

JOINT MEETING - November 16, 2004

A Joint Meeting of the Mayor and City Council and the Washington County Board of Education was held at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, November 16, 2004 in the Council Chamber, 2nd Floor at City Hall. Present were Mayor William M. Breichner; City Council Members K. B. Aleshire, N. L. Hendershot and C. N. Moller, City Administrator Bruce Zimmerman; Kathleen Maher, Planning Director; Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, Alfred Martin, Finance Director and City Clerk D. K. Spickler.

The following Board of Education members were present: Dr. Betty Morgan, Edward Forrest, Paul Bailey, Jackie Fisher, Bernadette Wagner, W. Princeton Young and Russell Williams.

Mayor Breichner called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Morgan presented the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report as required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) directive. The Washington County Public School System has met all the federal NCLB requirements. Each year the bar is raised on performance levels and there is a steep curve in next year's achievement level. The Board of Education is committed to meeting the requirements each year. At this time, the graduation rate is the highest it has ever been in Washington County. Sixty eight percent of the County's high school graduates go on to college.

By the year 2014, 100% of all students must be proficient (according to the NCLB law) in all areas. There are specific requirements for different groups of students. There is a major challenge to meet the goals for special education students.

The consequences for not achieving the AYP is a designation of a school that needs improvement. All the reports are reviewed by the State. Math and reading scores will have to increase by 9.5 points and 10.8 points, respectively, in order to achieve the goals set.

Key strategies for raising student achievement include:

- Use of Student Achievement Specialists (SAS) to provide crucial school-specific professional development in supporting teacher needs and student learning

- Center for Peak Performance and Productivity, provides district-wide professional development

- School improvement plan

- Use local benchmarks as MSA achievement leading indicators

Data Management System - performance matters, to inform and improve student achievement

Implementation of ongoing and new interventions

Monitor implementation of Voluntary State Curriculum with specific feedback to teachers regarding model lessons, grade level team discussion, data analysis, school-based intervention plans

Initiatives are also being implemented to raise the achievement levels of students with disabilities.

Councilmember Aleshire asked Dr. Morgan if, as the county grows and becomes more diverse, does she anticipate it will be more difficult to meet the requirements for the ethnic/special groups. Dr. Morgan expects the special ed rate to remain steady at 14%. Mr. Bailey indicated he has heard that some people are moving to Washington County in order to receive some of the services provided to disabled students, especially in the case of autism. Mr. Williams stated many people are moving here from Montgomery County because they cannot afford to live there, even with Section 8 housing vouchers. Mr. Young agreed that people are coming to Washington County in search of affordable housing and because of the services provided to Washington County residents. Ms. Wagner stated she thinks we are going to be attracting people from Frederick County and other eastern counties and the challenges to educators will continue to increase. Dr. Lockard indicated the individual child's needs will be focused, especially in the intervention program.

Councilmember Aleshire asked if anyone has completed an analysis of how the inclusion of grades 4, 6 and 7 in the testing scores will affect the overall scores. Dr. Abernathy stated these students were included in pre-testing and their scores were higher than the students included in the State reporting numbers.

Councilmember Hendershot agreed that people are moving to Washington County because of the amenities available here. He stated one of the problems in Washington County is the aging population and the less intelligent. He suggested that the Board of Education look at the program called "Play Attention" to help the less intelligent. Dr. Abernathy stated the program is being used and it allows students to control computer programs with the use of brain waves. It is not medical but educational. Ms. Wagner thinks this could help the adult community also. Dr. Morgan stated some of the results of this program have been phenomenal.

Increasing school enrollment was then discussed. William Blum stated he did not prepare a presentation for this topic. He thought the City would be presenting material.

Mayor Breichner presented a Board of Education staff letter that provides data to City staff about the enrollment of schools and the numbers of anticipated increases in student yield for developments. In this letter, Mr. Blum includes his opinion on what could be done to control growth which is to not allow development to move forward if the school is rated over 85% capacity.

Mr. Forrest stated the Board met with the County today and discussed the possibility of expanding Salem Avenue to a five round school. The Commissioners approved the expansion.

Mr. Blum stated his letter is in response to discussions with Kathleen Maher about the Mt. Aetna farms development. Mayor Breichner indicated Mt. Aetna farms is not within the City limits and no plans have been presented.

Councilmember Aleshire asked if the number of students per household is a realistic number. Mr. Blum stated the number was established by Tischler Associations. Mayor Breichner stated there are some developments that would not create an increase in student numbers. He asked if development in the City is really affecting the enrollment increase or is it from growth in the County.

Councilmember Aleshire stated minor developments do not fall within the requirements of an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). If the APFO was more even, more municipalities would accept the concept. Development is going to happen either way but the City would want some type of autonomy so that their minor developments would not be delayed by APFO fees. He stated he feels the student density per household numbers may need to be adjusted. He would like to see a differentiation between City development and rural development's impact on enrollment. Most of the projects in the building pipeline have already progressed beyond the reach of the APFO. This issue has been addressed at the 2+2 meetings. He stated the City is willing to do anything that will increase funding for the impact on schools.

Ms. Wagner asked if the County was also agreeable. Councilmember Aleshire indicated they are and the 2+2 committee would like to discuss the excise tax with the Washington County Delegation.

Ms. Fisher stated she appreciates the efforts of the 2+2 committee. She asked if they feel there is support within the delegation. Councilmember Aleshire stated he thinks the delegation will be supportive.

Mr. Williams asked if the City was concerned that funds collected in the City will go to improve non-City schools. Mayor Breichner and Councilmember Aleshire both stated they understand any funding collected will go to school improvement in general. Mayor Breichner stated the excise tax is appealing because it is collected across the board.

Mr. Blum indicated one issue is the funding, but another one is having the building for the students to go to.

Councilmember Aleshire stated he is concerned with the amount of development in the Sharpsburg Pike area. The sewer from that area flows to a County plant. E. Russell Hicks will have to be expanded and their sewer will flow to the Hagerstown Plant, which is at capacity. He stated the City needs to make sure, as development occurs, there are assurances that water/sewer capacity will be available for development. Councilmember Aleshire stated he understands a school ordinance needs to be enacted before the developments are 90% complete.

Councilmember Hendershot stated there was discussion last year about a shortfall in capital improvements. He knows there are a lot of initiatives taking place in the City. One of these is the School for the Arts. He stated one of the first questions asked by potential home owners is “what are the schools like”. The School for the Arts will be a major amenity.

Mayor Breichner indicated road improvements are needed on Eastern Boulevard and the City has authorized debt to make those improvements. Developers will be required to fund part of the improvements.

Dr. Morgan stated Pangborn Elementary School needs full attention and this is a top priority for her. Some action needs to be taken to establish funding for schools. Refurbishing schools can make a huge difference in a neighborhood.

Everyone agreed that the right mechanism has to be found to make it work.

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna K. Spickler, City Clerk

Approved: December 21, 2004