic programs for the schools, and she suggested that they might concentrate on budget forums rather than individual PTA testimony.

Dr. Michael Richman thought some burden should be placed on the Board for not anticipating the negotiations process and informing the community. He said that next year the Board would have to advocate a tax increase for better education, and he wondered how they would be able to build a Coalition. Dr. Pitt remarked that they could have 70 percent of the citizens vote for a tax increase and they might not get it. They had no way of assuming that what the majority wanted was what the majority would get. However, past experience had led them all to believe that they would get much of what they asked for in the way of educational programs.

Mrs. Smith explained that they were here to present what they thought about the Board's relationship to the community not the Council's relationship. She wanted the Board to know that there was frustration in the community dealing with the Board on the budget. She said that the communities wanted the Board to come in with a higher budget because they thought when the cuts came they would end up with what they wanted. Mrs. Praisner said she understood this, but the Council was saying that the Board just added at will. She had told the Council that they had to watch the painful decisions made by the Board, and the Board was well aware of the implications of the negotiated agreements. She did not see the Board's adding everything it wanted or everything the community wanted.

Mrs. Praisner reported that they had spent a lot of time educating the former Council education committee, and now they had a whole new committee to educate. Mr. Ewing thought that next year they needed to make more effective arguments, and while they were not comfortable with conflict they had to continue to fight for what they thought was best for education. Dr. Rose thought they had a situation of a Council making cuts and not understanding the impact of those cuts. She suggested that the school system had to give people as much information about the differences in what would be funded at the various budget levels. She said that next year they had to consider changing the way the superintendent and Board recommended their budget. In the event there was a gap between what the Board recommended for quality education and what the county executive was willing to fund, the Board had to spell out what the consequences would be of the suggested targets. After the budget decisions were made, they had to publicize the cuts and their impact. This will be sensitive because they did not want to give the impression that MCPS was not a quality school system. In addition, they had to start to build their community Coalitions, and she would like to see more community organizations testify. She endorsed the idea of public forums.

Mrs. Rafel reported that the Coalition was in the process of developing a mass mailing to approximately 40,000 people who vote regularly. She said that a lot of Council members and elected officials had been talking about a taxpayers revolt, but the Coalition did not think there would be a revolt over tax increases but rather over growth. That issue kept the civic associations from joining the Coalition.

Mrs. Jean Mallon stated that in Area 3 they were delighted with the choice of Dr. Vance as deputy superintendent. However, they wanted to be involved in the selection process for the new area superintendent. She asked that the area vice presidents as well as Dr. Vance be involved. Dr. Pitt replied that the job would be advertised, and the interview process would involve Dr. Vance and people from the community.

Mrs. Praisner thanked MCCPTA members for their comments.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

HP:mlw