

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY  
WORK SESSION ON THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2003 OPERATING BUDGET

Wednesday, February 20, 2002

The work session was called to order by President Donald Arnold at 7:02 p.m. at Greenwood. In addition to President Arnold, the following Board members were present: Ms. Maria R. Cirincione, Ms. Phyllis E. Ettinger, Mr. Thomas G. Grzymiski, Mr. John A. Hayden, III, Mr. Michael P. Kennedy, Ms. Janese Murray, Mr. James R. Sasiadek, and Mr. James E. Walker. Also present were Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools, and staff members.

Mr. Arnold reminded everyone that the Board would vote on the proposed budget on February 26<sup>th</sup>. He also informed the audience that while no testimony would be heard at tonight's meeting, the public is invited to contact Ms. Burnopp with any questions regarding the proposal.

Dr. Hairston noted the goal of the work session was to offer a more in-depth look at the specifics of the budget request. He reminded everyone that this is essentially a status quo budget request given the State and County revenues. Dr. Hairston stated the budget reflects fiscal realities and that the 3.8% increase over last year's budget is to maintain the current level of services to students and to keep pace with benefits for employees. System priorities will continue to be addressed.

Some of the items highlighted through a Power Point™ presentation by Ms. Burnopp, Executive Director of Business Services, were the revenue sources, the budget development process, initiatives included in the proposed budget, built-in costs, and redirected allocations for textbooks and instructional materials.

Ms. Jung entered the room at 7:10 p.m.

Mr. Arnold thanked the County Executive and other County officials for working with the Board in the past on budget issues. Mr. Arnold stated that with any status quo budget, there are sometimes opportunities when additional funds may become available. In the packets Board members received this evening, Mr. Arnold noted that there are recommendations for increases beyond the budget, which the Board could discuss this evening.

Mr. Kennedy expressed a desire to include cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for employees. He cited other Maryland counties that are asking for modest COLAs for its employees. Mr. Kennedy suggested perhaps the superintendent and staff could develop a few priority items to be implemented later in the fiscal year or provide the County Executive with an opportunity to monitor the economy for any changes that would allow COLA funding for school system employees.

Ms. Ettinger agreed with Mr. Kennedy and stated that perhaps the Board should communicate this to the funding authorities as a first level priority. She also stated she would like to see a more rapid implementation of technology for teachers.

Report of the Proposed Operating Budget Work Session - Page 2

Mr. Sasiadek stated that a high quality work force is needed in order to maintain and build on the solid base of the quality school system in place. He urged consideration of a 2-3% COLA.

Mr. Grzymski offered his strong support of COLAs for all employees.

With regard to copy machines for schools, Mr. Kennedy asked for a definitive study to determine if schools' needs are being met in this area and the costs involved. Ms. Burnopp stated that copier needs vary from school-to-school. This is a concern her office is reviewing. Ms. Jung stated that this is an area where basic countywide standards are needed.

Ms. Ettinger brought up an issue discussed at the hearings by a member of the Disabilities Commission-providing hearing aid coverage for children of employees. Mr. Grimsley, Executive Director for Human Resources, explained this coverage has been added. Ms. Ettinger requested this information be shared with the gentleman from the Disabilities Commission and with the Disabilities Commission.

Ms. Ettinger asked if the proposed budget addressed issues of class size. Ms. Johns noted schools are staffed based on projected enrollments, and teachers are added, appropriately, in the summer as enrollment increases. She also stated that some schools use Title I funds for additional staffing.

Dr. Hairston reminded the Board that there are costs associated with adding teaching positions-creating more teaching space.

Mr. Sasiadek suggested revisiting this topic in a work session before deliberations for the fiscal year '04 budget.

Ms. Ettinger asked how the system is supporting initiatives to improve reading achievement with regard to dedicated staff at the secondary level. Ms. Simon, Coordinator of English and Reading - Secondary Programs, stated for every middle school, there has always been a reading position allocated within the school-based principal's budget. Every middle and high school should have a reading position on staff. However, at the high school level, there is not always the greatest consistency with having a staff position devoted to reading. Ms. Ettinger stated that in the future, we should monitor secondary administrators to be certain the reading positions are used as intended. She also expressed concern that regardless of the size of the secondary school, only one reading position is allocated.

Mr. Walker questioned the effectiveness of only one (1) reading teacher in each high school.

Mr. Sasiadek expressed his appreciation of the County Executive's support of the prescribed needs in this year's budget, with respect to staffing in special education, and he shared his hope that the County Executive would continue his support in that area.

Ms. McMahon, Executive Director of Elementary Programs, and Mr. Myers, Coordinator in Elementary Programs - Early Childhood, explained for Mr. Grzynski and Mr. Walker how schools were selected for pre-kindergarten or kindergarten sessions.

Mr. Grzynski stated that perhaps for future budgets, the Board and staff need to share our commitment with legislators regarding the importance of periodic technology refreshes in order to have a first class system. He stated technology refreshes are like maintaining buildings-they are not a luxury, but a necessity.

Ms. Jung noted the past support of the County Executive and expressed the hope that his support of the Board's budget will continue within the limitations of the economy. She stated our system cannot maintain and improve without making an investment in its employees. Ms. Jung shared her concern about the various restructuring packages for employees that have been proposed but not implemented. She stated the Board and the school system need to take the steps indicated to the employee groups. Ms. Jung voiced her support of recommending salary increases for employees in July, if possible, or, if necessary, mid-year. She also shared the importance of including money for technology as a second priority.

Mr. Arnold confirmed the Board's desire to include COLAs for employees as the first item on a priority list and technology as the second item. Ms. Ettinger asked that the technology priority be specific to individual teachers.

Mr. Sasiadek thanked Mr. Arnold for the manner in which the work session was conducted-discussing one topic at a time and creating a more relaxed atmosphere for staff.

Dr. Hairston acknowledged the efforts of Deputy Superintendents Johns and Haines and Chief of Staff Merle Audette. He also recognized Sharon Norman for organizing his comments.

Mr. Arnold thanked the entire staff for its efforts in preparing the budget.

The work session was concluded at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston  
Secretary-Treasurer