



the mid to low 20's. The Task Force to Study the Public School Construction Program that Mrs. Praisner served on recommended that the capacity be lowered, but the IAC and Board of Public Works have not seen fit to do that. He explained that the 25 to 1 capacity reflected what was happening in their elementary schools. Thirty to one did not.

Dr. Rohr commented that there was a "myth" of flexibility available in 1991 in schools which assumed they could adjust boundaries and grade organization. This was difficult to do at the area level or the high school cluster level. MCPS and the Planning Board had proposed to the Council that they review subdivisions based on a high school cluster area versus the executive's administrative area. MCPS and the Planning Board also recommended they look at each level starting with elementary and saying "go" or "no go" based on elementary capacity, go to the JIM level, and finally the senior high level.

Dr. Rohr explained that they were projecting a 16,000 to 17,000 student increase in elementary school enrollment between now and 1992, and not all of that was up county. In Area 1, they were projecting a 6,000 student increase, in Area 2 it would be 3,000, and in Area 3 it would be an 8,000 student increase. The growth was a result of not just the rapid housing occupancies but the fact that births had hit the highest level ever. The birth rate was 10,000 per year, and ten years ago this figure was 6,500 per year. This birth rate would affect the elementary schools in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and then those numbers would phase into secondary schools.

Dr. Rohr reported that the Board's recommended FY 1988 capital improvements program, based on the program capacity of 25 to 1 at the elementary level, had only 384 seats available countywide which was less than one percent. He explained that as those higher kindergartens came in, those spaces in some schools would very rapidly start to disappear. While there would be secondary school capacity available in the 1990's, even with no new housing growth as the 10,000 births phase in year after year, the secondary school capacity would also disappear. There was not a lot of ease of reorganizing as the county executive had suggested from intermediate 7-8 to middle school 6-8. It could be done in some clusters right now, but then they would be faced with having to reorganize in several years as the elementary schools fill up and as the middle schools fill up. He explained that they took it literally that the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance said that they had to measure adequately the available capacity which was the basis for the suggestions they made to the Planning Board. They also took it literally that the Annual Growth Policy was the vehicle to link the adequacy of public facilities with the capital improvements program. Mrs. DiFonzo welcomed Mr. Norman Christeller and members of the Planning Board.

Mrs. Crenca stated that it was her understanding that the Council was here to learn and would not get into budget at all. The intent was not to have a debate on growth policy but to share the consensus

reached by the Board with the Council. She appreciated Dr. Rohr's presentation. She reported that the Council had had one hearing on the growth policy, and she wondered if they would be discussing "Test at Permit" or TAP.

Mr. Christeller stated that this had come up in the Education Committee, and he had pointed out that this could not possibly go into effect before January 1 of next year. There would be a task force studying this, and they did not really know how it would apply to schools. He suggested that they concentrate on what they would be adopting July 1.

Dr. Rohr commented that it would depend on the measure of capacity. If the Test at Permit was based on their measure of capacity at the 25 to 1 level, the "go" "no go" decision would be an easier one to make. If it were based on the 30 to 1 recommendation of the county executive, the school system would be limited in its response because they would not have much time.

Mr. Potter thought that the executive's rationale for the 30 to 1 would disappear if they went to Test at Permit because they would not have time to get over the target ratio in one year. He asked how long it would be before 6-8 middle schools were overcrowded if they went in this direction. Dr. Rohr replied that the JIM level would start going up in the next couple of years, but this varied significantly in different areas of the county. Up-county it was growing now, and down-county it would probably be the early 1990's. This would be followed a couple of years later with the increase at the senior high level. Dr. Cronin commented that this required a school by school analysis done year by year.

Mr. Leggett recalled that Mrs. Praisner had indicated that she would respond last week regarding a holding policy for schools when they renovated. Dr. Cody replied that he had sent the Board one way of dealing with that question, but the Board had not had an opportunity to look at that. He noted that these decisions were made with community involvement and choice. He said that in the past, even given available space, the majority of parents preferred to have renovation take place while the students were in the school.

Mr. Leggett thought they would be receiving the policy that would produce the outcome. Dr. Shoenberg replied that the Board did not have a policy. They had tended to try to accommodate the wishes of the community within the availability of their resources. If what the memorandum showed them was that the Council were to decide that the County was unable to bear the additional expense involved in renovating around the students and that they would have to move the students out of the school, they could do this within existing resources. Dr. Cody did not think that issue had been discussed in the context of the Adequate Growth Policy.

Mr. Leggett stated that his other question went to their ability to predict. It appeared to him that they had not had an accurate

prediction in many of the things they had suggested. Based on history, they could be above or below their predictions. He said they had indicated that the methodology by which they made these predictions was sometimes skewed by the information submitted to MCPS staff. Dr. Cody thought that the forecast for the next five years would be more accurate than it was in the last five years. Any forecast was based on an analysis of history plus an anticipation of events that could change those trends. The enrollment for last year and this year as forecasted five years ago was off because there was a continued projection of things slowing down further. However, there had been a drop in interest rates and a growth in the county's population. Right now the forecast they were talking about was based on children already born and living in Montgomery County. A rapid escalation of interest rates and a freezing of construction money could change this.

Mrs. Betty Ann Krahnke reported that in the Planning Board's forecasting document there was a look both forward and backward at population projections. The number of births in the county closely tracked five years later with the number of five year olds, and ten years later with the number of ten year olds, even though they were obviously not the same children. She said that studies showed that all of the things that would change the birth rate had already taken place, and there was nothing to show that there should be any dramatic change in the birth rate.

Mr. Christeller commented that the MCPS analysis of school population involved several different elements. They did a cohort analysis tracking students through the grade levels. The other element was new growth in the county in terms of new developments. The Planning Board made that forecast based on their best judgment of what the market would produce, and they were aware that was subject to business cycle changes. Therefore, that forecast was made with a low, intermediate, and high number. He explained that as they went out in time, the forecasts became more uncertain.

Mrs. DiFonzo stated that another problem was that statistically they knew historically that X-number of children were coming out of a given unit. Historically, a five bedroom house would produce more children than a two bedroom townhouse. However, what they were finding was that two bedroom townhouses were producing three and four youngsters because of the economic picture. Dr. Cronin explained that in order to find out where every child was would require changes in the budget.

Dr. Rohr remarked that he and his staff were working very closely with the Planning Board staff and the county executive's staff on enrollment projections. The MCPS forecasts were based on the intermediate level housing forecasts. At the countywide level, the Planning Board staff agreed with their projections, and he thought that the county executive's staff also agreed. The difficult came when there was an abrupt change in trends. He thought there were enough forces in place right now that they would see a sustained increase in enrollment in Montgomery County for the foreseeable

future because of number of births occurring.

As a long-time member of the Board of Education, Mr. Ewing commented that the state of their sophistication about planning and forecasting had greatly increased over the last ten years. They had far better staff working much more closely with the data and with the Planning Board. They had always done a good job on a countywide basis, and on a smaller basis they were beginning to do a better job.

Mr. Adams stated that some of them were concerned that the cluster proposal might be excessively rigid and the administrative area proposal might be too flexible. Jennifer Andrews of Council staff had suggested using clusters next to clusters. He asked for comments on the middle ground.

Dr. Rohr said that the idea of a cluster of clusters was at the staff level worth exploring. In some ways at the secondary level it might be too restrictive to look at only one high school and one JIM school. At the elementary level, they ranged from three elementaries to eleven elementaries in a cluster. It might be advisable to try to even that out. He thought they had to be careful about expanding it to too many areas, and to assume by doing that they would assure a flexibility they did not really have. The Planning Board staff would have to develop a procedure that would administratively control the procedure.

Dr. Cronin noted that one of the difficulties was that a subdivision might become an attendance island because the school it should go to was overcrowded. Another option was explaining to parents of children already in an elementary school that they they would have to move to accommodate the new subdivision. This could set up a number of hostilities and difficulties within smaller communities.

Dr. Shoenberg said they had to combine any talk about units of a different size with the notion of aggregating capacity K-12. This and the educational implications going along with that were sticking points for the Board of Education. He said that Dr. Rohr had pointed out that today's elementary schools were going to be tomorrow's secondary students. They could not use space in a high school to deal with excess students in an elementary school. If they were going to aggregate capacity K-12, even if they talked about areas of three high school clusters, until that cohort had moved through the elementary schools into the high schools, they were never going to say they could not build because there would always be space if they were going to aggregate capacity K-12. He thought that this was totally unreasonable for a lot of reasons. It was true that they could grade reorganize in some areas once if the community was willing, but they could not flip back and forth every three or four years. There were some clusters such as B-CC where it made no sense to grade reorganize because it would be counter to the thrust of the educational programs.

Dr. Rohr reported that there was an assumption that most of their schools were grade 7-8 intermediates, and it was simple to add the sixth grade. Of the 19 JIM schools, five were already middle schools, eight were currently junior high schools with plans to

convert them to intermediate schools, and six were currently intermediate schools. Dr. Shoenberg added that three of the six schools also had split articulation patterns.

Mr. Leggett commented that if their ability to predict future enrollments turned out to be near their optimistic viewpoints, it should make it easier to predict further into the future so they could make permanent changes on a one time basis. This would allow them to make some realignments and find out non-capital ways to make adjustments without building additional schools. It seemed to him that the ability to predict produced all these non-capital options. Dr. Rohr replied that they were already doing this. For example, the superintendent had a task force involving six high school clusters which was trying to plan for the future. They were looking at the early 1990's to come up with recommendations for some non-capital solutions to take advantage of the availability of space in other areas.

Mrs. Slye stated that Dr. Rohr had done an excellent job of bringing projections and actual enrollments much more closely in line over the past couple of years. On a system-wide basis they came within one percent. When they got down to the smaller areas, they had to look at the cost benefit of how far they were willing to go. For example, were they willing to go into certain neighborhoods and survey the children. This would involve providing the software to do the job and the manpower to complete the job to a degree of accuracy they could not do on a countywide basis.

Mr. Ewing commented that one way they were being creative was planning schools to be partially modular in construction and also to make use of modular additions. He said that some Council members had seen the Gaithersburg modular addition which was very attractive and working very well. Virtually every new elementary school was planned with a modular section. This was also true of the two new high schools. They planned to build a central core capacity which would sustain a larger number of classrooms which could be added in the future. He said that while portables might be adequate, they were not as attractive and were frequently afterthoughts. They were searching for balance between needing to add schools, needing to make boundary changes, and needing portables. They wanted to be flexible, but they did not want to do so much changing that children would be going to another school year after year. They needed to assure the public that the Board was concerned about stability and continuity, too. However, in a fast growing community there did have to be change, but they would like to avoid situations where children went to a different school every year during their elementary school years.

Dr. Cronin stated that if they refined the data and if they had the mechanisms, he could hear one conclusion that the capital budget was a kind of last resort analysis. This would still leave them the flexibility to come back. It would also tend to say that if there were subdivisions that would crowd the schools, the response would not be to adjust and find room. Mr. Leggett thought this would be a

fair assessment. As they refined the data, it would allow them to better predict and adjust on the non-capital side. When they had exhausted that, they would have no other choice but to suggest a capital solution. He remarked that there was a perception that it was not quite that way, and it should be that way. However, all of this was contingent upon their ability to predict and plan.

Dr. Shoenberg stated that the use of capacity really had to do entirely with the secondary schools. They were talking about building only two secondary schools. This would allow some junior high schools to become 7-8 schools, but almost as soon as these schools opened they would be crowded as 7-8 schools. This was true of Banneker and King. Therefore, they had limited flexibility. They did have flexibility in the Richard Montgomery/Rockville area, and Dr. Cody had talked about the group looking at that situation. Once they had found ways of using those schools to relieve some of their overcrowding problem in the surrounding schools, they would have used up their secondary school excess capacity as well. The elementary schools with a couple of exceptions would be barely adequate to get them through the six-year CIP.

Mrs. Crenca said she was aware that boundary changes were really undesirable. She asked whether they had found that when task forces got together there was a tendency to accept boundary changes. Dr. Shoenberg replied that they had never had a task force of this magnitude before. For example, Magruder and Rockville were involved in both task forces studying the situation. He could not think of three cases where a boundary change had been satisfactory to people. He reported that they had done fairly well in the Kensington/Garrett Park area.

Mrs. Crenca asked whether other jurisdictions had the same problem. Dr. Rohr replied that it was universally true. Mrs. DiFonzo said that in speaking with Board members from other places, people became attached to their schools. They felt ownership of that school, and when an attempt was made to move them to schools which might be just as good, they feared the unknown. Mr. Ewing commented that where there was rapid growth, people were eager to have their new school and were willing to go to the new school. People were concerned when a school was being closed or when boundaries were being changed in an established neighborhood. However, when they had been pushed into making boundary changes, they found that people adjusted. Dr. Shoenberg added that they were now starting to get complaints from people who were being asked to go to new schools.

Mr. Subin commented that it was mostly the parents that had the pain of redrawing the boundaries and not the students. His daughter had gone through two elementary changes, and the students had lived through it. He recalled that ten years ago the Board had had a task force on school boundaries. They had cited Regulation 265-1 which talked about changes in boundaries as "reducing crowding, better utilizing available classrooms, and establishing attendance areas." That same task force said, "a countywide reassessment of boundary changes should be made periodically." He asked what had happened in the ten intervening years. He said that what he was hearing now was

that if they went through boundary changes, the sky would fall. Mr. Ewing did not think that was what the Board was saying. He was saying that boundary change was traumatic for the people involved in it. If there were options to help them avoid that as the first choice, they should pursue those options. This led them to modular construction and other kinds of flexibility. He noted that they had made boundary changes every year, and from 1977 to 1983 there were hundreds of boundary changes. In fact, they initiated boundary changes in 1983 primarily for the purpose of improving the success of integration efforts. In addition, every time they opened a new school they made boundary changes.

Mr. Subin asked if boundary changes had been done to relieve overcrowding from one existing school to another school where there was underutilization. He was not talking about school closures or opening a new school. Mr. Ewing replied that they had. Mrs. Slye added that the Board had done that in the past. She reported that there was a particular area where the boundaries of B-CC and Walter Johnson met, where the assignments had been changed many times over the years by virtue of that type of dynamic. However, one problem with that kind of approach was that inevitably in certain areas they ended up moving the same population. Mrs. DiFonzo added that in the fifteen years she had lived in her home, the feeder pattern had changed five times in the Flower Valley/North Lake area. Families actually had children graduating from three different high schools.

Dr. Cronin recalled a presentation Ann Briggs had done last year for the Council which addressed some of this issue. He said that assertion seemed to be that there was an underenrolled school and an overenrolled school, and the Board was requesting capital construction for the overenrolled school. Mrs. Briggs had shown a cluster of ten or twelve schools showing all of the factors affecting decision making. The facilities plan required staff to look at boundary changes as one of their considerations. That assertion he had stated previously was not a true assertion for Montgomery County. Dr. Rohr reported that they would be opening a new school up-county on Goshen Road between Emory Grove Road and Snouffer School Road. On the east side of this area, students attended four different elementary schools because it was necessary to take advantage of the availability of space in nearby schools. This created attendance islands to take students to schools where space was available. In the up-county this had been the practice until the growth reached the magnitude that it was now.

Mr. Goldensohn pointed out that there were dozens and dozens of children in the county who had been moved four times in six years which was ridiculous. The modular approach gave them a flexibility which made up for any errors in the number of projects. For example, they were planning a school up-county that would be all-modular. In another instance, they were uncertain whether a school would need modulars but for a very few dollars they were able to add that capability to the plans. He thought that modular construction would be a saving grace for the future so that they would not have a

continuous parade of new school requests. In regard to the area going to four different elementary schools, he said that this community was annoyed because on the road to the school with excess capacity they passed six other elementary schools. He said they were making up for mistakes in the past, and as a member of the Board he had a stronger faith in the numbers coming out now and in the current staff.

Dr. Cronin hoped that Council realized that they had a rational planning process worked out with the Park and Planning Commission in an attempt to be as accurate as they could. They would take every step possible before they came to the Council for capital funding. He felt that the Board of Education needed to be a part of the planning process so that growth did not overtake them.

Mr. Ewing hoped that the Council would look carefully at the proposal for state rated capacity versus 25 to 1. He felt very strong that the Council had been supportive of the Board's efforts to try to work on the issue of class size, and with the help of the Council, he hoped they could make more improvements. If the Council supported 25 to 1, it seemed to him that was the only figure that really made any sense in terms of an adequate growth policy.

Mr. Hanna stated that if they wanted a good educational policy and if their interest was in building schools as they were needed, the best thing they could do would be to not attempt to have a shot gun marriage of land use policy and school policy.

Mr. Gudis remarked that eight years ago he had asked the school Board and the Council to consider a liaison between the two agencies to participate in fiscal planning because he had foreseen that they had a problem. To date, that had not been done. He thought the time was right to really consider this because there were so many overlapping topics dealing with schools and budgets on which they had to have a better relationship from a fiscal standpoint. He thought they should push for getting that done.

Mrs. DiFonzo thanked the Council members and hoped that the meeting had been productive.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The vice president adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

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VICE PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

WSC:mlw