

APPROVED
21-1987

Rockville, Maryland
April 9, 1987

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Thursday, April 9, 1987, at 8:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo, Vice President
in the Chair
Mr. Blair G. Ewing
Mr. Bruce A. Goldensohn
Mrs. Mary Margaret Slye

Absent: Dr. James E. Cronin
Mrs. Marilyn J. Praisner
Dr. Robert E. Shoenberg
Mr. Eric Steinberg

Others Present: Dr. Harry Pitt, Deputy Superintendent
Acting in the Absence of the Superintendent

Re: ANNOUNCEMENT

Mrs. DiFonzo reported that Mrs. Praisner, Dr. Cronin, and Dr. Shoenberg were out of town and had sent their regrets.

Re: MEETING WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Mr. Mark Simon, president of MCEA, stated that in regard to the budget they had good news and bad news. The bad news was that there did not appear to be a majority on the Council willing to go higher than \$515 million. The good news was the over 3,000 people who showed up at the budget hearing at Richard Montgomery High School. He reported that contrary to the story in the Washington POST, 96 percent of the mail received by the County Council was in favor of full funding of the Board's budget. He did not believe there was any groundswell of taxpayer revolt.

Mr. Simon said that the coalition to support the budget now had about 39 organizations participating, and he did not believe that this group would die out at the end of the budget season. He explained that the coalition was flexible and realistic about the size of the budget and recognized that compromise was necessary. While they thought a budget of \$538 million was justified, they recognized there would be cuts and wanted people to know that the cuts would not be harmless.

Mr. Simon indicated that as a result of the negotiated agreement the feeling in the schools was very positive. He said that this was to the credit of MCEA and the Board of Education.

Mr. Goldensohn stated that various Council members had said that they were not impressed by the turnout at Richard Montgomery because the

Board had arranged this and bused people in. He would like to tell the POST that people came out because of the county executive and the County Council. This turnout had not been organized by the Board. He personally intended to talk with Council members on an individual basis. Mr. Simon suggested that they should deal directly with the county executive in the next week or so.

Mr. Randy Changuris commented that the Council had forgotten that the 3,000 people who showed up were taxpayers exercising their right to petition the government. This was not a pep rally as some Council members had asserted.

Dr. Pitt noted that the newspapers had said that Montgomery County was in the best economy situation in the country. He thought the budget situation was more political than the issue of a tax increase. He suggested that they needed to find a way to resolve this situation by communicating with the county executive and improving the \$515 million figure. Mrs. Slye agreed that taxes were an excuse. There was a balance between what you paid for and what you got. What was being said was they were trying not to raise taxes but they were going to expand and maintain services. She pointed out that people chose to live in Montgomery County because of the services in the county and not because of the tax rate. She said that the folks in the coalition were as well equipped as anyone to make that point. Mr. Ewing observed that Mr. Kramer and some members of the Council were counting on the 3,000 individuals to be polite and reasonable and accepting of a \$515 million budget. He thought there were a lot of people out there still thinking that the cuts in the Board's budget would be minor. They had to get the message across that the salary settlements were \$33 million and the improvements were \$12 million, and a trade off between these figures was not possible.

Mr. Richard Jaworski pointed out that Mr. Kramer listened to the business community because these were his peers. In his work with the Silver Spring business community he had seen support for the Board's budget, but it was important that this support be communicated. Mr. Simon thought that people were confused about the timing of the budget process because everything seemed to be earlier this year. They needed to think about the timing of overtures to the executive and Council and about getting this information to the public.

Mrs. DiFonzo remarked that one of the most frustrating things about the budget process was trying to explain that the Board of Education was not an agency of county government. It was a state agency receiving its funding from the county. The Board of Education was an elected body with its own constituency which did send them messages. She hoped that people realized that if the budget were cut that everyone was going to be hurt including the children. She was concerned that she had not seen recent figures on the county's financial picture, and she was also concerned that by talking about taxpayer revolt and Proposition 13 that the county government was whipping up support for a taxpayer backlash instead of getting support. She hoped that representatives of the coalition would be

there when the Board went before the education committee and the County Council.

Dr. Pitt reported that the next meeting of the education committee was April 13 at 9:30 a.m. He assumed that there would be a review of the cuts in some services that OMB had recommended. He thought they had good data to support their budget including the illegality of a possible cut in benefits. However, they had not received copies of all the cuts to be proposed by OMB, and they were not sure whether the education committee would be voting on Monday. Mr. Ewing suggested that it might be too late to get support from the business community if the education committee did vote on Monday. He was concerned that there wasn't a timetable and a strategy to deal with the budget issue.

Dr. Pitt indicated that they had to make the point that a budget of \$515 million would hurt kids, and none of them wanted to hurt kids. This was not a question of cutting fat in a budget. He pointed out that cuts into some services represented programs that the County Council thought were important enough to fund last year. They should point out that \$33 million was for salaries, \$12 million for improvement, and \$1 million for adding to the Blair magnet, the Richard Montgomery IB program, magnet programs, and the new BICEP program for ESOL students. They had to counter the idea that the school system could withstand such a massive cut.

Mr. James Politis reported that morale in the schools was much better. A cut in the proposed improvements for teachers would have a catastrophic effect. Teachers were now facing an increasingly differentiated school population, and the public was finally realizing how important a job teaching was.

Mr. Simon stated that teachers were pleased about the contract because it was not simply a salary increase. It addressed the issue of planning time for elementary school teachers. However, teachers wondered whether additional aide time was included in the budget for this planning time. Dr. Pitt replied that additional aide time had been included in the \$26 million increase for the contract. Mr. Goldensohn commented that it was not just putting in the proper number of aides to cover the planning time but it was also the organization of the school to consider.

Dr. Pitt remarked that one of the problems with a budget of \$515 million was they would be unable to provide the aides and might have to cut art, music, and physical education teachers as well. Mr. Simon said that what they wanted to hear was that there was no intention to have art, music, p.e., and media people take on an additional burden for the sake of the planning time, and Dr. Pitt replied that this was not their intention.

In regard to the F-I salary schedule, Mr. Simon said they had been receiving a lot of comment. They had written to Mrs. Praisner outlining what they saw as the problem. They needed to have more discussion on this topic. Mr. Rick Bank suggested that after the

budget it might be appropriate to discuss this issue. The people on the F-I schedule were caught between teachers on the A-D schedule and administrators. There were about 165 people in this group, and on a daily basis they were not being paid as much as teachers. He thought that Bob Cooney would agree that they had to look at this situation. Mr. Simon noted that the in newspaper there had been an article on a workshop on Viet Nam. He wanted Board members to know that MCEA had organized that workshop. Mr. Dave Kahn reported that they were now employing teachers who knew nothing about the Viet Nam war, and other teachers were having a hard time securing information on this topic. He thought the workshop was a very positive experience.

Mr. Simon said that in addition to that workshop, MCEA had conducted one on teaching refugee children. In the fall they had had a workshop for association leaders on teacher evaluation systems and had invited people from Fairfax and Cincinnati to participate in the discussion. Later this month they would have another workshop on teacher evaluation.

Mr. Simon noted that they had received the report of the Commission on Excellence in Teaching which took a hard and critical look at the system but was not a blueprint for action. MCEA was unclear about next steps and wanted to be central to discussions and that process. Mrs. DiFonzo replied that the Board was in the process of "walking" through the report with the members of the commission. She was not prepared to talk about next steps until they had finished that discussion. Dr. Pitt commented that there were a lot of good ideas in the report, but some would take some doing in terms of community involvement. He felt that others could be moved on quickly and had to do with the selection and hiring of a new teacher. He thought that they did need to change their evaluation system, and MCEA would play a role in that. He pointed out that the teacher training centers would not be terribly expensive, and he would like to see movement there. Other recommendations would require more time and more discussion with community, staff, and teacher involvement. Mr. Ewing commented that the report had a great many positive ideas and suggestions, and he was pleased with the general thrust of the report. He thought they should complete their review and then lay out a plan to consider the recommendations. He hoped that they could work out a mutually agreeable mode of consultation on the issues as well as a timetable. He would welcome MCEA's suggestions as to how that might work.

Mr. Changuris stated that he was excited about the ideas presented in the commission's report. He remarked that their recommendations developed education as a true profession. The contract MCEA had negotiated had been a tremendous morale booster, and a lot of teachers had changed their minds about retiring. He and his colleagues wanted to work with the recommendations in the report of the commission, and they wanted to be a part of the Board's process because if they "owned" the report it would heighten their sense of professionalism. Mr. Jaworski agreed that teachers were excited about the report because while it was visionary, it was also practical.

Mr. Kahn commented that he was not as ready to embrace the recommendations of the commission, but he was willing to listen to more discussion and wanted to be part of the solution. He hoped that MCEA had gained credibility as a voice speaking for teachers. Mr. Rick Bank, executive director of MCEA, saw their involvement in the recommendations as a continuation of bargaining. He thought that in the most recent bargaining they had made a conscious effort to deal with issues on a pragmatic basis. He said they had a threshold of credibility and a chance to cooperate in solving problems. The recommendations of the commission were superimposed on the contract, and if MCEA did not have input they would view this as a threat. In regard to evaluation, he felt they should be sitting down right now and talking to the Board before they got to negotiations.

Ms. Marsha Smith stated that teachers were interested not only in salary but also working conditions. Teachers did want more say on what was going on in their schools and more input into decisions. She commented that they were all here to make sure the education delivered was the best they could have. Ms. Phyllis Cochran urged the Board to look at the report very closely. While the salary issue had raised morale, they had to look at how decisions were made and how teachers could be more creative and have input into what was most appropriate in their local school.

Mr. Simon stated that the next issue was the proposed changes from the state Board of Education on requirements to be an ESOL teacher. He asked whether the Board had discussed this and taken a stance. He explained that present ESOL teachers and new hires would be required to take additional courses. Mr. Jaworski pointed out that none of the MCPS teachers met this requirement. Dr. Pitt agreed to check into whether or not the Board had taken a position on this issue. In regard to the make-up day for the sixth snow day, Mr. Simon understood that the last day would be a half day with the day before the last day being a full day for students. Mrs. Slye thought that this arrangement might create undue difficulties for elementary teachers with their closing activities. Dr. Pitt explained that they had looked at adding a day and having a professional day on Monday; however, they did not want to bring teachers back for one day. He was concerned about running two half days at the end of the school year. Ms. Phyllis Cochran pointed out that teachers were now expected to do a day's work in three hours which would make it very difficult for them to do their records. Dr. Pitt agreed that it would be possible to run two half days for students. He pointed out that they had a problem of having to pay supporting services employees for that extra day which they had not budgeted for. Therefore, they would probably not serve lunch on the last day of school.

Mr. Simon asked about the possibility of requesting a waiver from the state regarding the one day they had to make up. Dr. Pitt replied that they were doing that for a few schools that had closed for an extra day for a variety of reasons, but MCPS had to make an effort to make up the one snow day for the entire county.

Mr. Goldensohn asked MCEA for their comments on the report of the

Commission on Excellence in Teaching. After Board discussion, the superintendent would be making recommendations. Mrs. DiFonzo thanked the Mr. Simon and the officers of MCEA for a very positive discussion.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The vice president adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

VICE PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

HP:mlw