

BOARDROOM CHATTER

PUBLICATION PREPARED BY: THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Board of Education

Mr. Robert Farrell, President
Dr. David Bohn, Vice President
Mrs. Tammy Fraley
Mr. Wayne Foote
Mrs. Debra Frank
Dr. David Cox, Superintendent
Ms. Eesha Bokil, SMOB

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Recognition of Jesse Fresh as Class 1A/2A State Wrestling Champion

The school board, along with Mountain Ridge High School principal Danny Carter, recognized Jesse Fresh as the Class 1A/2A State Wrestling Champion for the 106 lb. weight class this year. Jesse is a junior at Mountain Ridge with a record of 34-4. The 1A/2A class includes a total of 88 schools statewide. Mountain Ridge's head wrestling coach is Allan Twigg.

Emergency Radio Communication System Report

Mrs. Nil Grove, ACPS Chief IT Officer, updated the school board on a new transportation radio system. The Maryland First Responder Radio System Team (FiRST) is a statewide APCO Project 25 Phase II 700 MHz trunked Land Mobile Radio system with encryption capabilities for public safety. This system is designed to provide radio communication across the entire state. When complete, a public safety official located at Deep Creek Lake can talk with their counterparts in Ocean City. The system will also provide air to ground channels for public safety flight operations. This digital system has far reaching capacity to assist with areas like Westernport, Lonaconing, George's Creek and Mt. Savage.

There is no charge for maintenance or use by the County or State to the school board, and the County will allow riding on the system at no charge. Towers are maintained and provided by the State. The County, also free of charge, provides the current system; however, it uses analog signals, not the 700 MHz frequencies. The radios are much older with no capability to get repair parts or service. The school board has utilized this system since 2014. The only used parts available are on eBay.

Outside vendor systems area available, but can only maintain an analog system with the same repair parts, if available. ACPS may have service in West Virginia, but that would be an additional fee for use on those towers, which is a 6-tower system.

The cost for ACPS to upgrade transportation radios is approximately \$500,000.

Legislative Update

Dr. Cox provided the school board with the following legislative updates:

- ACPS is closely monitoring the legislation submitted regarding recommendations on the Kirwan Commission as the requirements of this could have budgetary implications.
- The minimum wage bill was voted into law. At the present time, the only budgetary impact that will have on ACPS is on substitutes. All current permanent employees are above the minimum wage increase.
- ACPS is closely monitoring a number of bills relating to school safety and SROs.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approve minutes for February 19, 2019, meeting.
2. Receive routine personnel actions for the period of February 1-28, 2019.
3. Receive school construction/maintenance report for the period of February 1-28, 2019.
4. Receive information technology report for the period of February 1-28, 2019.
5. Receive monthly financial report for February 2019.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Consider Approval of FY2020 Superintendent's Operating Budget

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, updated the school board on the FY2020 Superintendent's Operating Budget. The original budget shortfall was \$1,535,534. The school board then voted 3-2 at their last meeting to remove the addition

of five teachers to reduce class sizes for a savings of \$350,000. Therefore, the revised asked from the County after the March 12th meeting was \$1,185,534. Several considerations and impacts have yet again altered the budget request since then, and they are as follows:

- Received MSDE update of actual disproportionality impact for Special Education resulting in a \$40,599 savings
- Confirmed via MSDE documentation that Behavioral Specialists can be grant-funded from disproportionality impact of PassThrough grant resulting in a \$140,000 savings
- Received ACR grant confirmation to assist with 2020 ALL classrooms resulting in a \$75,000 savings
- Opportunity to request a budget amendment to purchase Market Street generator with FY2019 funds vs. FY2020 budget for a \$100,000 savings
- Fixed charges impact from salary reductions for a savings of \$42,182

The revised additional request over Maintenance of Effort to County Government for FY2020 would be \$787,753. MOE was adjusted by \$310,000. Therefore, the total FY2020 unrestricted budget would be 2.2% over FY2019.

Other FY2020 budget considerations include the following:

- Healthcare costs still remain a concern, as ACPS has seen an increase in large claims this fiscal year. However, they are still trending well compared to the FY2019 budget.
- Negotiations are ongoing with all bargaining units.
- There has been a shift in the rank and make up of some Title I schools that may have staffing implications within those schools.
- From a legislative standpoint, PSSAM and MABE are monitoring several bills that could potentially impact school system finances.

A motion was made, as a result of the significant savings since the March 12th meeting, to add back into the FY2020 the five teacher positions in an effort to reduce class sizes. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Consideration of Selection of Legal Counsel

The school board voted 3-2 to retain the firm of Geppert, McMullen, Paye and Getty as permanent legal counsel. The school board interviewed two candidates prior to the Open Session. School board member, Tammy Fraley, made a motion to approve Gary Hanna as legal counsel, and Mrs. Frank seconded that motion. That motion did not pass in a 3-2 vote. Before casting a final vote to approve the second candidate, school board member Deb Frank read a statement from the

CONSTITUENTS' COMMENTS

Mrs. Kim Sloane, President of ACEA

Mrs. Sloane had planned to address the school board to share her members' disappointment at the removal of five potential teachers in the FY2020 budget. Since the vote to add them back in for consideration by the County, she was pleased that the budget could now meet the need for increased counselors, mental health services, and special education services.

Mr. Evan West, UniServe Director of ACEA

Mr. West also thanked the school board for making an encouraging step in the right direction by adding back the five teaching positions into the FY2020 budget. He hopes that they will continue to move in the right direction, especially as it relates to the Maryland Blueprint for Education, which offers unique opportunities to compensate educators as professionals and for reducing special education costs across the state. There is money available to Allegany County in the form of a salary enhancement grant; however, requirements must be met in year one to continue to be eligible in year two. Mr. West is hopeful that the school board will do what is necessary to show educators that they work they do as professionals is valued and respected.

Mrs. Carmen Jackson, President Local Branch of NAACP

Mrs. Jackson addressed the school board requesting more transparency regarding the selection process for the interim legal counsel as well as the 3-2 vote to hire the interim legal counsel. She also requested transparency as it relates to legal fees. Mrs. Jackson would like the public to be able to see a comparison between the legal fees from former school board attorney, Gary Hanna, and the new interim firm of Geppert, McMullen, Paye and Getty.

Mrs. Pat Nordstrom, Constituent

Mrs. Nordstrom noted that since she began attending school board meetings in January she has noticed very worrisome behavior, specifically by the three-member alliance. She indicated that it was clear that they objected to policies that may not even have existed. She was happy to see the five potential teacher positions added back into the FY2020 budget. Mrs. Nordstrom is troubled that board members aren't offering any criteria or rationale for the proposals and decisions being made, and noted that they don't seem to be based on factual information. She concluded by stating that she was unhappy that the school board president and vice president hadn't attended a new board member training.

NEW BUSINESS CONT.

local Ethics Panel that indicated that school board president, Mr. Robert Farrell, and school board member, Mr. Wayne Foote, should recuse themselves from voting on this issue, as it is a conflict of interest. Mr. Farrell is currently in litigation against the school board and Dr. Cox, and Mr. Foote is in legal matters regarding the State Board of Education's recent decision to have him removed for inappropriate behavior. Nonetheless, the vote was held and passed in favor of Geppert, McMullen, Paye and Getty, also 3-2.

Consideration of First Reading of School Safety and Security Policy (File: ECAE) Revision

This policy was tabled at the last meeting so that the Superintendent and legal counsel could have the opportunity to meet as well as to share a draft with the policy committee. The school board unanimously approved the first reading of the above policy with a recommendation from Mrs. Fraley to include a clarification about job duties and an explanation of the need for and purpose of the policy. The purpose listed in the initial draft of the policy states "To provide safe, orderly, and caring learning environments in which all students feel comfortable in adherence to the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018."

Vote to Meet in Executive Session on April 9, 2019, as Necessary

The school board voted to meeting in Executive Session on Tuesday, April 9, 2019, pending any appeals or unfinished business. The meeting will be held at Braddock Middle School at 6 p.m.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Ms. Eesha Bokil, SMOB

Eesha updated the school board on the following regarding the Allegany County Association of Student Councils:

- ACASC members went to Annapolis for Advocacy Day. While there, they had the opportunity to tour the Maryland State House and sit in on the Maryland General Assembly.
- The Environmental Committee and the ACASC Executive Board met with Sierra Wigfield to discuss possible environmental initiatives and projects for the 2019-2020 school year.
- The Superintendent's Student Advisory Council met with Dr. Cox.
- ACASC members met to plan their next General Assembly, elections, and the Allegany County Health Department campaign.

Mrs. Tammy Fraley

Mrs. Fraley had the opportunity to attend the local Chefs of Steel event. She also gathered information from the food bank regarding their backpack program that she plans to share with the board in the hopes of implementing the program in other schools that may have a need for it. Mrs. Fraley also noted for the record that the local Ethics Panel gave an advisory opinion in September of 2018 regarding what role Mr. Farrell may and may not have in matters relating to the Superintendent, including his evaluation and contract discussions.

Mrs. Deb Frank

Mrs. Frank had the opportunity to attend the Allegany County Teacher of the Year banquet and congratulated this year's winner, Sarah Llewellyn of Westernport Elementary School.