

APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

The Board of Education of Baltimore County met in open session at 7:00 p.m. at Greenwood. President JoAnn C. Murphy and the following Board members were present: Ms. Frances A. S. Harris, Mr. John A. Hayden, III, Mr. Earnest E. Hines, Mr. Rodger C. Janssen, Ms. Ramona N. Johnson, Ms. Mary-Margaret O'Hare, Mr. Joseph J. Pallozzi, Mr. H. Edward Parker, Jr., Ms. Joy Shillman, and Miss Audrey Dittman. In addition, Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent of Schools, and staff members were present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The open session commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, which was led by Mr. Thomas Bosley, followed by a period of silent meditation for those who have served education in the Baltimore County Public Schools.

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. O'Hare motioned to reappoint Dr. Joe A. Hairston to a four-year term beginning July 1, 2008. Mr. Pallozzi seconded the motion.

Mr. Hayden expressed concern that the Web site reflected the next meeting as February 13, 2008, and not February 5, 2008.

In absentia, Ms. Flynn requested a statement be read by Mr. Hayden. Ms. Flynn believes that the Board is failing to live up to its duty to represent the citizens of Baltimore County unless it conducts an aggressive national search to ensure that this schools system's leadership is in fact the best leadership. She noted that the Board has devoted less than one hour of discussion on the decision to renew the superintendent's contract. Ms. Flynn's expressed personal concerns about ethical behavior, poor communications, and ineffectiveness to raise student achievement. Some of Ms. Flynn's opinions were:

- Middle and high school students are scoring below the state averages.
- Middle school reading scores compared to the rest of the state over the last three years are not showing improvement.
- Enrollment in Algebra I in grade 8 is dropping.
- Seventh graders' math scores for 2006-2007 are worse than when the students were third graders.
- Two key curriculum leadership positions continue to remain unfilled.
- Introduction of AIM alienated many teachers and administrators.

Ms. O'Hare disagreed with Ms. Flynn's comments. She stated that Dr. Hairston is the first superintendent who has attempted to unite us into a single school system as opposed to a system of schools. Ms. O'Hare highlighted a few letters from principals who praised the superintendent's leadership. She noted that while Dr. Hairston is a nationally acclaimed educator, some of his accomplishments as this county's superintendent were:

- The establishment of the *Blueprint for Progress*
- Shifting from the antiquated Columbia system to a data warehouse system
- Starting the Black Saga competition
- Shifting focus to help the average student succeed
- Funded the AVID program
- Increasing the number of students taking Advance Placement (AP) courses
- Elimination of low-level courses and establishing rigorous courses
- Approved state grant funding for STEM program
- Supported the China exchange program

Mr. Hayden stated that he cannot vote in support of the reappointment of the superintendent and believes that the Board must conduct a national search and recognize the professional qualities of others that might serve our schools. Among Mr. Hayden's personal concerns were:

- PDK audit report which highlighted areas of needing improvement including the inadequacy of BCPS' professional development program and misalignment of the curriculum
- The lack of detail in the recruitment and appointment process
- The lack of adherence to Board Policies 8240 and 8363.

As outlined above, a distressing expert report on this school system, misleading or incomplete personnel information central to the Board's statutory responsibilities, and inattention to conflict of interest issues, Mr. Hayden concluded that he could not support the superintendent's reappointment.

Mr. Hines stated that when he reviewed and tallied the letters received with respect to the AIM tool, the majority of the concerns came from the central area where the most resources are. He stated that when he talks with other professionals outside this region, Dr. Hairston receives national reviews; the more negative input comes from within Baltimore County. Mr. Hines noted that while the school system has more work to do, he believes that the school system has the right individual driving the ship and positioning BCPS for four years of greatness. Mr. Hines stated he believes that Dr. Hairston is a "change agent," does not run from responsibility, and has the leadership for this county.

Ms. Harris stated she supports the superintendent's reappointment. Ms. Harris stated that while she does not always agree with Board members and the superintendent, she has seen tremendous changes and the school system gets the job done.

Mr. Janssen expressed concern several years ago when the goal to eliminate the achievement gap was removed. He stated that this is a difficult decision.

Ms. Johnson commented that in the next four years this school system will face many challenges. She is a strong supporter of “raising the bar” and expecting more accountability from the Board, the superintendent, and everyone in the system. She stated it is about making the hard decision to place resources where they are needed the most. Ms. Johnson stated that she believes Dr. Hairston can take BCPS to the next level.

As a former member of the area education advisory council, Mr. Pallozzi stated that Dr. Hairston brought to the council his vision and beliefs. Mr. Pallozzi believes that the superintendent has done a tremendous job with the school system and is the right leader for the job.

Mr. Parker stated that Dr. Hairston is both a “doer” and a visionary. He stated that research shows there is a direct correlation between consistency and longevity of a superintendent and increased student achievement. He supports the reappointment of Dr. Hairston.

Ms. Murphy stated that she is supporting the superintendent’s reappointment because he does not throw away children. When Dr. Hairston speaks about teaching all the children, he means it. Quoting from educator, Peter F. Drucker to illustrate her point, Ms. Murphy stated that, “Management is doing things right, leadership is doing the right thing.”

Following the roll call vote, the Board approved the reappointment of the superintendent (favor-8; opposed-3). Mr. Hayden, Mr. Janssen, and student representative, Miss Dittman, opposed the reappointment.

Dr. Hairston stated that this exercise is just one of the hurdles and one of the trials and tribulations that a superintendent has to endure if he/she is going to be around long enough to make a difference for children. He stated that there will always be people who are for or against you; you just need to bear it and move forward. Dr. Hairston stated that he hopes that all the comments made this evening are put aside so that we can work together as a governing body for everyone who depends on us to move this school system forward.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Murphy made the following announcements:

- The Board of Education of Baltimore County will hold its next regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, February 13, 2008, at Greenwood. The meeting will begin with an open session at approximately 5:00 p.m. The Board will then adjourn to meet in closed session, which will be followed by a brief dinner recess. The open session will reconvene at approximately 7:30 p.m. The public is welcome to all open sessions. The Board will host the officers of the Baltimore County Student Council on February 13, 2008, from 6:00 until 7:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:51 p.m., the Board meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe A. Hairston
Secretary-Treasurer

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