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TEXT:

Mrs. Gloria Martin-Pressman, second vice president, reported that her responsibilities included supervising the area vice presidents and managing the delegate assemblies which were held once a month except for December. The purpose of the assemblies was to educate, inform, and provide a forum for representatives of the locals to vote on issues and disseminate information to the locals. This year they had done or would do assemblies on multicultural diversity, parent involvement, site-based management, and curriculum. They had received tremendous support from MCPS.

Mr. Ed Silverstein, area vice president, said that his job was to act as a liaison between the clusters and area office and Rockville. The area vice presidents also brought the various clusters together. He noted that Area 1 had the broadest range with students with the lowest income and students with the highest income in the county. They had schools with the least amount of subsidized school lunch, and they had schools with the highest amount of subsidized school lunch. They had schools with the highest minority percentage and schools with the lowest minority percentage. Because of the area reorganization, they had taken some time to get to know one another. He regretted that MCPS was facing another reorganization because his five clusters would like to stay together.

Mrs. Marilyn Van Degrift, area vice president, noted that Area 2 was formed out of three administrative areas, and they, too, had been getting to know each other. Area 2 contained a lot of older neighborhoods that had not turned over yet, and enrollment was still decreasing in schools. There were a number of schools in each of the clusters where staff had been there for quite a while. She thought it would be difficult to project into the future because of the budget, and she wondered how they were going to educate these students with their very diverse needs.

Mrs. Bea Gordon, area vice president, reported that Area 4 had started off focusing on human relations. In October, there were meetings with the clusters attended by the area vice presidents, Dr. Villani, psychologists, and PPW's. This gave everyone an opportunity to become acquainted with MCCPTA and the area office. One of the most exciting things they got to do was to assist in forming a new PTA at Springbrook ES #8. With their human relations focus, they had assisted the local PTA human relations chairs with activities. She had provided the Board with copies of the Area 4 human relations model which she hoped would lead to active human relations committees in every PTA in the county. Mrs. Mary Ann Bowen, area vice president, stated that they liked the four-area model because it meant dealing with only five clusters which resulted in better communication.

Mr. Silverstein stated that while they understood the Board's budget problems, they believed that they would not be able to function as an organization with less than three areas. Mrs. Mallon added that as they viewed the school system, anything less than three areas was really not workable. They had to consider socioeconomic and racial balance among the areas. Parents thought that having four areas had worked very well because it was possible to have personal contacts with the offices and the area superintendents. Mrs. Mallon complimented the four associates for their cooperative attitudes with the PTA.

Mrs. Ginny Donahue, area vice president, pointed out that if people visited the area offices they would realize these people were working very hard. She did not know how MCPS could do without the area offices. Mr. Ewing stated for the record that reductions were not made because the Board thought the areas were not working. Mrs. Mallon remarked that if MCPS did not have area offices, MCCPTA would continue with the area vice presidents on a geographic basis.

Dr. Pitt commented that if they reduced staff they would not be able to do all the things they did before. If they reduced administration more than they had, there would be a different level of support. The new superintendent would have to look at different ways of organizing the school system.

Dr. Cheung asked about the implications of school-based management on MCCPTA. Mrs. Mallon did not see any impact on MCCPTA. Dr. Cheung stated that when they had school-based management, the responsibility would be pushed to the school level. Parents, teachers, and the principal would have more responsibility and authority to implement programs. Dr. Pitt explained that one of the problems was that people thought they could get rid of all the structure and let the schools run themselves. The point was that there had to be a structure to give direction and support to the schools. Somebody had to evaluate and make judgments about principals. The idea of school-based management was to allow more flexibility at the local level under some kind of umbrella. Dr. Pitt reported that a lot of people believed that site-based management was an easy way to save money, and while there was value in flexibility at the local level, it was not going to save a lot of money.

Mr. Silverstein indicated that from their perspective each school had an autonomous PTA which operated within the local community and worked with the principal and staff at the school. MCCPTA served as an umbrella organization for all of the autonomous PTA's. He did not think that site-based management would affect them structurally. Mrs. Mallon commented that they could not look to site-based management as a cure for budgetary problems.

Mrs. Bowen added that the local school autonomy in the PTA had not done away with middle level management. In fact, in the PTA structure they had added cluster coordinators to take care of that middle level management. Dr. Pitt remarked that the school system needed to retain the cluster organization which was K-12. This was very critical to him.

Mrs. Charlotte Joseph, area vice president, commented that while they had a cluster coordinator role in the capital budget process, they did not have this role for the operating budget. In January after the superintendent presented his budget, they reacted. In March, they defended the budget before the County Council. This year they would be reacting after the final Council action. She suggested they needed an earlier involvement of the PTA. She thought that after the Maryland School Performance reports came out in March, schools could begin thinking of their need for resources for the coming year. As resources were shrinking, there was a need to be clearer about community involvement. If they had community involvement over a longer period of time, they could promote a better defense of school system priorities.

Mr. Ewing reported that they did vote to make some changes in the budget process for the next year. The public would have a document similar to "Choices" which would lay out some of the options. There would be an opportunity to comment on that. He suggested that the Board provide MCCPTA with a description of the new budget process. Mrs. Joseph stated that "Choices" was only one part of this. The second part was letting the public know the Board's criteria for its priorities for resources at the school level. Mr. Ewing replied that the Board would publish a document that was more than an outline of choices. It would be a description of programs, program progress, and the reasons why they had these programs. He felt that it would address some, if not all, of her concerns.

Mrs. Fanconi stated that first of all they had to see whether they had the money to do this. Then they had to develop a process around this. She asked whether televising the Board meetings should be high on the Board's priorities or whether they should think about cutting this. Mrs. Joseph replied that she would be a strong proponent for continuing the cablecasting of Board meetings. Mrs. Martin-Pressman felt that a lot of people were watching Board meetings. In addition, they were reaching people who would not normally attend meetings.

Mr. Silverstein said that a question was raised about whether the school system prepared budgets more than one year in advance. He liked the way that Dr. Pitt had been looking at goals in the recommended budget. Even if they changed the budget process, Mr.

Silverstein felt they needed to continue looking ahead over several years. It needed to be publicized because people did not realize the school system was projecting budgets. Mr. Ewing reported that at its January retreat the Board indicated that it wanted to do long-range planning for the budget.

Dr. Pitt stated that in the last five years the Board has had a five-year program, and he thought they had moved toward those goals. This year they would move backwards in a lot of those areas. He said that the Board had moved toward early childhood education and having supports in schools. Capital budget projects tended to extend over more than one year. It would be ideal to fund an operating budget over more than one year so that they would know how much money was available for the following year. He believed that the county had changed somewhat and they were much more real estate driven than they had been in the past economically. He also believed that their potential for planning over a period of time was going to be very limited. He thought they should work toward a state planning effort to stabilize the budget process over a two-year period.

It seemed to Mrs. Mallon that what was important was a good working relationship between the PTA's and the Board of Education. They were all here for one purpose, and that was the children and their needs. She pointed out that PTA members gave freely of their time, and many times they felt frustrated because they were not thanked. She commented that just working with the parent community was not enough for education. They had to reach out to the business community as well and tell them why it was important to support public education. They also needed to cultivate people who did not have children in the school system anymore, but lots of them did have grandchildren in the system. She pointed out that only 25 percent of the population had children in the public schools.

Mrs. Bowen said PTA's were talking about the issue of renovations and modernizations and what the Council did on the capital budget. Communities needed to know how the Board was going to address the process. Mr. Ewing replied that the Council had not yet acted on this; however, they were expected to act on it this week. Mrs. DiFonzo commented that the reality was the Board did not have a position on whether to accept the generic PDF or not.

She had real problems with this, and for six years she had argued against this. She thought it was an abrogation of the Council's responsibilities because they had to approve or disapprove of each PDF. Mrs. Fanconi agreed with Mrs. DiFonzo and indicated she had a problem with this. She thought that because Council members were now elected from districts there would be a problem if a Council member's district did not get a particular community project.

It seemed to Mr. Ewing that if the Council said that the job was the Board's that was good. The Board would then have the responsibility to do what it thought was most important. The danger was that the Council would give with one hand and take away with the other. Dr. Pitt pointed out that the Council was the ultimate funding authority. It was easy for a Council to not fully fund the projects and to not accept responsibility for that decision.

Mr. Ewing thanked the MCCPTA leadership for their views and participation.

Re: THE FISCAL CRISIS AND THE BUDGET
PROCESS

Dr. Pitt described the revenue deficit projections and the various operating budget levels facing the Board of Education. The Board would have to take action on a non-recommended list of cuts totaling almost \$65 million at its March 25 meeting to meet the spending affordability guideline set by the County Council. He pointed out that the school system had made strides over the past few years but that the projected budget would have a devastating effect on MCPS at a time when they were adding 5,000 students and when their student population was becoming more diverse.

Mr. Ewing asked for suggestions from the audience and for comments on a paper he had prepared on the fiscal crisis and the need for concerted action. Dr. Kenneth Muir suggested that the Board release its list of nonrecommended cuts prior to the County Council public hearing on March 25. Mr. Ewing explained that the list had been held confidential because there were a number of items that impacted the negotiated agreements. Board members discussed releasing the list, and the majority decided that the list should not be released until the Board had taken action.

Dr. Pitt hoped that they did not see testimony before the County Council as the end of the process of defending the Board's budget. They had to make a concerted effort to get to Council members, both publicly and privately, over the next several weeks. Audience members suggested getting out the word about potential cuts directly affecting children, so that the average parent would understand the crisis and respond. They had to send a clear signal to parents and the community and had to avoid sending mixed messages not easily understood. Audience members reiterated the need for a fact sheet that could be distributed to the community. Mr. Ewing explained the danger in releasing the proposed list of cuts because people would think it was recommended and because the list contained more cuts than

necessary.

Audience members stressed the need to focus on an approach to the budget crisis. A way had to be developed to involve business and the chambers of commerce. Board members thought that the average citizen did not grasp the effect of cuts of the magnitude of \$82 million, and audience members pointed out that while organizations could testify on budget impacts, the Council needed to hear from the rank and file. These citizens needed specific information because they could go only so far on emotion. A suggestion was made to approach citizens on the value of an outstanding school system on their lives. The strength of the school system attracted people to the county and raised the value of property which was an appeal that could be made to people not having school-aged children. Mr. Silverstein pointed out that the important issue was that three restrictive resolutions were rejected by the electorate and only one-third of the citizens voted in the last election. Of that one-third, only 58 percent supported Question F. The fact that only one-sixth of the voters supported Question F had to get out to the general public. He suggested they not get bogged down in minutia and focus on the need for a strong school system in Montgomery County.

Mr. Keith Prouty stated that the key number was seven because seven of nine Council members had to vote to override Question F. They had to realize that the override was needed not just for the school system but for the county as a whole. Citizens had to combat the effects of the taxpayers group and show that there was support for overriding Question F and a willingness to pay more taxes to maintain the quality of life in the county. The sooner they launched this campaign, the better off they would be. Mr. Vincent Foo, president of MCCSSE, reported that five Council members now appeared to be in favor of overriding Question F. They had to work on the remaining Council members and get them to override and increase revenue by the largest possible amount.

Mrs. Fanconi pointed out that they also had to look toward Annapolis and keep on top of what was happening there to protect Montgomery County interests. They also had to build a case for administrators and get the word out on how further cuts in administration would impair their ability to help teachers deliver on the Maryland School Performance Program, new curriculum needs, and the Gordon recommendations. She pointed out that in the past two years they had cut administration by 12 percent, and any further cuts in the central office would affect payroll, finance, procurement, federal reporting guidelines, curriculum support, etc. They needed to provide specific descriptions of a classroom and what would happen if the \$84 million cut became a reality. They also had to point out the importance of education to society as well as look at other

county cuts affecting services to children.

Mr. Gene Thirolf said that people had to testify that they were willing to pay more taxes if services were maintained. The Board and the school system had to be more aggressive and show how the schools would be significantly worse next year if the cuts came to pass.

Mrs. Brenneman thought that everyone was preaching to the choir, and the Board and the audience were in agreement. Mr. Thirolf reported that Save Our Services was actively enlisting support, and he had heard that students would be circulating their own petitions. Mr. Chang said that a lot of students would be willing to help, and they could use the students and the PTA to inform citizens. He agreed that they should look at using students as resources.

Mrs. Friedman reported that they had had a meeting on Thursday evening and had sent the participants off with a package of information and a sample petition and letter to the County Council. Mr. Ewing had seen a sample package and thought it was well done. He pointed out that while the Board had not been silent on the budget, they did not want to alienate the Council or the county executive. They had to begin by recognizing the economic crisis faced by the county and make it clear what they wanted to happen and why. The Board would continue to inform the PTA and community leaders about the situation. He had had letters published in the press, and he suggested that citizens try to get more letters to the editor in the Washington POST which was read by most people in the county. He cautioned that they had to be careful to maintain a unified front because conflicting concerns would cause confusion and might result in a loss for everyone. He agreed that after March 25 the Board had to take a more aggressive stance than it had to date.

Mr. Ewing pointed out that the Board had voted unanimously to support tax increases. He had written to the Montgomery County delegation in support of increased taxes at the state level, and he hoped that members of the audience would contact their delegates and senators. He believed that if the Council and legislature got the message that people wanted their taxes to increase, they would support that increase. They had to keep the pressure on the Council to override Question F. He thanked the members of the audience for their advice.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 10 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

HP:mlw