

Open Work Session

Quarterly Meeting with Wicomico County Board of Education – FY23 Budget Session

April 19, 2022

Dr. Donna Hanlin, Superintendent; Dr. Micah Stauffer, Chief Finance and Operations Officer; and Mr. Jesse Reid, Comptroller, came before Council. Dr. Hanlin said also with them are Dr. Rick Briggs, Chief Academic Officer, and Ms. Kim Miles, Assistant Superintendent for Student and Family Services.

Mr. Holloway asked where the Board Members are, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, it is kind of a fluky thing that each one of them had a conflict today, unfortunately.

Mr. Cannon said the major concern on the agenda is the upcoming budget session, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they added a few things mostly related to budget.

Mr. Holloway suggested putting this off until some Board Members can be here. He clarified, he is being serious. Ms. Acle said it kind of feels a little odd that they are not here. Mr. Holloway said there are no Board Members here, to which Mr. Cannon responded, everyone is here, and they can still have a discussion. He said he is sure they went to a lot of trouble to prepare this and they are giving up their time, to which Mr. Holloway responded, he understands that.

Dr. Hanlin clarified, as she said, their Board Members, unfortunately, each had a conflict today, so they are not able to be with them, but obviously they know this budget very well having approved it.

2023 Proposed Budget

Mr. Cannon asked if what has been given to the Council today are some changes that they are anticipating, or just a highlight, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, highlights, and she will turn it over to Mr. Reid to take Council through that.

Mr. Reid said he wants to briefly highlight a few things in the budget for the benefit of the Council, and he would like to begin with their revenue, which is from page 50 of their budget, and is the top page on the handout. He said their maintenance of effort County appropriation number provided by MSDE was \$50.1 million, which is an increase of \$1.3 million over the previous year. He said their other revenue is down primarily because of low interest rates, lack of rental revenue, and not being allowed to charge for summer school any longer per the law. He said their foundation revenue, which is based on total enrollment, is \$86.4 million, which is an increase of \$12.8 million over the current year as a result of Kirwan being fully implemented. He said net taxable income is now included in the foundation revenue, but that goes away in FY23. He said comp ed, which is based on free and reduced meals student count, is being flat funded because their count is down slightly. He said special education appears to be up almost \$2 million, but in reality it is only up slightly, which he will explain in a second. He said limited English proficiency is up \$2.5 million because of the large growth in that population. He said college and career readiness is a new funding source under Kirwan, and they are receiving \$439,000 for that initiative. He said transportation is up about \$550,000 and the guaranteed tax base, which is based on County wealth and enrollment, is down slightly. He said they did not receive a declining enrollment grant this year, and their teacher salary grant is down about \$1.6 million because it is now based solely on nationally board certified teachers. He said transitional supplemental instruction (TSI) was formerly a grant, and it is now part of the general fund. He said aging schools and nonpublic placements are not

changing, so that leaves them with \$14.2 million in additional State aid. He said they have about \$3.9 million in additional fund balance left over from the previous year, and that added in with the additional County and State revenue brings the total to \$18.9 million in new funding; however, that number is misleading because they are not able to compare apples to apples. He said \$2.5 million of this funding was TSI and special ed grant funding previously, so it is not really new funding available, it already has \$2.5 million in salaries applied against it, as Council will see in a minute. He said that paired with \$3.3 million in additional costs just to open the doors next year brings the number down to about \$13 million in new funding that they had to work with.

Mr. Reid said, on the next page, which is page 58 of their budget book, is the breakdown of how new funding is allocated. He said they have the cost of doing business of \$3.3 million that he just mentioned, and these are the additional costs just to open the door next year, the increase in insurance, mainly health insurance, of almost \$1 million, the increase in their retirement contribution over \$1 million, increases from rising costs due to inflation and the shortage of materials, and increases in their software and hardware annual maintenance contracts. He said, as he mentioned, they had \$2.5 million in grants that became unrestricted and that represent 47 positions that are moving from being grant funded to now being funded by the general fund, so no new people or positions, just changes in funding sources.

Mr. Dodd clarified, there are no new positions, to which Mr. Reid responded, not so far, but the next page does have some new positions. He said, at the bottom of the page he projects it is \$600,000 in salary savings from turnover, so that is a reduction in expenses.

Mr. Reid said the next page displays new requests. He said they are having to pick up seven positions due to the expiring pre-K expansion grant, and they are adding eight teachers including five English language learning (ELL) teachers. He said they are expanding funding for their band programs, increasing funding for some before and after school programs, and adding four technology staff due to the increase in devices in their growing tech environment. He said they are adding a CNA, two additional ground staff, a transportation specialist, and two additional custodial staff due to the expansion of alternative programs. He said, although they are adding 25.5 positions, seven and a half of those are the result of grants expiring that they have to pick up in the general fund. He said, finally, they needed \$10.7 million to fund their negotiated agreements, which added almost \$900,000 in additional charges for a total of \$11.6 million. He said everything on this page, in addition to everything on the previous page, comes to \$18.9 million creating a balanced budget.

Mr. Dodd said about two years ago after COVID started he asked if they were going to continue doing Zoom type classes, and he thinks Dr. Briggs said yes, so it is inevitable. He said he is curious how large the IT Department got and how many employees they have increased since COVID, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, he would have to get back to Council with that specific number, but they have added some positions because they went to a one-to-one initiative. He clarified, from the time before COVID to now they have added 6,000-7,000 laptops into the hands of their students in going to a one-to-one initiative.

Mr. Dodd said his second question is how that is working out because he knows they are talking about kids and expensive laptops. He then asked if they are destroying them by accident. He clarified, not intentionally, but there is a lot of handling, so are they seeing a lot of laptop repairs, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, they are seeing some, but they make sure the laptops they are using are durable laptops. He said also, much like a textbook, if there is damage that is caused intentionally by a student, that may be something that goes back to that student to partially pay for at some point as well.

Mr. Dodd said police officers have something called a Toughbook, which is a heavy duty laptop and is a little more expensive, but prevents damage. He then asked if they have those in schools, to which Dr. Briggs responded, they are not currently utilizing anything like that. Mr. Dodd said to keep an eye out for that as there may be a need. Dr. Hanlin said she thinks they are experiencing normal wear and tear.

Mr. Davis asked, with the kids who do not speak their language, is there any point those kids learn the English language, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they do learn the English language. She clarified, they are taught by certified ELL teachers who are experienced and have been trained in teaching students from multiple languages how to speak English. She said the goal is that they become more proficient in English so they can eventually make their way into regular classes. Mr. Davis asked if they are required to take them even if they do not speak English, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, absolutely. Mr. Davis said he has problems with them on the bus. He explained, he had a little girl who stood at the back of the bus and he asked her to sit down and she just stood there, and someone told him she did not speak English, so that is a little problem. He then asked, if a child is in first grade, at what point should they be able to speak English proficiently to be in a regular class, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, there is not one rule of thumb, and she would say it varies from student to student. She said obviously their academic ability in their own native language is a factor, but it will vary. She then asked Dr. Briggs if he has any idea of a range, to which Dr. Briggs responded, no. He explained, there are so many factors that go into it, from the amount of English that is spoken in the home, their academic ability, and their eagerness to want to learn the English language definitely plays a factor. He said, in some homes there is no English spoken whatsoever, so the only English they are exposed to is the time they are at school from the second they step on the bus until the second they step off it in the afternoon, so it really ranges. He said they try to speed that process up as expediently as they can. Mr. McCain added, the school system receives the students at all different levels from high school to elementary.

Ms. Acle said her husband came here from Cuba in the 1970s and his family did not speak any English. She said he failed fourth grade and then went on to finish college and medical school in five years.

Mr. Dodd asked if Dr. Briggs knows how many foreign languages they have in their public schools, to which Dr. Briggs responded, they have 49 he believes. Mr. Davis said that does not include the dialect because he had a problem with them on the bus. He explained, they were Spanish so they took them to West Salisbury with their parents, and Rick Smoke and an interpreter were there. He said the interpreter was talking to the parents because at the bus stop there were three groups who would not mingle with each other. He said, when they were talking, the interpreter was speaking to the lady, but she stopped and they asked her what was wrong, and she said they had an attitude towards her because she was not speaking their dialect.

Mr. Dodd said a lot of people do not know they have 49 languages.

Mr. Cannon said he hates to take isolated areas because there is always more to it, but this says a 35 percent increase. He then asked if that is because there is an increase in the enrollment of those students, or are they just applying more funds towards that effort, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she believes it is a combination. She said the enrollment of their ELL population has increased, but they also added a program about two years ago that, in essence, is a newcomer's program so students who are brand new and speak no English at all start there so they get intense services. She said that has been a research-based model that has been used in other places and has been very effective. She said they have had that in place, and they have needed to continue to add staff to make that work.

Mr. Cannon said he noted there was a 100 percent reduction based on the decline in enrollment. He said, again, taking these numbers as they are by themselves is not always a good thing, but he believes they have a 100 percent decline in enrollment grant where they have reduced that by \$4,833,000. He said he knows there has been an issue mostly due to COVID that enrollment has gone down, and he believes they sent a letter out not too long ago trying to express their concerns to the State that declining enrollment may be an anomaly to a certain degree. He then asked where they are with that in this current reduction, to which Mr. Reid responded, they tried to get them to enact a declining enrollment grant this year, but their argument was, because Kirwan funding is now implemented and the per-pupil funding is higher, and because no one is actually losing money, they were not doing a declining enrollment grant. Dr. Hanlin clarified that no one received the declining enrollment grant.

Dr. Stauffer said this is a good example of how Blueprint funding has increased per pupil, but at the same time there is other funding they typically received in the past that is being used to subsidize that increase.

Ms. Acle asked if they have a plan to bring those students back to the public school system. She said, losing so much enrollment, is there family engagement or something where they can start bringing them back into the public school system, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they have been successful in bouncing back to some degree in other settings, and they are not back to where they were before COVID, but they continue to do outreach with families, especially out in the communities with their community liaisons.

Mr. Dodd said he does not know if he is reading this right, but it looks like there is just a \$10,000 increase in school resource officers (SROs). He said he knows somebody was going to pass legislation where they were going to have to increase SROs in more of the schools, such as elementary schools. He then asked if they have done that, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, all of their SROs are assigned to elementary schools as needed, so they are in compliance with the law. Mr. Dodd clarified, they do not have any there fulltime yet, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, correct. She clarified, nor is it required by law at this point, they just have to be assigned.

Mr. Cannon said it is good to see they had a 190 percent increase in pre-K, which he thinks is good, but he thinks they have always been ahead of the curve on that. He then asked if this is part of a local initiative, or is it just part of what the State government is sending down at the local level, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she thinks everyone recognizes the importance of pre-K, and she is really pleased with their efforts locally to increase pre-K enrollment, not only 4 years olds, but 3 year olds. She said her colleagues across the State are scrambling as they are being required to increase the enrollment more and more because they have not. She clarified, she should not speak generally, but in many systems they have not considered that as much of a priority as they have here.

Budget Requirements

Dr. Stauffer said they want to take a step back for a second because many times they will present the budget that they have and Council asks great questions they are able to inform them on, but they thought it might be helpful to just take a step back and talk a little bit about how they structure their budget the way that they do, what requirements they have to follow as a school system within Maryland, the things they include in their budget, and how they inform the Council and the community as well, so they wanted to spend a few minutes on that.

Mr. Reid said they prepare their budget in accordance with Maryland Education Code 5-101, that spells out the order that the funds and categories should be displayed. He said he is not going to read every line, but they can see that they are to budget the number of full-time equivalent positions by each category and any fund balances held by an outside source. He said, on page 2 they can see that they are to show the current expense fund estimated receipts as part one of their budget. He said the current expense fund is made up of their general fund to which the County contributes funding, and their State and federal grants. He said they have to display their budget by the 14 major categories, which are administration, mid-level administration, instructional salaries, textbooks and supplies, other instructional costs, special ed, student personnel, health, student transportation, operational plant, maintenance, fixed charges, food service, and capital outlay. He said part two of their budget is to be the school construction fund where they have to display their requested appropriation from the capital plan or capital appropriation by land, buildings and equipment, site improvement, remodeling, additional equipment, and debt service. He said they actually display a lot of additional information that is not required by law, which they do for two reasons - one because they follow the format recommended by the Maryland Association of School Business Officials so they can ensure that they are producing a budget document that is held to their standards and similar to other Maryland Counties. He said also they want it to be a document that one can go to and access just about anything they want to know about the school system, so they include an executive summary of who they are, enrollment numbers by school, projected enrollment for the future, projected expenses and revenue, salary scales for employees, and how they compare against other Counties on various categories across the State. He clarified, that is just a list of a few examples. He said, again, these are not required, it is just additional information they like to provide. He said the budget document that they produce in March is not as thorough as the document they produce in June because they do not have all the statistics and supplemental information by March, so it goes from about a 194 page document in March to a 260 page document in June. He said, if Council really wants to get the full details of what is going on, they should read the one they post in June after final approval.

Ms. Acle said this is extremely helpful and she does not know if he can put this on their website because she has gotten so many questions over the past month about the reason teachers do not get a raise is because of the tax cap. She said this really clarifies that point in a nice, clear, concise way. Mr. Reid said that is a great idea.

Mr. Holloway asked Ms. Acle to explain why the teachers did not get a raise because of the tax cap, to which Ms. Acle responded, that is a misconception. She clarified, it is a misconception that just needs to be cleared up.

Maintenance of Effort Versus Local Share

Mr. Cannon asked if maintenance of effort is still around, to which Mr. Reid responded, it is. He said he was going to explain maintenance of effort going forward because things are going to be changing. He explained, FY23 is the final year of the maintenance of effort kicker. He said Council may recall that, if a County government's education effort was below the Statewide average, there was an escalator that kicked in requiring a County to contribute additional funding, so starting in FY24 and going forward, County funding will be based on the higher of the new maintenance of effort, which is, again, without the kicker or what the State is calling local share. He said the new maintenance of effort is simply going to be what they are slated to receive from the County in the current year divided by last year's

enrollment times the current year's enrollment. He said, because there is no longer a kicker, the per-pupil maintenance of effort funding will always be the same every year. He said local share is going to be based on eight different funding sources, which are total enrollment, County wealth, college and career readiness students, free and reduced meal students, English language learning students, special ed students, students requiring supplemental instruction, and pre-K students. He said, again, going forward, it is going to be the higher of the new maintenance of effort without the kicker or the local share, which is the eight separate allocations based on the items he just listed.

Mr. Dodd asked if Mr. Reid said maintenance of effort is not going to change, to which Mr. Reid responded, it is going to go down for them because every year they have had the kicker. Mr. Dodd said it sounds like the formula has changed, to which Mr. Reid responded, the formula has changed in the sense that now it is the greater of the new maintenance of effort without the kicker or the local share, which is based on those eight different items. Mr. Dodd said the County still has to fund their budget, to which Mr. Reid responded, correct. He clarified, one of the two is going to be required, either maintenance of effort or local share.

Revised Blueprint Timeline

Dr. Stauffer said this is called the proposed new plan timeline for the Blueprint plan that was published back in February and has since been approved by the General Assembly at the conclusion of this Legislative Session early last week. He said it kind of outlines the new proposed timeline of where they are. He said, if Council remembers, the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) is the Maryland Governmental Department that will be in charge of implementing the Blueprint Statewide. He said that Department was late in getting started. He explained, Governor Hogan was to nominate members for the AIB and that was to be done by July of this past summer, but it did not occur until the fall. He said the Blueprint AIB committee did not meet until around Thanksgiving and then really did not get started with staff until an Executive Director was chosen just two months ago. He said then they will be starting to staff that department between now and the end of June, so hopefully they will be in a position where they can really get started on the work they need to do. He said the entire timeline for Blueprint really has been pushed back by about nine to ten months Statewide. He said, if they look at this new proposed timeline, some key dates that stand out are that on December 1 the AIB adopts the Comprehensive Implementation Plan that will be a Statewide plan that all 24 local school systems have to follow in order to develop the Local Implementation Plan. He said Wicomico County will have its own Blueprint Implementation Plan that is developed, and that has to be submitted to the State by March 15, 2023. He clarified, the original deadline was June 15. He said the next step for Wicomico will be that they will be developing workgroups specifically around the five pillars or five policy areas of Blueprint itself. He said these include the expansion of pre-K or early childhood education, college and career readiness including CTE, the career ladder or high quality instructional staff, as well as ensuring that they have resources for their populations of students that are struggling or need those additional resources to be successful, which includes English language learners and special education students, so there will be more funding available to help push those students forward, and then also governance and accountability both at the State level and the local level. He said they will be getting those workgroups together over the course of the next few months and MSDE will be taking a guiding role. He said, even though the Accountability and Implementation Board will serve as the overarching accountability piece for Blueprint, MSDE will be working alongside them in the local school systems to provide guidance to each school system as they develop these implementation plans. He said that will begin this summer

and into the fall and that is when they will really see the work start over the course of the next six months or so as each school system develops their plan.

Ms. Acle asked if they are then accountable to this Board or to the elected Board because it seems a little strange to have an appointed Board when they have an elected School Board. Dr. Stauffer responded, their local Blueprint Implementation Plan will first be approved by their local Board. He said they will be a key piece in developing that. He said that plan will then be submitted to both MSDE and then ultimately the AIB will be the ones approving that plan. Ms. Acle asked if the first step will be the elected Board, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, that is correct.

Mr. Cannon asked if that is what is due by March 15, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, March 15 is when it is due to the AIB, so that is when the local plans have to be submitted at a State level. He said, obviously, if they work backwards, they will be working with their local Board earlier than that.

Mr. McCain asked who appoints the AIB, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, there was a nominating committee that was first formed by the Governor. He said that committee then chose to put 12 names forward, and then ultimately the AIB was selected by the Governor and also the General Assembly.

Ms. Acle asked if they will be able to put these Boards together locally, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, that is correct. He said they will have stakeholders from not only Wicomico County Public Schools but also the community as well, as it needs to apply to each of those areas.

Mr. Cannon said one of those categories was recruitment and retention, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, that is correct. Dr. Hanlin added, those pillars are very well aligned with the strategic plan that is already in place, to which Mr. Cannon agreed.

Media Policy

Dr. Hanlin said she knows there is a lot of controversy in the community about books and media materials in their media centers, and she thought she would speak to that for a moment and tell Council how they make decisions about selecting materials as well as reviewing materials when parents express concern. She said obviously she is sure, just even on the County Council, even on the School Board, and people sitting in this room, the opinions about this topic are extremely wide from those who believe that it should be very limited what students have access to in the schools, as well as the other end of the spectrum. She said they hear from those individuals as well who believe that there is a place for banning or censorship of materials as it could be considered a first amendment violation in their schools. She said they have a policy and procedure in place for the selection of textbooks and media materials, and also the review of those materials. She said she has for Council a copy of the policy, which is the Board's policy, and they will note that the Board creates a policy which basically is their belief about how their schools should be governed, and then they direct the Superintendent to create procedures, which is the administrative procedure, which is like the law and regulation at the State level.

Dr. Hanlin said the policy is short and just describes that the Board believes they should provide students with a comprehensive selection of materials and textbooks that support curricular goals and objectives and reflects their varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels for the divergent student population that it serves. She said it also indicates that those materials should be in support of their mission, vision, educational philosophy, beliefs and values.

Dr. Hanlin said what is next in the handout is much more detailed and is the procedure. She said, in addition to a handbook that media specialists have, it specifies how materials are selected and it talks about that they are selected by their media specialists. She said they have a certified library media specialist in each one of their schools and they select and order these materials, and they examine them for relevance to the curriculum, objectives of instructional programs, accuracy of content, appropriateness of reading level, quality of literary content and technical merit, and robustness of review by external scholars and professionals. She said the procedure also goes on to say that the collection should provide a global perspective in order to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion; it should offer a broad background of information including opposing sides of controversial issues to foster critical thinking of students, and that purchases coming through the media specialists are approved by supervisors and by the Director of Curriculum.

Dr. Hanlin said the next section is the handling of concerns. She clarified, today she is just talking specifically about media center material that is really where the concerns of late have come from. She said there is a very step-by-step process there. She said, in the event that a parent or guardian has a concern about a resource in the media center, they should communicate their concerns to the school principal, and then the school principal would meet with that individual, sort of like an appeal process through this procedure. She said, if the concern is not resolved at the school level then it comes to the Chief Academic Officer who then appoints a committee that is specific to review that material. She clarified, it is not a standing committee, it is a committee that is assigned to review the specific material that is of concern. She said the committee will read the material in their entirety and discuss the material and then provide a recommendation to the superintendent of schools. She said the superintendent of schools determines whether he or she is going to adopt the recommendation and then communicates back to the concerned citizen.

Dr. Hanlin said she will give Council some examples of how this procedure has played out over the course of the last couple of years. She said, since she has been in her position for the last six years, there have been four books that concerns have arisen from. She said three of the books were probably at least a year ago and were a concern expressed by a parent. She said, while the parent did not put his concerns in writing, they followed the procedure, and at the end of the procedure it was determined that the books would remain in the media center. She said those concerns were not raised at the school level, so the committee was formed by Dr. Briggs who forwarded their recommendation for those three books. She said, basically, they found that, while there may have been segments of the book that were of concern, the literary value of the book in its entirety was of greater value than the concern, so the recommendation for those three books was that they remain in the media center where students have access to those books. She said the parent was issued a letter with the findings with the procedure for how to appeal, and the parent did not appeal, so it did not come before the Board. She said it would have been interesting to see what would have happened before the Board because she knows that there are very wide ranges of views on their Board about this particular topic.

Dr. Hanlin said the most recent book that has been raised as a concern was *All boys aren't blue*. She said a single copy of the book was found in two of their high school media centers. She said, when those two media specialists who ordered the book in the first place heard of the concerns that were raised at two other local board meetings, Somerset and Worcester, those two media specialists reviewed those books more thoroughly and determined that they wanted to remove them from the collection. She clarified, they ordered the books, they changed their minds that those books were not appropriate or they did

not believe those books should be in their media centers, so it did not go through the formal process of the procedure; however, she has heard from opposing views about censorship, and, in talking with legal counsel, the way that they reacted to those books, according to legal counsel, could also have been considered that it was resolved at the school level. She clarified, the concern was found at the school level and was resolved at the school level. She said that is how the procedure works. She said she knows the question has been raised about how that book got there in the first place. She said their media specialists are charged and cannot read all the hundreds of books that they order themselves, but they are required to have at least two scholarly reviews of those books, and this particular book has been highly acclaimed. She said it is a book that is considered a good read for young people, so they did their due diligence in the beginning by having those required scholarly reviews, but then upon more thorough review they chose to remove it from their collections.

Mr. Holloway asked when this process with the media specialists started, and is that the way it has always been done where they order the books, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, it goes as far back as she remembers. Mr. Holloway said about 12 or 13 years ago there was a book that came forward that a parent brought to him and basically it was pornography, but he was told at that time that there was a committee that approved all the books that went into the media center. Dr. Hanlin responded, it could be that the procedure was written at that time, but she is not sure.

Mr. Holloway said Dr. Hanlin said that more of the material in the book was beneficiary than what little bit was not, so they take a 200 page book and 190 pages of it is perfectly fine, but they have ten pages of bad stuff, so does that mean they leave the book in there? Dr. Hanlin responded, it depends on the review of the committee.

Ms. Acle said she was not going to bring this subject up, but Dr. Hanlin's narrative is very different than what she heard at the Board meetings, and there were significantly more books than three, but she will go with that. She said she just wants to put this out there – these are minors. She said one has to be 18 to buy pornography in the Royal Farms, and this is in the hands of minors. She said they are talking about freedom of speech and they are talking about appropriateness and defining those terms, it is in the context of children under the age of 18 who are being exposed to it. She said one has to be a certain age to purchase pornography, which is the last book that she read that was in the library and she thinks is worse than some of the pornography she has seen from a distance at the Royal Farms.

Mr. Dodd said, during the time Mr. Holloway was talking about, there were committees that were put together to review books and then they would come to the Board of Education and have work sessions, and then ultimately the book was approved or denied.

Dr. Hanlin asked if Mr. Dodd is talking about every book in the media center, to which Mr. Dodd responded, just new books. Dr. Hanlin said that does happen, and text books go through that review procedure with a first and second read by the Board.

Mr. Hastings said he is glad they have a process and it is well laid out here. He said it is hard to imagine folks having a problem with something in a book, though maybe they did not know that the internet was invented because that is the real place they are going to find the issues. He said it is YouTube and social media videos that is the real world that is out there, and of course they cannot protect everyone from all of that, but he is glad that they at least have a process in place that they can point to. He said,

hopefully, in the future, if there is something bad, people are getting it through reading and not through the real avenues that exist in today's society.

Mr. Holloway asked if Mr. Hastings is saying that the school should be distributing this stuff, to which Mr. Hastings responded, he thinks it is great that they have a process, and this is the way it should be. Mr. Holloway said he is not talking about the process, he is talking about the material, to which Mr. Hastings responded, he is saying that children have phones. Ms. Acle said her children do not watch that. She said she does not allow them to watch that. Mr. Dodd said his children did not. Mr. Hastings responded, regardless, the internet exists, and on the internet there are things that are uncomfortable, so he is glad people are having issues with reading, but they need more kids reading, not more kids doing the opposite, so he is glad there is a process. He said the reality is that the offensive world is something that the Board of Education cannot do anything about. Mr. Holloway said they can do something about what they control, to which Mr. Hastings responded, that is correct.

Mr. Dodd said he understands that some things slip through the cracks, but they are ultimately corrected when somebody finds out about it and complaints are made.

Beaver Run

Mr. Holloway said, on a lighter note, how are things going at Beaver Run, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, very well, and they are ahead of schedule. Dr. Stauffer added, as they like to say, they are on budget and on schedule. He said the next step will be at the end of the school year moving staff from the old school to the new school and they will be working over the summer to finalize that move and get all of the classrooms prepared for the first day of school, which will be in the new building this fall. Mr. Holloway asked if they will have a ribbon cutting, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, there is no date yet, but the Council will obviously be included. Mr. Holloway said this school is right down the road from where his store is and it is in his district, and he has had people with requests for bricks from the old school. He then asked who they would see about that, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, he will make a note of that and see what they can do to get some information together. Mr. Holloway said he knows that will have to be worked out with the demolition crew. Mr. Dodd suggested they might be able to sell them. Mr. Holloway said they could sell them or give them away, and he is sure these people would pay something for them, but he has had numerous requests from people who are alumni of Beaver Run who want bricks.

Dr. Stauffer said, as Dr. Hanlin said about the ribbon cutting ceremony, keep in mind that is yet to be scheduled and depends on how that work goes over the summer. He said they have extensive demolition work of the old school that they will have to take care of after they move everyone over to the new school.

Mr. Holloway said, on another note, he knows they are working on Mardela, and the other question has come up about what the next new school is in the plans other than roofs and repairs, as he is just talking about new schools, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, the next school they will be looking at is Fruitland Primary and what type of renovation and work they can do there. He said, as they move forward, depending on how State funding incurs through the IAC and what that flat funding amount will be, that will determine the direction they have to go with their schools. He said they are looking in the future of being at a point where they can do some pretty major systemic and renovation work potentially as opposed to new sites.

Mr. Dodd said Fruitland Primary does need a lot of attention and there will be a lot of happy people. Mr. Holloway said Beaver Run went pretty smoothly compared to some of the other issues they have had in the past. Mr. Dodd said that was a big project.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Cannon thanked them all for being here and said this is April 19, but Dr. Hanlin's last day is June 30, so this is her last quarterly meeting. He said they appreciate her leadership and he thinks she has demonstrated she has been very fair and has had excellent judgement in her process throughout the years of what she has contributed. He said he only hopes that they can find someone as qualified as she is and as much of a visionary as she has demonstrated herself to be over the last few years. He said COVID threw a real chink in the armor. He said he attended all of the meetings she had with her Imagine 2022, and everything is so true. He clarified, what is now being proposed on the federal and State level, Wicomico County was way ahead of the curve, and most of that had to do with what Dr. Hanlin's vision was for Wicomico County. He said they appreciate that, and he is sure the committee can find as qualified of an individual to continue the work she has done. He said, once they get back to a sense of normalcy, they can move forward as well as they were in 2019 just before everything else hit.

Mr. Dodd asked if the Council plans on having another meeting with the Superintendent and staff, as well as the Board before Dr. Hanlin departs, to which Mr. Holloway responded, Mr. Cannon just said no. Mr. Dodd said he did not know if they were coming up with a definite date.

Mr. McCain said he thinks Dr. Hanlin deserves a round of applause because that is the least they can do, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she appreciates the support she has felt from Councilmembers. She said it has been a good six years, though challenging in the last two. Mr. Dodd said Dr. Hanlin's name is in the history books. Mr. Cannon said she has a very strong staff, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she has a great team. There was no further discussion.

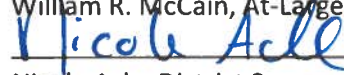


John T. Cannon, President, At-Large

Ernest F. Davis, Vice President, District 1



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Nicole Acle, District 2



Larry W. Dodd, District 3



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator