

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY RETREAT

Sunday, September 14, 2003

The Board of Education of Baltimore County, Maryland, met in open session for a retreat on Sunday, September 14, 2003, at 10:13 a.m. at the Marshy Point Nature Center, Marshy Point Road, Baltimore, MD. President James R. Sasiadek and the following Board members were in attendance: Mr. Donald L. Arnold, Ms. Francesca Cirincione, Ms. Phyllis E. Ettinger, Mr. Thomas G. Grzyski, Mr. John A. Hayden, III, Mr. Michael P. Kennedy, Ms. Janese Murray, Ms. Joy Shillman and Mr. James Walker. In addition, Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Carol Saffran-Brinks, Assistant County Attorney; Mr. Douglas Neilson, Chief Communications Officer; Ms. Cheryl Bost, TABCO President; Ms. Brenda Stiffler, Administrative Assistant to the Board, and the media were present.

STUDENT EXPULSIONS & SUSPENSIONS

Through a Power Point™ presentation, Mr. Dale Rauenzahn presented *“Student Hearings: The Appeal Process.”* He started by discussing how the number of hearings has decreased. In 1995-96, there were 76 hearings (2 per week in a 36 week period). In 2002-03, there were 2 hearings total. He remarked that zero cases have gone to the State Board.

Mr. Rauenzahn reviewed the purpose of an appeal and the Board’s authority; the definition of “expulsion” as the removal of a student from the regular state program; and the alternatives offered to expelled students.

Additionally, Mr. Rauenzahn discussed incidents or offenses that result in student(s) violating school rules and/or county policies and rules.

Mr. Rauenzahn then reviewed what occurs at the Designee’s hearing including the information provided to parents about the appeal and mitigation process.

Mr. Rauenzahn briefly explained the different between the appeal and mitigation processes, including the roles of the Appeals & Mitigation Officer as well as the Legal Counsel to the Superintendent.

Lastly, Mr. Rauenzahn outlined the Board’s role in the expulsion hearing process.

Mr. Grzyski asked whether this presentation had ever been provided at PTA meetings. Mr. Rauenzahn responded very few times has this been presented, however, the material is available to the PTA Council.

Mr. Sasiadek called for a ten-minute break at 11:13 a.m.

THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT

At 11:25 a.m., Mr. Sasiadek introduced Mr. Eric B. Schwartz, Esq., Staff Attorney for Charles County Public Schools. Mr. Schwartz's presentation was entitled, "Five Questions Which Must Be Addressed Before Closing A Meeting."

Mr. Schwartz reviewed the scope of the Act, its exceptions, how it applies to the "public body", and the procedure for issuing public notification of a closed meeting.

Lastly, Mr. Schwartz discussed the requirements for closing a meeting.

Mr. Sasiadek announced a lunch break at 12:10 p.m.

The retreat reconvened at 12:45 p.m.

BOARD NORMS

Ms. Ettinger briefly discussed the committee that was established to write the proposed Board Norms, a copy of which she distributed. She stated these norms might help assist the Board regarding their behavior. Ms. Ettinger asked Board members to review the Board Norms and provide comment. Changes recommended were: 1) replace "Elected" officials with "Public" officials, and 2) add Retreats to the sixth bullet.

Mr. Grzymiski congratulated the committee for its work in developing the norms. He recommended reviewing the norms annually at a retreat. Ms. Shillman stated Board norms institutionalize the Board's beliefs and behavior. She agreed with Mr. Grzymiski to review the norms annually.

Mr. Arnold suggested the Board vote on the norms at one of its regular sessions. Ms. Ettinger will work with Ms. Stiffler to get the appropriate changes made and place the Board norms on the agenda for vote at the September 23rd meeting.

Mr. Arnold recommended, in the future, we change the wording of "We" to "I" and possibly have Board members sign the norms.

INTERNAL PROCEDURES

Mr. Sasiadek reviewed the information distributed to Board members and staff in the Board Notebook, which included: Calendars, Board Norms, Open Meetings Act, Political Information, and Blueprint for Progress. Mr. Sasiadek recommended that this information be placed on the Board of Education website.

Mr. Sasiadek reviewed housekeeping items and future events with Board members. He asked Board members to provide suggestions for topics for future work sessions.

Mr. Sasiadek distributed a memo from Ms. Rita Fromm regarding the upcoming hearing on the Woodholme Elementary project. Dr. Hairston stated that government officials would be at the hearing to present the community with an overview of the plans to construct an elementary school at the proposed site.

Mr. Sasiadek reviewed the list of possible constituent groups for dinner on a board night or a non-board night and requested suggestions from Board members.

Mr. Sasiadek addressed the possibility of having work sessions on the third Tuesday of every month. The intent is to have Board members automatically set this day aside for possible work sessions, thereby not interfering with other obligations. Additionally, lengthy reports presented at Board meetings could be provided at these work sessions.

Dr. Hairston remarked that there could exist a gray line between work session and Board meetings. He feels that staff needs a reasonable amount of time to validate the information before presenting.

Mr. Grzynski recommended that staff be provided report-structuring guidelines (e.g., number of slides). Ms. Ettinger stated she would like enough lead time to read and digest the information. She also expressed concern about the public receiving incomplete reports. She recommended that one copy be marked "draft" before going out. Ms. Jung recommended reports be made available through the education channel.

Dr. Hairston stated staff would make every effort to have the reports completed in a timely manner so Board members have the opportunity to review the material.

Additionally, Dr. Hairston stated that unless there is a severe time constraint, staff would make available a contract person with whom the Board can talk regarding a specific report.

Based on discussion, Mr. Sasiadek reiterated:

- Reports to be provided ahead of time, where practical
- Reports marked "draft," when necessary
- Agenda to be reviewed ahead of time and determine if a report could be considered a work session item
- A work session should be scheduled on the alternate Tuesday of the month, that is, a non-Board meeting day.

Mr. Sasiadek invited Board members to discuss the current configuration of the public comments period at the Board meetings. After thoughtful consideration and extended discussion by the Board, Mr. Sasiadek stated public comment would remain at the end of the Board meeting.

Mr. Sasiadek distributed the Board of Education Committee Members list from the prior year. Board members were requested to review the committees they are currently on and adjust accordingly. Mr. Sasiadek requested Ms. Stiffler make the appropriate changes to the committee member list and disseminate.

The retreat was concluded at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston
Secretary-Treasurer

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