

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED  
OPERATING BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003

Tuesday, January 22, 2002  
Ridge Ruxton Center

President Donald L. Arnold called the hearing to order at 7:01 p.m. In addition to President Arnold, the following Board members were present: Ms. Phyllis E. Ettinger, Mr. Thomas G. Grzyski, Mr. Michael P. Kennedy, Ms. Janese Murray, Mr. James R. Sasiadek, and Mr. James E. Walker. In addition, Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools, and staff members were in attendance.

Mr. Arnold noted the budget hearing was being held a week earlier than usual because of scheduling and calendar issues. He stated that because the hearing was being held earlier than in the past, citizens were welcome to call or write Board members with their comments on the proposed budget. Mr. Arnold asked that any email regarding the proposal be sent to Barbara Burnopp, Executive Director for Fiscal Services. Noting the current state of the economy and indications from state and local officials, Mr. Arnold stated that it was decided to develop a budget that would effectively and efficiently use our existing resources next year. President Arnold noted that we will be able to continue with existing programs next year, but won't be able to expand some as hoped.

Mr. Hayden entered the room at 7:05 p.m.

The following citizens addressed the Board:

1. Mr. George Siberry, a parent from Warren Elementary School, spoke of inadequate staffing causing large classes, particularly in Central Area schools. He asked the Board to provide additional staffing and to make a commitment to minimize multi-level combination classes.

Mr. Teplitzky entered the room at 7:08 p.m.

Ms. JoLynn Chadwick, Chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Education, thanked the Board for its past support of Gifted and Talented initiatives and asked them to pass the current budget as proposed. She noted that any reduction of resources would be devastating. Ms. Chadwick also asked the Board to examine its policies with regard to the Gifted and Talented Program.

3. Ms. Marcella Kehr, President of the Baltimore (County Instructional) Assistants and Clerical Employees, requested increased funding for clericals and instructional assistants. She noted the lack of funding in recent years for the reclassification of school-based clericals, even though this was approved over two (2) years ago. Ms. Kehr encouraged the Board to continue to include funds in the budget that would provide quality professional development for all school employees.

4. Ms. Paula Simon, President of the Council of Administrative and Supervisory Employees, requested a restructured salary schedule that includes lanes and steps for its members, noting the current schedule has neither. She also noted that school system principals are tenth highest paid in the state, and other certificated administrative and supervisory positions rank between 10th and 15th. Ms. Simon proposed implementing the suggested scale by placing employees on the scale where they are currently compensated, thereby not incurring additional funding for the next fiscal year. She noted CASE's support of House Bill #7, which will provide for state funding of principals.
5. Ms. Elizabeth Grauer, an assistant principal in Baltimore County, spoke of her reasons for becoming an administrator and shared some of her experiences over the last eight (8) years. She asked the Board to consider a restructured pay scale for administrative and supervisory personnel.
6. Ms. Glenda Chernoff, Chair of the Advocates for Baltimore County School Music, thanked the Board for its past support of the music program. She shared her hope that the proposed budget will continue to provide for the replacement and repair of instruments, supplies, and the funding of various musical events.
7. Mr. Tom Kelleher, Senior Council Representative for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, asked the Board to consider some of AFSCME's long-term concerns. He noted there are Transportation employees who have been waiting ten (10) years for an upgrade. Mr. Kelleher stated that through negotiations, AFSCME has asked for consideration of a four-year program to increase shift differential money for custodians. He asked the Board to "keep the door open" with regard to COLAs.  
  
Ms. Lora Williams, President of AFSCME Local 434, reiterated Mr. Kelleher's statements regarding the need for an upgrade for bus drivers and attendants. She also asked the Board to consider shift differential money for custodians.
9. Ms. Terri Parrish, Chair of the Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities, shared her happiness with an item in the capital budget for ADA projects and urged the Board to support this particular item. Ms. Parrish introduced her daughter, Grace.
10. Miss Grace Parrish, a fourth grader in Baltimore County Public Schools, asked the Board to include more money in the budget to make schools more handicapped accessible. She shared with the Board the difficulty her mother experiences in attending some school activities.
11. Ms. Lauren Dodson, the student representative on the Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities, and who is a Baltimore County Public Schools' graduate, shared three (3) areas of concern:

- a. **The need for** at least **one automatic door in each building,**
  - b. **The importance** of **having access to athletic fields, and**
  - c. **The importance** of having gym classes available for students with disabilities.
12. Ms. Julie Hammond, a resident of Baltimore County, urged the Board not to cut the ADA funding for schools from the capital budget. She noted *difficulty* in getting into buildings has made her feel unwelcome.
13. Mr. Benjamin Dubin, Vice Chair of the Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities, urged the Board to consider adding hearing aid coverage for children of school system personnel to its health insurance coverage.
14. Ms. Kelli Nelson, representing the Infants and Toddlers Program (UT), requested the Board to support the proposed funding for the Infants and Toddlers Program. She noted the figure listed in the budget for I/T population is 650, when, in fact, there are more than 1,100 children currently receiving services. Ms. Nelson also questioned why these students are not included in the funding formula. Finally, Ms. Nelson also expressed her concern with this year's timeline for the budget process.
15. In a statement read by Ms. Kelli Nelson, Delegate Robert Zirkin expressed his concern with the lack of funding for land acquisition in the proposed operating budget. He noted the need for acquiring additional land for school construction, particularly in the Northwest/Owings Mills area.
16. Ms. Mary Anna Barratt-Dimes, President of the Prettyboy Elementary School PTA, expressed the school's appreciation of its full-time guidance counselor and funding for sufficient materials for the new reading program. She asked the Board to include in the proposed budget a full-time technology person at the elementary level. Ms. Barratt-Dimes stated librarians should not be expected to take on the additional duties of a **technology teacher and teach the full** curriculum of library and media skills. She also noted that in order for her school to have a web site, a paid Baltimore County Public Schools employee must administer the site. **She hoped the** Board would grant elementary schools that position.
17. Ms. Teresa LaMaster, Chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Special Education, echoed Ms. Nelson's concerns with budget timeline and the delay of getting out information. **She suggested the proposed budget is not bold enough** in asking for what is really needed within the system. Her concerns were:
1. **Staffing levels in special education need to be at the level** set forth in the staffing plan.
  2. The delay in getting technology to teachers.

3. With regard to the ten (10) lowest performing schools, Ms. LaMaster requested details of how the school system is addressing raising the performance level of the students in these schools.
  
18. Mr. Stephen Crum, representing the Southeast Area Educational Advisory Council (SEAEAC), noted the difference between this year's budget and last year's budget comes out to approximately \$24 per student, approximately the cost of a textbook. He expressed concern about the under funding of technology, particularly for teachers. Mr. Crum noted the importance of supporting the proposed funding for the teacher mentoring program. The SEAEAC will assist in getting the proposed budget passed by the fiscal authorities and hopes the County will not make any cuts.
  
19. Ms. Tracey Weinkam, the parent of a five-year-old hearing-impaired child at Hillcrest Elementary School, thanked the Board for its interest and concern with regard to the need to improve the audiology facility at the Maiden Choice School. She thanked Dr. Hairston for including this item in his proposed budget request. By upgrading this facility, Ms. Weinkam noted the children in the Southwest Area will have equity and greater access to appropriate, quality audiology services.
  
20. Mr. Carl Alexander, the parent of an Old Court Middle School student, asked the Board to increase the budget in order to reduce class sizes in schools with large numbers of special needs students. He noted the Northwest Area schools have a large number of group home and foster care children, and many of them require special services. Mr. Alexander also requested an increase in the budget request to help targeted schools.
  
21. Ms. Maggie Kennedy, Coordinator of the Area Educational Advisory Councils, offered the Councils' assistance in working with the Board to bring the school system's communications abilities into the 21't century. It was her hope that this year, all employees would have a computer on their desk as well as a telephone in every classroom. She urged the Board to pass the proposed budget and noted the importance of addressing the minority achievement issue as well as retaining quality teachers and administrators. Ms. Kennedy expressed her concern about the turnaround time of this year's budget process.
  
22. Mr. Mark Beytin, President of the Teachers Association of Baltimore County, distributed a handout showing Baltimore County's ranking among the "Big Seven" for teachers' salaries. He shared his frustration that the formerly agreed upon reclassification for BACE clericals is, once again, not funded. Mr. Beytin also expressed his concern about the short-term and long-term negative impact of the proposed budget, fearing it will further erode teacher recruitment and retention efforts. He shared his concern that many teachers will choose retirement or resignation this year.

23. Ms. Jan Thomas, PTA Council of Baltimore County Operating Budget Chair, stated her frustration with the scarcity of budget data and the time given to review the data prior to the hearing. She asked the Board to consider the following during its budget deliberations:
1. School baseline funding accounts for only 2% of the school system's operating budget. She noted the per student allotment does not reflect the reality of what is actually spent or needed by schools.
  2. The need for a Grant Specialist position-Noting the growing dependence on grant funds, Ms. Thomas stated this position is critical to access all funding sources. She also stated that with increased grant money and the increased ability to apply these funds more liberally, the system needs to be certain that the funds are used appropriately to maximize their benefits and effectiveness, as well as look carefully at how the use of these funds is evaluated. An adequate number of trained data specialists and internal auditors are also needed.
24. Ms. Mary Pat Kahle shared her concern about the budget information available and the amount of time given to review the information prior to the hearing. She expressed her concern about how the lack of legitimate curriculum for diploma bound special education students might impede their success on the High School Assessments. Ms. Kahle also stated reading positions at the middle and high school level should be similar to those at the elementary level. She asked that high school principals be required to use reading specialists in the capacity for which they have been trained.
25. Ms. Jasmine Shriver questioned the data presented for the special education portion of the proposed budget.

Mr. Arnold assured the audience the Board would consider its comments during its budget deliberations.

The hearing was concluded at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston  
Secretary-Treasurer