

PTA Meeting Minutes

Patapsco Middle School PTA Meeting January 15, 2013

Attendance: Cindy Dillon – Principal, – teacher representative; PTA Board members Allison Anderson – president, Emily Rice – first vice-president, Caroline Bodziak – second vice president, Patti Lizzo – corresponding secretary, Kari Schumm – treasurer, Tina Siedlecki – recording secretary.

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Anderson at 7:00 pm in the library of Patapsco Middle School. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the November meeting were presented for review, and approved as written.

Treasurer's Report: Kari Schumm presented the updated financial report/budget and following items were discussed:

- PTA approved allocation of \$110.96 from reserves to pay for repairs for table soccer as additional expense.
- Received Box Tops check for \$200
- Reminder that new rules require that PTA collects and pays sales tax on concessions.
- Music Boosters was successful in grant application and received \$1700.

Principal's and Staff Report: Ms. Dillon reported that assessments begin tomorrow. Prior to the Sandy Hook shooting, Patapsco underwent a surprise inspection. Inspector was immediately approached by staff upon entering the building. Ms. Dillon has requested county to look at HVAC because there's an issue with positive air pressure in building that causes doors to get blown open; at school now trying to correct. Last lockdown drill was held first quarter. Every building in school system has 911 radio; if push orange button, direct to 911. BOE is evaluating feasibility of intercom entry on front door; for schools such as Patapsco with portable classroom, would have to consider use of key cards.

Committee Reports:

School Safety: Suzette Bressette attended the county PTACH meeting. Chairpersons (William Ryan and Ken Roe) indicated they have created a task force. Two focus groups have already taken place. They are looking at certain issues: Why aren't all schools locked? Why is there not uniformity among schools with regard to safety. They are looking to collect information and assess feasibility, re-examine security protocols in place. They will evaluate security/crisis management, including anti-bullying and school security.

Fundraising/events: Beth Tennant has arranged for a Patapsco fund raiser night with Patapsco receiving a portion of sales at Chick fil A on February 19. Information will be disseminated in newsletter and emails.

New Business:

Howard County Redistricting: BOE Member Janet Siddiqui, M.D. and Joel A. Gallihue, Manager of School Planning, provided an update on the status of redistricting, and answered members' questions.

Mr. Gallihue indicated that Patapsco is the first Howard County PTA to request him to attend a meeting. He said that the elementary redistricting plan has changed significantly from the original plan, with about 1,000 students placed in different schools. There has been an overall philosophical change in redistricting approach. Two key influences over past two decades: 1. Nonresidential area has become residential (smart growth planning resources, sewers, roads). Building new elementary school now and another new Timbuktu Restaurant (off Coca Cola Drive). These are in "walkable" communities. 2. Students previously at Veterans Elementary are now at Ellicott Mills Middle. County effectively reduced the crowding at Veterans, but Ellicott Mills is 120% utilization, rising to 140%. One option is to add portables. Original plan is designed to fit with elementary plan originally proposed and will need to be re revised. Currently: have pressure on east side schools and capacity in western Howard County. Market has changed and younger families with elementary students less likely to move to large houses in west. There is some capacity at Folly Quarters and Glenwood (but not same as space issues at elementary level). On positive side of moving west: school buildings are expensive and council directed us to see what we currently have. However, there are concerns about feeds and distance involved (i.e., Mt. Hebron to Marriotts Ridge). At any option, we have to look at "feed" arguments. Superintendent Foose has directed us to develop a reasonable, smaller plan. There is no magical solution to crowding. We do look to see what Montgomery County and Baltimore County are doing.

Document will be republished in June, and there will be work session at that time for those interested to watch or attend. Attendance Area Committee will work through summer and expect to end in August; those interested can apply. Changes to document will be published in October. Board will hold series of hearings and work sessions. Documents available on web site – see presentations/minutes. Mr. Gallihue is available by phone at 410-313-7184.

Mr. Gallihue and Ms. Siddiqui addressed audience questions.

Question/Answer Session

Q: Under the current policy, are there guidelines about number of students in a "feeder" to another school? Mr. Gallihue indicated that current policy is 15% feed to high school from middle school (measured at receiving school level). It would

require Board action to change that policy. Keeping communities intact is not on the Board list of objectives. "Feed" issue is area of concern for many in community.

Q: Do polygons make sense from a community perspective?

A: There are about 600 polygons which currently accommodate about 100 or so elementary students. They were previously larger and ineffective because they included about 400 students and we have schools with that capacity. We were directed to not make changes to polygons. We use polygons to evaluate scenarios. Board has made decisions in past to keep certain streets with another polygon.

Q: Is there any thought to creating a work task force to address streets that are divided (i.e., McKenzie)?

A: (Siddiqui) I have not heard anything yet about task force, but will follow up with Superintendent Foose.

Q: Are there any mandates/timelines?

A: (Gallihue) Redistricting is on the same schedule as previously planned. Superintendent Foose has been holding some "listening" sessions. My direction is to gather information from other jurisdictions on what they are doing. Other counties are redistricting annually, but not as comprehensively. Baltimore County grew before the baby boom and already has existing, extra buildings.

Q: The ultimate recommendations of the board have been different than that proposed by the Area Adjustment Committee: only a small percentage of those recommendations have been actually incorporated. What is the knowledge, insight and motivation of the Board that's different than the committee and that makes it better? What is the different insight of the Board?

A: (Siddiqui) We all go through the process differently and some are involved early and others (such as me) keep a distance. We want the committee to do what they have been tasked with. I was surprised when the alternate plan developed. I reviewed and it was acceptable compared to the policy. I go back to the policy and determine whether it has been met by the plan.

Q: For many of us, we are looking at our third or fourth elementary school redistricting. Can you provide insight into why that decision was made?

A: (Siddiqui) We tried a variety of scenarios and listened to the communities, received hundreds of emails. It is part of superintendent's implementation in terms of process. We take each group's comments and come up with best plan.

A: (Gallihue) The decision on a certain dates reflects a process which leads up to the parliamentary decision by the Board of Education and reflects goals, i.e., relieve overcrowding at Veterans. We look at issue comprehensively.

Q: Any consideration to permitting "grandfathering" to permit some family choice of schools rather than splitting children in one family to different school feeds.

A: (Gallihue) If we are able to look at a smaller redistricting plan, that might not happen.

A: (Siddiqui) Grandfathering is different at middle school than at elementary school level since they are together for a shorter period of time. We've discussed this in previous redistricting discussions; we have to look at kids moving together.

Q: Why not just use portables rather than redistricting?

A: (Gallihue) We can move 200 students out of Ellicott Mills as one option instead of redistricting 2,200 kids. Portables are not perfect; they clutter the site, affect traffic and lead to security issues. If we are trying to do a smaller plan, we may have to use temporary capacity there. We review capital projects (i.e., on school building) every year; no one comes to the hearings. People get involved in redistricting but don't attend those hearings. Need to look at implications there. The Capital budget is on the web site. The capital budget process starts first. Waverly Elementary still has addition plan for approximately 2015.

A: (Siddiqui) We receive dollars from the state for construction and must justify our expenditures.

Q: What about high school level redistricting?

A: (Gallihue) The plan for 2016 particularly involves Howard High School overcrowding. The process will take place in 2015 for effect in 2016.

Q: Is the process flawed? What about open enrollment?

A: (Gallihue) Polygons as a whole are not unrepresentative of communities. We have to open a middle school and we must redistrict. We must move about 200 students out of Ellicott Mills? Where do they go? Dunloggin and Patapsco have about 50 seats each. Open enrollment didn't work in this county to change capacity, so we eliminated that.

A: (Siddiqui) We look at every group involved. While there may be tweaks required, Joel gets calls from counties all over the state and is considered an expert. It is not a perfect process, but we take input.

Q: How do county and school system work together for planning for schools and other facilities? Why can county put new development in if there is more growth than school infrastructure can support?

A: Everyone can attend the county planning board meetings, but typically no one attends. Howard County just amended its general plan. At some point, have to go through facilities test and must first go through capital plan. School system has a school projector for the planners. If a school is 115% capacity at elementary/middle school level, it becomes closed. Can use that to stop development for a period of time (four years). They test for schools and roads. You can nominate an interested person, visit Jeff Bronow at capital planning for input on this issue.

Q: What might you recommend at Patapsco?

A (Gallihue): I will look at where we have small amount at Dunloggin and SJLES,

how large of a plan we will make and must deal with Ellicott Mills. Decisions will be made in favor of less disruption to community.

Q: What is our recourse?

A (Gallihue): There is an appeal process, explained in the Frequently Asked Questions on the website, through the state administrative law process. There is also a Howard County school ombudsman, or my supervisor, Ken Roy.

Q: Why aren't similar efforts in place to look at other options beyond redistricting, such as open enrollment and magnet schools?

A (Gallihue): We need to keep looking at other options. We were looking at those options before Superintendent Foose arrived. Policy 9000 allows for open enrollment; this is under review currently.

A (Siddiqui): In the past, we have looked at issues such as equities, lottery, staffing adjustments. We can look at these issues again.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Next meeting: Tuesday, February 19, 2013 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Tina Siedlecki