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Rockville, Maryland  
October 18, 1990

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Thursday, October 18, 1990, at 8 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Dr. Robert E. Shoenberg, President  
in the Chair  
Mr. David Chang  
Dr. James E. Cronin  
Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo  
Mr. Blair G. Ewing  
Mr. Bruce A. Goldensohn  
Mrs. Catherine E. Hobbs  
Mrs. Marilyn J. Praisner

Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Harry Pitt, Superintendent  
Dr. Paul L. Vance, Deputy Superintendent  
Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

Re: GENERAL DISCUSSION OF FACILITIES  
ISSUES

Ms. Ann Briggs, director of the Department of Educational Facilities Planning and Capital Programming, introduced Mr. Richard Hawes, director of the Division of Construction; Dr. Philip Rohr, associate superintendent for supportive services; Mr. Bruce Crispell, demographic planner; and Ms. Deanna Newman, facilities planner.

Dr. Pitt reported that they had received a letter from the county government about a general freeze this year. MCPS was already in the freeze status, had a problem with additional students above projection, and was facing an unknown problem with the cost of utilities. He would be presenting his facilities recommendations to the Board in a few weeks, and he alerted the Board that he might also present alternatives to the facilities plan.

Mr. Crispell shared information about the tremendous growth in the county and the increasing diversity of its population. The county had grown by 30 percent population in the last ten years and had gained some 70,000 new households. This legacy would last through the 1990's even though the economy was softer and slowing down. The enrollment was 1,100 over forecast, 3,500 students more than last year, for a total of 103,773 this semester. Dr. Pitt called attention to the fact that Mr. Crispell's original projections were higher, and Mr. Crispell indicated that if his original projections had been used they would have been 800 below projection. Mr. Crispell explained the difficulties of projecting kindergarten enrollment and said that some of the unanticipated growth in high schools might be due to

more private school students coming into the public schools because of changes in the economy. In regard to special education enrollment, Dr. Cronin asked whether students were moving into the county because of MCPS programs or whether these were newly identified special education students.

Mr. Crispell described trends in the housing market and building starts. He said that Park and Planning and the Council of Governments were not seeing this period as a recession but as a slowdown because the unemployment rate was still around 2 to 3 percent. Mrs. Praisner suggested that they had to develop their arguments for the school system's potential needs and make their case for school facilities. Dr. Pitt replied that the students were already living in the county and would be entering the schools, and Mr. Crispell pointed out that this year's kindergarten was 2,300 more than the twelfth grade going out. He expected that the peak year in kindergarten enrollment might be 1995. He shared some statistics on the birth rates for the past decades and noted that this year would be the low point in 9-12 enrollment. He pointed out graphs showing where the highest growth would be in the various high schools. Dr. Shoenberg noted that it would not be possible to relieve overcrowding at the high school level by boundary changes because most schools would not be underenrolled.

Mr. Crispell predicted that by 1996 there would be 131,000 students enrolled in MCPS. He reported that his projections from two years ago were very close to this mark. Dr. Pitt asked staff to provide the Board and staff with the forecasts from Fairfax County when they were available.

Mr. Crispell pointed out that a dramatic change had occurred in their ESOL population which had grown by 2,000 students since 1984. He showed Board members a chart on the ESOL centers showing the home schools of the students. He also shared information on the changing minority population of the county with the growth in black, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian students with the white population remaining stable. Board members viewed graphs on all of the high school clusters showing their racial composition. Mr. Crispell said that another dimension to look at was socio-economic status, and the best indicator they had of that was the free and reduced-price meals program which had a dramatic increase of 19 percent this year in the number of students being approved.

Mr. Goldensohn pointed out that in December there would be new members of the County Council, and it might be useful for Mr. Crispell to make this presentation to them. Dr. Pitt replied that the education committee normally received the presentation; however, they could extend the invitation to other Council members. He asked Dr. Rohr to pursue this.

Dr. Rohr said that various allegations had been made about their construction cost overruns. Those allegations stemmed from the

initial cost estimates on projects which followed the project no matter how it changed over the years. For example, their initial estimate for asbestos removal had been \$240,000, but the law had been revised and now they were estimating removal to cost \$24,000,000. However, the initial cost was still on the project description form. This year staff would try to explain the changes in the scope of projects on the PDF's. He assured the Board that they were not experiencing cost overruns.

Mr. Hawes reported that in the past year their cost per square foot had declined because of the favorable construction market. The commercial market was depressed which generated increased competition for public buildings. Another factor in reducing cost had been the reuse of designs for new construction. He provided the Board with a handout showing a comparison of square foot costs over the past five years among MCPS and similar school districts in the area. Mrs. Praisner cautioned staff about drawing conclusions from these kinds of figures because there were so many variables and Montgomery County did much more construction than other counties. Dr. Pitt agreed but pointed out that the significant figure on the handout was the comparison of Montgomery County costs with those allowed by the state. MCPS costs were 20 percent below the state's allowable costs. Mr. Hawes stated that based on labor costs, materials costs, and new environmental regulations they were forecasting construction costs for next year similar to this year's.

Mr. Ewing asked whether their reduced costs were because of the volume of work or the way MCPS managed its construction program. Dr. Rohr replied that they were well managed and because of the volume of business, a lot of contractors were used to working with them. Another factor was that MCPS continually evaluated its programs and refined the design of its projects. For example, they had repeated one design four times and had talked with the architect, contractors, and users to find out changes that should be made. Mr. Ewing asked about comparisons with national figures for square footage costs, and Mr. Hawes explained why it was very difficult to index national figures. They believed they were about 5 percent below the national figures when they factored in costs in the Washington metropolitan area. However, they did not believe this was a good comparison. Mrs. DiFonzo pointed out that other school systems might have higher land costs, higher labor costs, or include features such as swimming pools.

In view of the amount of overtime needed to open schools on time, Mrs. Hobbs asked whether it was time to revise the building schedules for school buildings. Mr. Hawes replied that they had received approval from the county government to increase the time on new construction and on modernization. Dr. Rohr added that the schools planned for FY 1992 would reflect the lengthened time schedule.

Ms. Newman reported that most clusters had requested additional space, modernization, PLAR projects, or special projects such as computer labs or ceiling fans. For the most part, clusters wanted their projects to stay in the six-year schedule or move up on the schedule. There were requests for new projects in a few of the clusters. She showed slides of some of the projects done in this fiscal year. In particular, she asked Board members to pay close attention to the slides of the relocatable addition at Kennedy which contained bathrooms in the new wing. She pointed out that they had 40 schools on the six-year modernization list, and many had asked to be accelerated.

Ms. Newman said that in working with principals and staff, they all wanted school buildings that work and were efficient places to work in and to learn in. The single most requested item was additional electrical outlets. Teachers asked for work spaces and more storage. Principals wanted offices with good visibility to see people entering the school, and they wanted recognizable entrances to their school. Many clusters requested PLAR projects for roofs, bleachers, parking lot lighting, playground equipment, and handicap accessibility.

Ms. Briggs announced that tonight's meeting was the first visible step in the capital budget process. The superintendent would publish his recommendations about November 1. There would be a Board worksession and Board alternatives on November 8. The public hearings would be held on November 19 and 20, with decisions made on November 26 and 27. Mrs. Hobbs asked about improving office space in the Carver Educational Services Center and in one or two of the area offices. Dr. Rohr replied that they were reviewing these situations and would have recommendations on November 1. Dr. Shoenberg thanked staff for their presentation.

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president of the Board adjourned the meeting at 10 p.m.

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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY

HP:mlw