

APPROVED  
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Rockville, Maryland  
May 18, 1992

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Monday, May 18, 1992, at 7:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL      Present: Mrs. Catherine Hobbs, President  
                  in the Chair  
                  Mrs. Frances Brenneman  
                  Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo  
                  Mr. Blair G. Ewing  
                  Mrs. Carol Fanconi

Absent: Dr. Alan Cheung  
          Ms. Ana Sol Gutierrez  
          Mr. Shervin Pishevar

Others Present: Dr. Paul L. Vance, Superintendent  
                  Dr. H. Philip Rohr, Deputy  
                  Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian  
                  Mr. Jonathan Sims, Board Member-elect

Re: ANNOUNCEMENT

Mrs. Hobbs announced that Mr. Pishevar was ill, Dr. Cheung was out of town, and Ms. Gutierrez had a previous commitment.

Re: MEETING WITH MCCPTA

Mrs. Hobbs welcomed members of MCCPTA. She assumed that they would be reviewing the MCCPTA budget resolutions and focusing on user fees and the budget process.

Mrs. Sharon Friedman, president of MCCPTA, stated that she had reflected on the final Council budget actions. It seemed to her that the Council was hearing from citizens who wanted to be sure that if taxes were raised that county services would be as efficient and effective as they could be. There had been a change this year in the way government was examined, and there was a lot more to be done. She remarked that all people committed to public education needed to send signals that the public schools were as efficient as they could be but that MCPS was willing to consider change. She agreed that they should focus this evening on a change in the budget process and on user fees.

Mrs. Friedman said that in conversations with Council members there seemed to be a real willingness of their part to consider change. She wanted to address the ways in which they could be sure the budget process was as efficient and effective as it could be. One way to do this was to make sure that information

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was out in the community as soon as possible. Another way was to assure people that all the things important to the school system were the priorities used in setting the funding for the budget. She asked that the Board consider coming together with MCCPTA, Council members, and the representatives of the county executive in a worksession at the end of June. In regard to user fees, this issue was bigger than just user fees for MCPS.

Mrs. Friedman noted that Mr. Ewing had introduced two motions on long-range planning and resource allocations, and MCCPTA would like to see these addressed in the total picture of the budget process. They wanted the public to see that they had a plan for the coming year, and Mr. Ewing's issues were of tremendous importance to MCCPTA. She called attention to the work that her group was doing with the chambers of commerce. The Chamber had sent the Board a letter in which they talked about tying the budget to fiscal realities. In addition to these issues, they would like to talk about the Board's budget resolution of 1990 at the Board/Council/MCCPTA/Executive retreat.

Mrs. Hobbs asked whether the County Council and county executive had reacted favorably to the idea of a retreat, and Mrs. Friedman replied that they were starting with the Board to get their views. If the Board agreed with the idea, she would start making inquiries of the county government; however, several Council members had already indicated their desire to meet to address some of these issues after this year's budget process. She pointed out that Dr. Vance had already initiated a group of individuals to begin an alliance for education in Montgomery County and among that membership were both critics of and advocates for MCPS. These people did have in common their commitment to public education. In light of shrinking resources and an increasingly diverse student body, they all had to convince the public they were doing things the best way they knew how.

Mrs. Diane Kartalia, MCCPTA budget chairperson, asked for Dr. Vance's views on the FY 1993 budget process. Dr. Vance said he would prefer to complete the process before commenting; however, he strongly supported the initiative to take a hard look at long-range planning. He pointed out that they had a history of supporting multi-year initiatives, but they were unable to continue that support this year. He did like the idea of a retreat because they might eventually get to the realities of future budgets. He agreed that they had to have a broader constituency intimately involved.

Mrs. Hobbs commented that she had already marked the retreat on her calendar, and from conversations with Bruce Adams, she thought the Council would be receptive to the idea.

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Mr. Ewing remarked that it was always desirable to have opportunities to talk about procedural and substantive matters, and he hoped they could do both. He would be a little concerned if they just talked about process. He felt it was important to reach agreement before the retreat on the outcomes expected, whether it be just discussion or areas for resolution. It seemed to him that it was important to talk about long-range planning in this context, and he hoped that the Board would take action on his proposals in the near future. At the retreat, he hoped that the Board would not be the target of everyone's unhappiness. It was important for the Board and Council to enter into the process with the understanding that this was not the setting to express discontent but to think about what could be done to make the process more effective and efficient. Mrs. Friedman indicated that they had talked about advance planning for the retreat. She thought that when they came together for this retreat there would be discussion and some outcomes, but there would not be agreement on all issues.

Mrs. Fanconi pointed out that some Board members would be out of town the night before the date of the retreat. She was pleased that MCCPTA saw this as a cooperative process of working together. She pointed out that the Board operated under state law which provided a check and balance with Council actions. She knew that they would have to deal with user fees, and she was very anxious about that issue. She pointed out that the Board could not charge for certain services because of the law, and she would welcome a dialogue on this issue.

Mr. Ed Silverstein commented that MCCPTA was well aware of the processes the Board and Council were required to go through, but they wanted to explore how to make this process more effective and less hostile to everyone. Their concern about user fees went beyond the MCPS budget, and as advocates for children they wanted to look at all budget areas where there might be an impact on children.

Mrs. Brenneman agreed that they had to be careful to examine the process and not mix that with disagreements about views held by individuals. Mr. Silverstein thought they should not get into substance at the retreat because of the emotionalism involved. Mrs. Brenneman agreed that they needed to look at the process and the checks and balances.

Mr. Tom Hill reported that in his cluster they were reaching out beyond parents to the business community which had its own perception of the school system and county government. They had done a lot of discussing this year, and they needed to get to the point where they had common goals so that they wouldn't battle back and forth with no clear vision for education. He assumed they were facing a taxpayer revolt in November, and he was hearing that people would vote for it unless they saw change.

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Mr. Silverstein explained that a lot of what they were talking about was how the budget was actually developed. He thought they should not start out with same services but rather at zero and build up every year with justifications for programs. He also thought that the superintendent should get earlier input from MCCPTA and the clusters. Mr. Claude Matsui explained that they were not criticizing decisions made in the past, but rather they were talking about how to move forward. He felt that the school system had a lot of different initiatives that could be rolled together for efficiency.

Mr. Terry Roche said that they were in agreement that this year was not fair for anyone and that long-range planning was a good thing. They were at a juncture, and the Board had the last act to play in the FY 1993 budget. Soon they would be in negotiations followed by contracts for FY 1994 and beyond. They had Success for Every Student, and a lot of that planning should be finished by July with implementation to follow which involved shifting dollars for training, awards, and stipends; however, he had not seen these in the FY 1993 budget. He wondered why they needed a task force to look at what happened beyond June, and he wondered why they couldn't start now. Mr. Ewing pointed out that the Board had yet to agree it wanted to do long-range planning. This item had not been scheduled, and the Board had to vote on it.

Ms. Linda Lang sensed a need for a retreat because they had to look at the issue of substance versus process. They had a population that saw taxes as involuntary charitable contributions. They had to move forward so that the community would see all of them working together -- the PTA, the Council, and the Board. They had to say they had to make decisions, and these were their priorities. There was a real need for positive public relations to come out of a meeting such as this. There was a lot of anxiety out in the community, and the community was waiting for a sense of motion. She pointed out that people had short memories, and they were beginning to settle for less. A taxpayer revolt would force them to settle for even less. One of the greatest problems was that the Board could not talk about program delivery because of the \$43 million in contract funds. The relationships with the unions seemed to get in the way of progress when they were trying to design a system. During a retreat they could have a serious discussion of how to utilize community energies. This had to be something more than just a task force. If they did not come together, things would fall apart in November.

Mr. Ewing explained that in proposing the resolution it was his intent to respond to MCCPTA's initiatives and to get on with what the Board said it would do in January, 1991. The proposal he had made was not like any other task force, and he would like the Board to vote on this as soon as possible.

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Mrs. DiFonzo remarked that the Board was well aware of how she felt about Saturday meetings, and in any event she had a commitment on June 27. She was reluctant to participate in Saturday functions, and she would rather see this held in an evening. She was not opposed to a retreat, and as the Board's representative to the collective bargaining group she would be coming to the retreat with a slightly different view. She would like to know what outcomes they expected from the retreat. Would they be talking about the process or the budget outcome? She thought the Council was concerned about outcomes, and perhaps they should be talking about a budget timeline. The big red flag to her was "operating budget and related issues." They had to recognize the statutory privileges given to an elected Board of Education. She would be concerned if the retreat were held out of the public's eye, and she pointed out that the Board had taken some criticism for holding meetings on Saturdays.

Mrs. Friedman explained that the letter before the Board was a general one, and they would have more specifics. Related issues might include user fees, a task force on the allocation of resources, and a task force on long-range planning. They did not foresee this as solving all problems. They could come up with lots of reasons for not beginning a dialogue, but if they didn't begin now they would have a repeat performance next year. This was not going to go away, and the public had to see them trying to make a start.

Mrs. Fanconi said she would like to have a dialogue on their priorities and the importance of services to children. These were things they had not worked out as a community. The Board was not practiced in cutting budgets, and they still had some difficult decisions to make. They had to cut \$1.6 million more out of administration. She pointed out that if they had more task forces there would be an impact on a reduced staff. She knew they had had to set aside some things because they had limited staff. For example, the area offices would not exist in their present form, and the area offices were instrumental in community contacts. They had already cut 18 percent from administration and now they were asked to cut \$1.6 million more. She pointed out that they were looking into TQM but most of that was data driven, and the \$1.6 million reduction impacted the people doing the data collection. She encouraged MCCPTA to have some understanding of what these reductions meant to Board members.

Mrs. Friedman asked whether the Board wanted to proceed with the retreat. Mr. Sims commented that students were sharing frustrations regarding the reductions and fees. If the Board went further in this direction, it was essential to send a message that these fees were temporary sources of revenue. It was a temporary way of finding money to continue some of the services that make MCPS one of the best school systems. While he

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agreed they must involve the business community, he pointed out that they had an untapped resource -- the students. He would make the effort to get more student involvement, and he would like to sit down and discuss this with MCCPTA.

Mr. John Taylor commented that in this economic climate the school system had to do business differently. They had to look at what they had and how they could best deliver services. They should take a positive approach and concentrate on what they had rather than what they didn't have. Mrs. Fanconi felt that the Board was doing just that at every Board meeting. She believed this was a very productive Board which was looking at how the system was run. Mr. Hill suggested that this might be the time to reach out to the business community. He knew that the Board had lots of task forces and committees, and he would like to get a list of what the task forces they had and what their areas of responsibility were.

Mr. Ewing said that they had to realize that everyone was a bit shell-shocked. While they all knew that things were likely to get better, there was no assurance that they would ever recover from these cutbacks. The fact was they had to learn to do with less, and in the process of doing this they had to keep the channels of communication open. If they didn't, the avoidance syndrome would set in and they would never resolve their differences. He felt that they had to have ground rules and clarity about expectations before they had the retreat. Later on if the situation became less tense, they could have a more free wheeling discussion.

Mrs. Fanconi thought that the school system was still doing a good job of educating children. People were anxious because they believed the quality of education was eroding, and it had to be pointed out that MCPS was still doing exceedingly well. Mrs. Carol Jarvis pointed out that the general public had not felt the cuts in the school system, and because MCPS was coping so well, they thought that the school system had not been cut enough. The public saw the headlines about employee raises, and their feeling was that the Board of Education and the County Council had not made much of an effort to cut back. This would lead to the taxpayer revolt; therefore, it was essential for all of them to start trusting each other and working together. Mrs. Mary Ann Bowen agreed that the retreat had to be focused, and she suggested that the MCCPTA budget committee meet with the Board officers to share suggestions.

Mrs. Brenneman asked about the participation of the unions in the retreat, and Mrs. Friedman felt that it should be just MCCPTA, the Board, Council, and county executive's staff. Mrs. Brenneman said she would have to think about participating in a Saturday retreat; however, she was not giving them a yes or a no but rather a "maybe."

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Mrs. Hobbs pointed out that several Board members were absent and should be given an opportunity to consider this invitation. She thought that they could work out the details and the date for the retreat. Mrs. Friedman thanked the Board for the opportunity to discuss these issues.

## Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

PLV:mlw