

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2006
OPERATING BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Wednesday, January 26, 2005
Ridge Ruxton School

The hearing was called to order by President James R. Sasiadek at 7:05 p.m. In addition to President Sasiadek, the following Board members were present: Mr. Luis E. Borunda, Mr. Thomas G. Grzynski, Ms. Frances A.S. Harris, Mr. John Hayden, III, Mr. Rodger C. Janssen, and Mr. Michael P. Kennedy. In addition, Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent, Dr. Christine M. Johns, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, J. Robert Haines, Deputy Superintendent of Business Services, staff members, as well as media were present.

Prior to hearing testimony, Mr. Hayden commented on the capital budget and the strong possibility of Baltimore County Public Schools receiving the \$250 million dollars for capital improvement projects. Mr. Hayden urged the public to get in touch with legislators and express the importance of the school system receiving this money.

The following citizens and employees offered testimony:

- 1) Mr. David Mark, Sports Booster President, Towson High School – Requested additional funding for athletic transportation for all 24 high schools in addition to the \$84,000 already in the proposed budget.
- 2) Mr. Kevin Abell, Chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Alternative Programs – Thanked the Superintendent for his continued support of the alternative education programs. Mr. Abell was pleased with the modest increases in the budget. He hopes the Board votes to keep the budget intact.
- 3) Ms. Francine Hahn, Lawyer for the Public Justice Center - Requested the Board use the money budgeted for the Bridge Center to instead provide services to students in their neighborhood schools. She noted that providing in-school support service is more effective than the approach proposed last year.
- 4) Ms. Meg O’Hare, Baltimore County Education Coalition Member – Asked the Board to fund 100% of the proposed operating budget. She stated all items are tied to the Master Plan, except built-ins and one-times. Ms. O’Hare commented that Thornton funding was intended to improve education rather than ease the County budget. She suggested the County look at impact fees or look at targeting tax increases specifically for education.
- 5) Ms. Kelly Nelson, Co-Chair, Infants/Toddlers Coordinating Council – Expressed support for the proposed operating budget, which includes four additional FTE’s for Infants and Toddlers. She commented that Thornton funding is to bring adequacy to education. Ms. Nelson stated she wants to ensure that the operating budget adequately addresses support for pre-school at risk students. Ms. Nelson would also like pre-school inclusion placed in the operating budget.
- 6) Ms. Roe Davis, Co-Chair, Infants/Toddlers Coordinating Council – Supports the proposed operating budget adding of four positions for the Infants and Toddlers program. She thanked staff for their support of the program.

- 7) Ms. Tonia Ferguson, Parent – Encouraged to see the addition of four FTE’s for Infants and Toddlers. She commented that Infants and Toddlers may need additional monies as numbers increase. Ms. Ferguson also asked to see local level funding be included for pre-school inclusion.
- 8) Ms. Pat Everett, Teacher, Riderwood Elementary School – Requested staffing every kindergarten class with a paid aide or parent helper. She stated Riderwood Elementary is fortunate to have parent volunteers; however, not all schools have this luxury. Ms. Everett stated that daycares have a 10:1 ratio whereas the kindergarten classroom ratio is 30:1.
- 9) Mr. Michael Moore, Representative, Minority Achievement Advisory Group (MAAG) - Expressed thanks for valuing the advisory group’s voice and commitment to students, which shows in the proposed operating budget. He stated that MAAG is interested in and focused on all students. Mr. Moore noted that when conditions improve for minority students in this county, it improves the conditions for all county residents.
- 10) Mr. Robert Ossakow, Parent – Supports the Infants and Toddlers Program. He thanked the Superintendent for proposing an increase of 4 FTE’s in Infants and Toddlers. Regarding Thornton funding, Mr. Ossakow stated he would like to see money earmarked for special education services and teacher training related to inclusion issues.
- 11) Ms. Judy LaFlame, Parent and PTA Corresponding Secretary, Pleasant Plains Elementary School – Requested staffing all kindergarten classes with paid aides. She noted there is a wide disparity among skills of students. Ms. LaFlame remarked that one teacher with 20 or 25 students cannot adequately address the needs of the students. She stated that aides should be paid parent helpers for four hours a day.
- 12) Ms. Deanne Brookshire, Parent – Supports the Infants and Toddlers Program. She believes early intervention services are very helpful to parents. Ms. Brookshire also thanked the Infants and Toddlers staff for its time, dedication and support to her family.
- 13) Mr. Lance Phillips, PTA President, Pleasant Plains Elementary School – Requested support to equip the school with air conditioning and completion of the building’s renovations. He expressed concern over the lack of air conditioning in classrooms, cafeteria, and gymnasium and concerns as to asthma and allergies. Students cannot concentrate on the task at hand. With regards to building renovations, Mr. Phillips stated that the front of the school received a face-lift, but the very back of the school remains the same. He asked that the task be completed for a revitalization project that is long overdue.
- 14) Ms. Linda Castaldi, Special Education Teacher, Padonia International Elementary School – Requested support for staffing kindergarten classes with paid aides. Ms. Castaldi noted there is a disparity of educational levels of children in one class. She stated it is important that kindergarten classes be equipped with teachers and aides for students to succeed.

- 15) Ms. Jan Thomas, Operating Budget Chairperson, PTA Council of Baltimore County – Inquired where the dollars were for at-risk students for additional programs and staff. She noted that non-salary dollars account for 32% of the budget and 1.8% of this goes to all schools as school-based funds. Ms. Thomas is concerned that schools' funds are being pulled in too many directions causing division and inequities among schools. She praised the Superintendent for inclusion of money for Maryland's Tomorrow program; however, she stated that more attention to dropout prevention is needed. She noted that the County's dropout rate has risen to 4.4 percent in 2004. Ms. Thomas would like to see more programs aimed at dropout prevention and alternative programs.
- 16) Ms. LaKerry Dawson – Supports the Infants and Toddlers Program. She believes this program is a connection between the doctor and parent. Ms. Dawson requested additional funding for parental involvement programs within Infants and Toddlers. She also thanked the Superintendent for increasing the Infants and Toddlers Program by four FTE's.
- 17) Ms. Joann Meats – Supports the addition of four positions in Infants and Toddlers; however, she would like to see additional funding within the program. She stated occupational and physical therapists are critical and need more support. Ms. Meats commented that the school system needs additional speech therapists.
- 18) Mr. Ben Dubin, Parent – As a parent of a deaf child, Mr. Dubin requested funding for children with special needs. He believes the school system does not have adequate equipment to continue to test children for hearing. Mr. Dubin requested the Board to include in the proposed budget at least two pieces of Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) equipment for the audiologists to test students at high risk.
- 19) Mr. Murray Piper, Milford Mill Academy PTSA President - Supports the operating and capital budget proposed by the Superintendent. He specifically supports the funds for Milford Mill. Regarding Goal 3 of the *Blueprint for Progress*, Mr. Piper requested funds be set aside to attract highly qualified teachers. With regards to Goal 4 concerning safe and conducive learning environment, Mr. Piper asked for funds to be placed in the budget to include air conditioning at Milford Mill Academy.
- 20) Ms. Deborah Servetnick, Teacher, Woodlawn High School - Commented that BCPS salaries are behind compared to other states. She is a new teacher from Philadelphia who started her tenure in September 2004. Ms. Servetnick requested an increase to teachers' salaries. She noted an entry level teacher in a particular city would receive \$7000 more in salary than in Baltimore County. Ms. Servetnick commented that the school system needs to pay like it means it.
- 21) Ms. Lisa Orens, Parent and Chair of the Southwest Area Educational Advisory Council - Supports the Superintendent's operating budget. She remarked that the increased funding for career and technology (CTE) is encouraging. Ms. Orens stated that alternative programs need additional funding to support at-risk students. She also reviewed the allocation of guidance counselors to schools and believes it is not an equitable distribution at present.

- 22) Ms. Cheryl Bost, President, Teachers Association of Baltimore County – Thanked the Superintendent for a supportive budget, which includes a proposed average wage increase for teachers of 4%, additional positions in special education, and full-day kindergarten. She stated that full-day kindergarten needs aides in these classes. Ms. Bost remarked on teachers’ workloads and the demands of printing capacity and purchasing supplies. She believes it is necessary to fund program needs for all students. Ms. Bost looks for the Board to support the proposed budget and make revisions where necessary.
- 23) Ms. Vicki Schultz-Unger, Coordinator, Area Educational Advisory Councils - Expressed support for the proposed budget. She stated this budget is considered to be a responsive budget and one that requires support. Ms. Schultz-Unger noted that the school system must develop strong incentives to attract and retain excellent teachers in the schools. This budget funds competitive healthcare benefits and support for professional development that enables teachers to meet the demands of the highly qualified classification. She asked the Board and the County to fully support this responsive, responsible, and necessary budget.

Mr. Kennedy commended Mr. Hayden, for his leadership, and the work that he is doing to get money for school construction.

The hearing was concluded at 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston
Secretary-Treasurer

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