

BOARDROOM CHATTER

PUBLICATION PREPARED BY: THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Recognition of Retirees

The school board recognized the following 2018 ACPS retirees for their many years of service:

- Lonnie Nixon, 51 years
- John Reuschlein, 46 years
- Stanley Eisel, 44 years
- Mary Fuller, 43 years
- Gary Delaney, 43 years
- John Cornmesser, 40 years
- Charles Yarnall, 40 years
- Larry Negley, 39 years
- Katherine Brashear, 38 years
- Gene Morgan, 37 years
- Suzanne Hilton, 35 years
- Charles Kane, 34 years
- Larry Lancaster, 33 years
- Janet Stevens, 33 years
- Sheila Abe, 31 years
- Roy DeVore, 25 years
- Vicki Hardman, 25 years
- Nancy Huber, 25 years
- Patricia McKenney, 25 years
- Nancy Burkett, 24 years
- Mitzi Morgan, 24 years
- Karen Duguid, 22 years
- Helen Keller, 21 years
- Ruth Dicken, 20 years
- Roxanne Apple, 20 years
- Brenda Smith, 19 years
- Sharon Wolfe, 18 years
- Janice Waugaman, 17 years
- John Shockey, 16 years
- Debra Brailer, 16 years
- Kathryn Mathews, 15 years
- Jill Davis, 15 years
- Kenneth Wiseman, Sr., 15 years
- Donna McKenzie, 14 years
- Eloise Thompson, 14 years
- Karen Scarpelli, 11 years
- Diane Spiker, 11 years

Recognition of Blue Ribbon

Commission Members

The school board recognized the following members of the Blue Ribbon Commission, which was formed to provide FEA with relative and important information and perspectives regarding the task of adjusting boundaries for more efficient and effective utilization of school capacity:

- Dr. Matthew Crawford
- Deborah Hendrickson
- Meredith Irons
- Smanatha Isom
- Carlie Johnson
- Melissa Nelson
- Jodi Stanton
- Robin Summerfield
- Jen Thomas
- Robert Stevenson
- Autumn Eirich

FEA Final Report

The school board contracted with the consulting firm, Facility Engineering Associates (FEA) in November 2017 to conduct a facility utilization study and analysis of schools in the district. Three recommended actions to create efficiencies and savings to annual operating costs were presented to the Blue Ribbon Commission in May 2018. FEA previously reported, after review of enrollment and geographic data, conducting a facility condition and needs assessment, and educational adequacy appraisal, that ACPS has excess elementary school capacity that is equivalent of one additional school per each high school attendance area.

The following recommended actions, in order of priority, would be to close Parkside Elementary School in the Central Region; close George's Creek Elementary School in the Western Region; and

Board of Education

Dr. Sara-Beth Bittinger, President
Mrs. Tammy Fraley, VP
Mr. Nicholas Hadley
Mrs. Laurie Marchini
Mr. Wayne Foote
Dr. David Cox, Superintendent
Ms. Alexis Lashbaugh, SMOB

rebalance student populations by adjusting attendance boundaries at Beall and Frost Elementary Schools. FEA also advised the school board to monitor growth and enrollment projections at John Humbird Elementary School as a future consideration to increase efficiencies in the Eastern Region.

In the Central Region, Cash Valley Elementary School was also a consideration for closure because of proximity; however, Parkside was the preferred option due to the ease in redistributing the student population within the same region to restore neighborhoods and update attendance boundaries. In the Western Region, the most straightforward option from a capacity standpoint would be to relocate the George's Creek population into Westmar Middle School to form a pre-K through grade eight school. Finally, as an outcome of the study, FEA discovered that rebalancing student populations at Beall and Frost would help ease capacity and transportation issues at those schools.

National School Board Association Annual Conference Update

Mrs. Tammy Fraley attended the National School Boards Association annual conference in San Antonio, TX, and gave her fellow board members an update. The conference began with a community service project that allowed attendees to join NSBA's National Hispanic Council of School Board Members to pack 12,000 lbs. of food for the San

Antonio Food Bank. Mrs. Fraley received training in the Drums Alive DRUMTASTIC Program for educators. This program is evidence-based and applies fitness, drumming, music and educational concepts designed to improve the health of children and pre-teens by disseminating physical education, after school, early childhood, coordinated school health and music education programs to teachers, recreation leaders, and coaches serving pre-k through middle school students. Other sessions that Mrs. Fraley had the opportunity to attend included Track Your Success – Free Your Board to Focus on Strategic Goal Setting, New Board Member Bootcamp: Basic Parliamentary Procedure for New Board Members, Social Media Threat Alerts, Breathing and Mindfulness: The Keys to a Healthier You, Avoiding (or Resolving) Dysfunction in the Boardroom, Safe and Secure Schools – Not Bunkers, Redefining Communications and Leadership in the Digital and Social Media Age, Prescriptions and Population Health: The Impact of the Opioid Crisis, and Leading School Security Improvement in Your School Community.

Superintendent Comments and Response

Dr. Cox read a prepared statement in response to comments made by an individual at WCBC's Board of Education Candidate Forum on June 4th at Allegany College of Maryland. The last question of that event was asked by WCBC's agent and panelist, Mr. George McKinley, who is an attorney by trade. Mr. McKinley asked if the candidates were satisfied with Dr. Cox's performance as the Superintendent of Schools in Allegany County. Dr. Cox acknowledged that the question alone was a fair one; however, it was Mr. McKinley's prefacing comments to his question that warranted a response in an effort to speak truth to correct untruths he believes to be reckless and defamatory.

In the remarks preceding Mr. McKinley's question to the candidates, he stated that he represented a teacher in the "first case at Mountain Ridge High School." According to an article in the Cumberland Times-News, Mr. McKinley was one of two attorneys who represented Autumn Leathers, a teacher at Mountain Ridge who was convicted in April 2009 of 4th degree sex offense stemming from a sexual relationship she engaged in with one of her students. Mr. McKinley indicated that because he represented Ms. Leathers, he had knowledge that a number of individuals in the Mountain Ridge community were aware that abuse was happening and that nothing was done to stop it, and that based on his knowledge of that case, he concluded that the problem lied at the top, implying that it was the superintendent who was "the problem."

Dr. Cox informed the public through his prepared statement that his tenure as Superintendent in Allegany County began on July 1, 2009, three months after Ms. Leathers' conviction. Any knowledge and complicitness that Mr. McKinley attributes to the "top" in this case was before Dr. Cox's time in ACPS. Dr. Cox feels strongly that Mr. McKinley's comments and conclusions must be corrected, because the public and any candidates who aspire to become or remain members of the school board have a right to evaluate his performance but should do so based on facts that are accurate.

Additionally, he noted that anyone who abuses a child has broken the law and any person who is a mandated reporter and who has knowledge that a child has been abused and fails to report it to Child Protective Services has also broken the law. Once a report is made to CPS and an investigation opened, the school system's role is to support the investigation in any way necessary. It is never appropriate for any member of the school system's staff to investigate an allegation of child abuse ahead of, or even alongside CPS and C3I because these are the agencies legally obligated to investigate. The school system provides assistance without interfering or obstructing the investigation.

Child abuse is a serious matter, and the school board took the initiative to commission an independent evaluation and investigation of the Mazer case to determine if there were missteps or a failure to follow procedures for reporting. The investigator had only one charge – to determine if the staff acted appropriately – and found no evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the staff at Mountain Ridge. Nevertheless, the investigator made recommendations for improving policies so that they contained more direct language regarding what behavior is appropriate in a student-staff relationship so troubling behavior could, hopefully, be identified and dealt with before any relationship becomes a matter that must be reported as suspected child abuse. Those recommendations were approved and have been implemented in ACPS.

WORK SESSION NOTABLES

Maintenance and Construction Update

ACPS Director of Facilities, Vince Montana, updated the school board on various ongoing or upcoming maintenance and construction projects. They are as follows:

- **At Allegany High School, the contractor is doing the following on the interior:**
 - Completing the floor tile in the stairs and student dining; Installing wall caps in the locker rooms; Finishing final details in the greenhouse; Conducting final tests of the fire suppression system in the kitchen; Installing remaining doors and hardware; Installing entrance mats; Telephone lines have been installed; Preliminary inspection of the elevator and wheelchair lift have been completed and pending State inspection; Installing the interior glass in the office; Completing the glass rails and wooden trim in the theatre; Installing the remaining light fixtures in the mechanical rooms and media center; Making final connections to the dimming system in the theatre; Programming and testing the HVAC controls; Serviced the salvaged generator which will be tested at full load before the final inspection.
- **At Allegany High School, the contractor is doing the following on the exterior:**
 - Pouring concrete sidewalks in various locations; Completed the redesign of the road at Lions' Center and work will begin next week; Temporary fencing has been removed; Final paving will be completed over the next two weeks; Work has begun on the parking lot at the main entrance and the adjacent overflow parking lot.
- **At Allegany High School, the following general items have been completed:**
 - Final cleaning is progressing; Teacher tours were completed in May; Troopers from MSP toured the building; Furniture, fixtures and equipment has been ordered and will begin to arrive in mid-July.
- **Frost and Mt. Savage Roof Projects:** Bids were opened for the roof projects on June 6th. Staff will request additional information from the low bidder before making a recommendation for the contract award.
- **Miscellaneous:** Staff met with representatives of the Greenway Avenue Stadium Improvements Committee on June 6th. A representative from the company that supplied the scoreboard and video display made recommendations for the replacement of the display. The committee will consider the options for the upgrade at their next meeting.

Budget Update and Recommendations

Mr. Larry McKenzie, ACPS Chief Finance Officer, reviewed the FY2019 budget with the school board. Prior to beginning, Mr. McKenzie reminded the audience of several board budget priorities that were taken into consideration when balancing this budget. Overall, approximately \$900,000 had to be cut from the original proposed budget in order to balance the FY19 budget. While not fully-funded, the County did "flat fund" the school board at the FY2018 level of \$30,424,308. This is the first time since 2012 that the school system has been funded above Maintenance of Effort. State revenues decreased by \$9,549 from the proposed budget based upon changes from the draft aid to the final state aid.

The budget adds five teacher within the K-2 grade band to reduce the teacher to student ratio to 18:1. It also provided for the continuation of athletic trainers at all three high schools. The FY19 balanced budget fully-funded three elementary school afterschool programs previously funded by the 21st Century SAFE grant. It provided additional Bridge Plan and summer school recovery opportunities for students. This budget eliminated four positions through attrition while continuing to meet student needs, and the savings related to five additional retirements are above those included in the original budget.

Other personnel highlight within the budget include the addition of two teachers to accommodate growth within the secondary Foreign Language program; the addition of two Behavioral Support Specialists at the elementary level as student resources; the addition of two Testing Coordinators/Secondary Coaches at the secondary level; a reconfiguration of the Drug Counselor position which will be a contracted service within the entire district for a cost savings of \$20,000; and the addition of Project YES salary funding of \$115,000 as salaries and wages can no longer be grant funded.

Several non-personnel highlights included in the FY2019 budget include the following:

- Technology funds that were removed from previous budgets have been reinstated at \$200,000. The original budget included \$400,000 from the complete reinstatement of technology funds.
- Seven Active Learning Labs will be added at \$140,000
- Dual enrollment costs will increase across the district by \$52,500
- P-Tech requires an additional dual enrollment appropriation of \$20,000 since grant funds are not permitted to pay tuition. This need has been added since the original budget proposal.
- Plan, with school board approval, to assign savings from 2018 to purchase bus and telephone system. This

WORK SESSION NOTABLES CONT.

assignment will allow the school system to remove the cost from the 2019 budget.

- Moving expenses for the new Allegany are in the budget at \$50,000.
- Continue to provide school-based allocations at a constant level when compared to the prior year
- Appropriate funding for staff development opportunities as requested
- Move from an alternative learning space at the Allegany Museum to save \$18,000

Mr. McKenzie also highlighted several additional grants compared to last year's budget. The Full Steam Ahead Grant in the amount of \$200,000 is a state-restricted grant to provide afterschool enrichment opportunities that focus on STEM based activities with an environmental focus. The Striving Readers Grant in the amount of \$741,754 is the cost for year one of a three-year federally restricted grant totaling \$2 million. This grant will provide additional reading support for birth to grade 12 students at targeted schools and catchment areas based upon underserved children such as those with special needs, English as a second language, and children from poverty. The Judy Center Expansion Grant in the amount of \$330,000 was not in last year's restricted budget, but the school system received a portion of last year. This federally restricted grant for South Penn will provide services to children ages birth to five for that population.

SB1265 was drafted and passed during the final week of the 2018 Maryland legislative session. It has been enacted into law as the Maryland Safe to Learn Act of 2018. Currently, ACPS has eight School Resource Officers, The fiscal notes to SB1265 indicate that for fiscal 2020 a cost of \$1,513,050 will need to be absorbed to bridge the coverage gap for seven additional SROs the bill deems necessary for the district. This figure is inclusive of all costs associated with seven additional law enforcement officers to include:

- \$101,617 for salaries and fringes
- \$61,675 for State Police Academy training
- \$50,800 for a fully-equipped police car
- \$2,054 for uniforms and equipment

For FY2019, the County has agreed to fund an additional SRO for ACPS through the Sheriff's Department until the total impact of SB1265 can be determined.

Finance Report

Mr. McKenzie also updated the school board on the following financial information as of May 2018:

- The school board's legal fees are still under budget, but nearly 80% has been spent so far
- The use of substitute teachers has decreased
- The tuition for non-public placement students with special needs requiring outside services is down with a positive variance of \$560,775 compared to last year
- Transportation costs have increased, likely due to the cost of fuel
- Utilities are trending well
- Healthcare costs continue to trend well with a positive variance of \$1.7 million compared to last year

Technology Report

Mrs. Nil Grove, ACPS Chief IT Officer, updated the school board on the following information technology highlights for the month of May:

- Senior report cards were completed. For the final week for seniors, students held the top three places accessing Aspen with more than 34,323 hits.
- The Accolades Banquet was held for the top 10% of the senior class.
- Submitted a grant request for funding of the Active Learning Labs for next school year as well as one for camera security and wireless expansion to community stadiums, Greenway Avenue and Mountain Ridge.
- Provided extensive audit data for the OLA and MSDE from computer controls, inventory asset tracking procedures to contracts valued at more than \$100,000.
- Fiber work for the new Allegany is progressing and should be complete before the end of June.

SPECIAL BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS

Consider Accepting FY2019 Operating Budget

The school board voted to accept the FY2019 Operating Budget with one modification, as suggested by school board member, Nicholas Hadley. Mr. Hadley asked to add back into the budget the \$18,000 fee to utilize the Allegany Museum as an alternative learning space for ACPS students for one more year to give this community partner, who operates as a non-profit, more time to find another partner to subsidize these funds.

Review and Approval of FY2019 Special Education Staffing Plan

Mrs. Debbie Metheny, ACPS Supervisor of Special Education, updated the school board on the 2018-2019 Special Education Staffing Plan. The staffing plan was developed with the goals and objectives of the Allegany County Master Plan in mind, and the components have been publicly discussed as part of the budgetary process. Allegany County's local application for federal funds in the amount of \$2,284,878 was funded by MSDE for FY18. Infant and Toddler funds in the amount of \$243,579 were also funded in FY18.

Staffing decisions for the 2018-2019 school year were made through a series of meetings during which special education administrators, facilitators, and staff looked at student data and identified IEP needs. Assignment of staff was based on student needs. The Special Education Department will employ, using local and restricted funding, the following providers at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year:

- 85.1 teaching positions
- 92 full-time instructional assistants
- 25 part-time instructional assistants
- 26.4 professional positions (audiology, speech, vision, interpreter, mental health counselor, school psychologists)
- 18.5 professional positions (infants and toddlers coordinator, facilitators, elementary behavior specialist, non-public, assistive technology/data management, instructional specialist, itinerant autism specialist)

Changes affecting caseload and staffing throughout the school year requires flexibility in regards to staffing. These changes are necessary to implement the IEPs of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment to provide a free and appropriate public education. As students' IEPs are developed throughout the school year, staff changes may be required. The staffing plan will be reviewed at monthly staffing meetings and quarterly Special Education Citizen's Advisory Committee meetings.

The school board approved the FY2019 Special Education Staffing Plan.

WORK SESSION NOTABLES CONT.

- On a normal school day, more than 30% of ACPS's internet bandwidth is utilized by guest devices. The most prevalent time for use is between 7:30-8 a.m. and again at 10 a.m. and then at 2:30 p.m. Each interval of time indicates a usage of 50% or more of total bandwidth utilized by BYOD.
- The internet and wireless was monitored during the Allegany capsule opening. There were roughly 500 BYOD units watching the live stream with no significant bandwidth drop during the presentation.
- Investigating how to get an E-rate reimbursement using Voice Over Internet services through the Network MD service provider, which could be a very cost effective way for phone services.
- Closed April enrollment and attendance. Finished April with 8,545 students, down 27 from students from last month and down 70 from this time last year.

STUDENT BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Ms. Alexis Lashbaugh served as the Student Member of the Board of Education for the 2017-2018 school year, and this meeting was her last before she is replaced by the new SMOB, Eesha Bokil. Alexis said that she is very optimistic about what Eesha will bring to the table next year as she has many great ideas to offer. She thanked the school board and a number of staff members for their help during her tenure and indicated that she was truly grateful for the opportunity to serve in this capacity all year. She was able to be a member of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee, attended Dr. Brauer's mental health meetings, and went to the MABE conference in Ocean City, to name a few. Alexis plans to continue work such as this in college and into the future.

PUBLIC COMMENT & RESPONSES

Mr. Wesley Mason

Mr. Mason addressed the school board regarding mental health. He was contacted by ACPS Supervisor of Student Services, Dr. Ben Brauer, to speak to high school students in health classes about his attempted suicide and subsequent road to recovery. Last school year he was able to speak to several classes, and he felt his story was well-received. Next school year Mr. Mason hopes to address health classes in each high school each semester to continue his work to help raise awareness of mental health issues.

Parkside Parents & Community Members

The following Parkside Elementary School parents and community members addressed the school board regarding the FEA recommendation to close the school in an effort to increase efficiencies within the school system: Kari Hendershot, Ellie Ness, Chris Golliday, Angela Pishko, Ferne Benson, Sonya Eisentrout, and Dr. Murtaza Amir. Topics, concerns, and questions raised by these parents and community members included the academic success of Parkside, larger class sizes if students are moved to other schools, closed classrooms versus open space classrooms as they relate to safety and the ability to pay attention, and an increase in births in the area which will ultimately increase enrollment.

The school board thanked these individuals for their support of Parkside and for taking the time to address the board with their concerns. No action will be taken on FEA's recommendations for at least a year, and the school board is in the process of answering a number of frequently asked questions that will be published to the school system's website. Questions asked during this meeting by these constituents will be added to this list to be addressed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Consider Second Reading of Policy for Proper and Acceptable Use of Surveillance Cameras (File: ECAF)

The school board approved the second reading of the above policy, whose purpose is "to set guidelines for the use and viewing of video/audio surveillance."

The policy states, "The Board of Education recognizes that maintaining the safety and security of students, staff, and district property is best implemented with a multifaceted approach. The use of technology such as video/audio surveillance cameras is supported by the Board."

NEW BUSINESS

Greenway Avenue Stadium Capital Improvement Fund Committee Report

The Greenway Avenue Stadium Capital Improvement Fund Committee was formed in an effort to raise funds for the continued renovation of Greenway Avenue Stadium. Routine maintenance and upkeep is the responsibility of the school system; however, this community group will strive to raise funds to be placed in an endowment for use on future renovations, the largest being the periodic replacement of field turf and running track areas.

The 12-member Committee's first fundraising endeavor was a fun run/walk at the stadium in April. As an incentive to increase participation, the group awarded a plaque and small monetary award to the schools at each level with the highest participation. Allegany, Washington, and John Humbird were this year's winners. John Humbird went one step further and held its own fundraiser for the stadium and raised more than \$700 for the cause. To date, the committee has more than \$10,000 on hand from the proceeds of the walk and from donations from private donors and businesses.

The committee has three phases of work to do. Phase I will cost approximately \$160,000 to replace the field turf, the display on the scoreboard, and update the track. Phase II will be a complete stadium renovation to include the visitor's bleachers, lights, replace the track to make it regulation eight lanes, and any other facility upgrades necessary. Finally, phase III will be to establish an endowment to set aside money for future stadium upgrades and improvements.