

Open Work Session
Wicomico County Board of Education
January 16, 2018

Dr. Donna Hanlin, Superintendent of Wicomico County Public Schools, Mrs. Leisl Ashby, Director of Facilities, and Mr. Donald Fitzgerald, Board President, came before Council. Mr. Cannon said the Capital Improvement Budget and Program (CIP) was the first item on the Agenda, and he thinks it is good to know what their priorities are, and how they establish their priorities.

Dr. Hanlin said she will start with just a few general comments. She said she would like to take a few minutes to review their top priorities from the CIP, and give Council an opportunity to ask any questions about those top priorities, or any other items that are on the 15-item list. She said, as she shared with the IAC, the State Interagency Council on School Construction, and the Board of Public Works, they take great pride on how they make decisions about their facilities by database decisions. She said it is a very complicated, intricate process that Mr. Matt Auchey and Mrs. Ashby go through to make those decisions. She said they make those decisions not just in isolation about their facility needs, but also about what their instructional needs are in the County, so it is the big picture. She said they also stressed at the State level, and she is not telling Council anything they do not know, the unique needs that are in Wicomico County with increased diversity, increased enrollment, and, quite frankly, beginning to discuss new instructional initiatives. She said all of that goes into their decisions about what their top priorities are. She said she will start with highlighting the first of those priorities.

Dr. Hanlin said they are very pleased the State recommended full final funding for the West Salisbury project. She said that construction is, obviously, still going on time, on budget, and they are excited, and the community is very excited that it will open next fall for the 2018-2019 school year. She said they are already beginning to talk about transition plans for moving staff back into the building. She said that has happened very quickly, but they are very excited about that. She said their second priority is the limited renovation at Delmar, and that limited renovation will address lots of needed items, such as HVAC, ceiling and lighting systems, plus a new elevator to serve the second floor. She said the architectural improvements also include upgrades to the cafeteria and gymnasium, as well as looking at what are currently open space classrooms, and closing those open space classrooms which will make the instructional program much more solid. She said they are also very excited about the Beaver Run project, which is a replacement project. She said the school has, as Council may know, multiple systemic needs including HVAC, roofing, windows, electrical, and plumbing systems. She said it currently is a campus-style school with open breezeways, and sometimes there is flooding during rain, and it exposes students to the elements, so they want to make some adjustments there. She said, most importantly, the school currently lacks the necessary space to support the current instructional program. She said the pre-K students are offsite, and not at Beaver Run. She said their fourth and fifth priority projects they presented to the State involve roof replacements at Glen Avenue Elementary and Pinehurst Elementary. She said both building roof areas will have an average age of 30 by 2019, so they have exceeded what patching they can do to improve those roofs, and it is essential they have a weather-tight school for their students. She said those are the highlights of the top five projects they presented to the State, and they are happy to answer questions about any of those, or any of the 15 that are on the list.

Mr. Joe Holloway said, in reference to Beaver Run, he knows there has been some discussion. He then asked if they are going to keep the gymnasium and build around it, or are they going to replace everything. He said he knows the gymnasium is the newest part, to which Mrs. Ashby responded, it had

received some HVAC upgrades a couple of years ago, and that was the newest element in that gymnasium. She said that was one of the options in the feasibility study, but it was more cost effective with the replacement option, and that had mainly to do with the phasing because of that large space throughout the campus. Mr. Joe Holloway asked if they are going to replace everything, to which Mrs. Ashby responded, correct. She said they just found out that MSDE has approved the educational specifications, so they are underway with hiring architects and engineers to proceed with the design.

Mr. Kilmer asked if the fields and grounds work for Mardela Middle and High School is all on track, and if everything is proceeding, to which Mrs. Ashby responded, yes, once they receive the bond funds. She explained, they were designed as alternates under the original scope. She said, as far as being designed, that part is complete, but they would have to bid all of those items, and schedule those pieces when the track would be available to do those additional improvements. Dr. Hanlin added, the remaining pieces of it.

Mr. Cannon asked if the Chipman Elementary site paving and parking lots is something they will be doing, because he sees it on the list Dr. Hanlin has given Council, but he does not see it on the County CIP. Dr. Hanlin said she thinks, at this point, that was something that was not included in Executive Culver's CIP. Mr. Cannon said, with that being item number six on the Board of Education's list, he assumes it is a high priority. He asked if it is something that is necessary for Council to adjust on their side to create that as a higher priority, as opposed to what has been recommended in the current CIP? He said it is a \$648,000 item, to which Mrs. Ashby responded, that has been a high priority for that particular school. She said they have significant parking issues. She said they are landlocked, and it does require some expansion, as well as stormwater management and erosion control, and the forest conservation piece. She said, in the earlier presentation they made back in October, she showed Council how she comes up with the FCI, the PI, and the QI to prioritize these projects, and this was one of those higher ranked projects. She said they take the time to put these in priority order based upon that data. Mr. Cannon said he is just wondering whether or not that is something they should try to shift around, in looking at the CIP as a whole. He said they have amended it a couple of times already, but it may be necessary to make amendments to that affect. Mr. Dodd said they are saying is that is not a higher priority on their end. Mr. Cannon said it is number six on their end, to which Mr. Dodd responded, but it is not marked off. Mr. Cannon said, either way, if they see there is something they would like Council to consider, let them know. He said the first thing he did was try to compare what the Board of Education's priority list was to what the County had, and the other item that stood out to him was the Wi High renovations, which were listed for about \$750,000, and he thinks the County CIP had it at \$500,000. Mrs. Ashby said their priority numbers five, six, and seven were not recommended. Mr. Cannon said number five was listed but it was only \$500,000. Mrs. Ashby said the item Mr. Cannon is referring to is actually number thirteen. She said five was not, six was not, seven was not, eleven was not, eight through ten were, and twelve through fourteen were recommended. Mr. Dodd asked what the auditorium retro is for Parkside, to which Mrs. Ashby responded, it is a replacement of the seating in both of the auditoriums. Mr. Dodd asked if it is just the seating, to which Mrs. Ashby responded, yes, just the seating. Mr. Dodd said it is definitely needed. He said he sinks pretty low in some of those seats. Dr. Hanlin said she will let Council know if they have any thoughts about making any adjustments.

Dr. Hanlin said the second item is some information she wanted to share with Council, though sharing this information is a little unusual today because, if Council recalls, she invited them to the Board meeting to hear her talk about this, the Board meeting got cancelled, so they are actually getting to hear it before the Board meeting tonight. She said the Board is well aware of what her recommendation is for doing some adjustments to the enrollment in the middle schools, and she wanted Council to be aware

of it so they know how to answer questions if they are asked. She said they currently have what they call an enrollment bubble in their 5th grade. She said, in other words, a high population in the 5th grade that is getting ready to move next year into the middle schools. She said, unfortunately, that bubble is moving mostly into Bennett Middle School. She said Council may know that Bennett Middle School is just about at capacity already. She said, if they do nothing, they will be about 200 students over capacity at Bennett Middle over the course of the next two to four years. She said not only does she not agree instructionally with a middle school being over 1,100 students, which is the State rate of capacity, but also that facility cannot withstand that kind of population for a lot of reasons. She said she has been discussing with the Board some thoughts about how to make some adjustments to middle school enrollment, and she is coming at this from a two-pronged approach. She said the first she will talk about is instructional programming Council has heard her talk about before, and her ultimate goal is that, in all of their middle and high schools, at least for now, they will have Academy Signature Programs where students have a choice of where they go to school based upon interests they have that are connected to careers in some way, thus making their instructional program meaningful to them. She said that is a vision for the future, but they are going to start that next year. She said, by doing that, it will start to help with that enrollment balancing she talks about. She said, for next year, they are proposing they start a middle school program at Salisbury Middle School, which is Project Lead the Way Gateway Program. She said Council may be familiar with their high school Project Lead the Way Program that is a STEM-based engineering program. She said it is extremely popular. She said they have one at Wi High, one at Parkside, and they are trying to get it at Bennett also because it is extremely popular. She said it is a National program that is research based and well-respected across the Country. She said that program has a middle school program, and they are going to be launching that program at Salisbury Middle as their first Academy Signature Program next year. She said that program will be open to all middle school students, and the County will provide transportation. She said it will start, however, only with students who are going from fifth grade, and they will start to talk about it later this spring to current fifth graders who are going into sixth grade. She said the first class of Project Lead the Way students at Salisbury Middle School will be 50 students coming from across the County who will be next year's sixth graders. She said the next year they will add 50 more, and the next year they will add 50 more so that in three years' time they will have the program subscribed to 150 students, again, coming from any middle school in the County. She said that is the first of their Signature Programs. She said Mr. Rick Briggs, their Chief Academic Officer, has a task force working on these Academy Signature Programs, and that group recommended to her, and she agrees, that they need to start with one, and make sure they do it right. She said that is just the beginning. She said, obviously, all 50 of those students next year are not going to come from Bennett Middle. She said they are going to do it proportionally at their middle schools, so all 50 will not come from Bennett Middle. Mr. Dodd asked if that will require redistricting, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she will get to phase 2, and she does not like that word. She said that is the first part of it, which, obviously, does not come close to alleviating the need for moving a capacity of almost 200 students. She said the second prong is looking at boundary line adjustments. She said she calls this enrollment balancing because she thinks they can balance enrollment with more than just moving boundary lines. She said, in this case, they need to move some boundary lines. She said they are doing it on a very limited basis, and she wants to stress that because she knows a few years ago the County went through some redistricting that was major, and did not go as smoothly as some would like. She said, in this case, they are looking at natural boundary lines, and she cannot stress enough that this is still her recommendation, and what she will be sharing with the Board tonight. She said, again, she will be reiterating this recommendation, and the only thing the Board will decide on tonight is whether or not to go out and have public hearings so they can hear from these families who are impacted. She said it is still her recommendation. She said they are looking at approximately 90 students who currently are in the Bennett Middle School district who are northwest of

the Wicomico River in the Pemberton area. She said they currently go to school at Pemberton Elementary, and they are the only students who go to Pemberton Elementary and then go to Bennett Middle instead of Salisbury Middle. She said it makes sense geographically, as they are closer to Salisbury Middle now than they are to Bennett Middle. She said, to keep them with their elementary school cohort, it makes sense to change that boundary line, and that is 90 students for who she will be making this recommendation. Mr. Cannon asked if the rest of the neighborhood is already going to Salisbury Middle, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, the rest of the students in that elementary school all go to Salisbury Middle School, and it is a shorter bus ride. She said the other important thing to emphasize, not only about these students who she is recommending go from Bennett Middle to Salisbury Middle, but also the other group she is about to describe moving from Bennett Middle to Wi Middle, is that, in both cases, this does not change their high school. She said they all know that is when they start to hear more from the community because they have their heart set, for whatever reason, on going to a particular high school. She reiterated, this is just middle school. She said the other group, again, is along a natural boundary line. She said it is a group of about 60 students who are along Snow Hill Road where they are closer to Wi Middle than to Bennett Middle, and her recommendation is for those 60 students to change to Wi Middle. She said, again, she will be sharing her recommendation publically at the Board meeting tonight, and asking the Board to approve two public hearings sometime between now and the February Board meeting. She said she will be personally inviting the families who are impacted. She said it is small enough that they can send letters, and even use the phone messenger to invite families to come and hear about this recommendation so the Board, herself, and staff can hear feedback on this recommendation. Mr. Kilmer asked if she has a map of those adjustments, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she does, and she will be sharing that at the Board tonight. Mr. Kilmer asked if she can share that with Council because he knows they will probably get questions, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she will be happy to do that after the Board meeting tonight. Mr. Joe Holloway asked if the Academy is voluntary, but actually will be about balancing, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, it is. She said she believes strongly in that approach, but, again, obviously, one program is not going to do it for the problem they have at Bennett Middle right now. Mr. Cannon asked what the ratio of students is, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, that is a very good question. She said student-teacher ratios currently, and she does not have the numbers in front of her, at Bennett Middle are 24 to 25 students. She said at Wi Middle it is 16 or 17, and at Salisbury Middle it is around 12. She said both are well under capacity at Salisbury Middle and Wi Middle. She said, by doing this, it will get them closer to the State rate of capacity, and it literally balances the enrollment of those schools. Mr. Joe Holloway asked if the strength of her argument might be that there is overcrowding, and there is going to be overcrowding if they do not do something, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, absolutely. She said they are already hearing that from teachers and parents, and they are just at capacity. Mr. Dodd asked how this will affect the kids who go to Delmar for the 5th grade program, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, it will not impact Delmar. Mr. Cannon said he thinks the redistricting the last time was a very excellent, concerted effort, but it was so broad, and impacted so many different areas of the County that there was almost no way in the world to please everybody, and they did that all at one time. He said he saw many Board of Education members at the different meetings, and the public was doing everything but throwing stones. Mr. Fitzgerald said it started out very small, and, when they got into it, it got real big. He said he will take the blame for the Board. He said they did not publicize it, they did not communicate, and the Board deserved part of what they got. He said they stopped it because they did hear the people. Mr. Cannon said the best thing they did was stop it, and just acknowledged it was not working because it has to work for the public. Dr. Hanlin addressed Mr. Kilmer, and said she would be happy to send him the map and graphs that she will be sharing publicly tonight that show the enrollment trajectory. Mr. Fitzgerald said that Council getting this information before the Board has voted on it is something new, but the Board was canvased and agreed this was the proper thing to do, so he does not have a problem with Council

knowing before they vote on it. He said they had a workshop on it, they have heard the concerns, and they know of the need. He said they will move forward tonight, but they still wanted to give Council the opportunity today.

Mr. Davis asked about transportation. He said he understands the Pemberton kids going to Salisbury Middle, and the Snow Hill kids going to Wi Middle. He then asked, with the program with the kids coming to Salisbury Middle, how will they transport a kid from Willards all the way to Salisbury Middle, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, her ultimate plan is to have hubs around the County. She said this will be sort of like what they do with their Magnet program where students are transported from their home school to a hub somewhere locally, and then transported to the school by shuttles. Mr. Davis said that is pretty much like the Fit Kids.

Mr. Dodd asked what the plans are for the next Academy. He asked if they plan on putting an Academy into another middle school, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they are looking at Wi Middle. She said she does not know whether the group is far enough along, but Council has heard her talk about her passion for the arts, so she will sway their thoughts. Mr. Dodd asked if she has heard anything negative about the program, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, not at all. Mr. Dodd then said he knows at one time some people were negative about the Magnet program, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, this is a little different. She said, with their Project Lead the Way Engineering Program, they will be looking at students' reading levels, for example. She said she does not know if this is definite yet, but they are talking about a lottery type system once they have students who they know are interested. She said they are not going to be able to enroll every student, but once they know who meets the minimum requirements, and has that interest, they are then talking about a lottery so it is fair. Mr. Dodd said he remembers with the Magnet program people calling it a private school within a public school, and they will probably hear the same thing with this program, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, that is not what they are talking about here, but that is good to think about in terms of their communication about the program.

Mr. Hall said he has a question about property disposition. He asked if there is a designated use for the property that is on the corner of College Avenue and Division Street. He asked what the purpose for the property is going forward, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she thinks there have been conversations about that on and off, and Mr. Bruce Ford can jump in here. Mr. Bruce Ford, Chief Finance and Operations Officer, then came before Council. He said, specifically, concerning the property on the corner of Division Street and College Avenue, there are approximately 8 acres there, and the Superintendent and staff have discussed various uses of that. He said they have had ongoing discussions amongst themselves but have not briefed the Board yet as to what the recommendations will be. He said that is something that will be forthcoming, and, at that point, those conversations will be made public. He said until the Superintendent has had a chance to really air those out with the Board, they are not making any of those discussions public at this time.

Mr. Hall said he received an email, apparently endorsed by Comptroller Franchot, last week talking about the PARCC testing, and it being an issue in the State. He said it talked about redoing it, or possibly tweaking it, and whether it was actually the best thing for the State of Maryland. Dr. Hanlin said she has not seen this letter, to which Mr. Hall responded, he will forward it to her. He asked if they do any lobbying as far as programs go. He said he knows they do lobbying for money because it is so important. He then asked, as far as programs go that impact their County, do they do lobbying? Dr. Hanlin asked for clarification. She asked if Mr. Hall is talking about Legislation, to which Mr. Hall responded, exactly. Dr. Hanlin said they are constantly keeping up with Legislation that is being proposed, and, in some cases,

doing fiscal notes when it has a financial impact, which she thinks actually goes through the Executive Office. Mr. Hall clarified, not necessarily financial impact, but curriculum impact. Dr. Hanlin said Superintendents meet on a monthly basis, and Mr. Hall may be familiar with that. She said they have an organization called PSSAM, Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland. She said they meet monthly, and they are briefed every month, even when the Legislative Session is not going on, about pending Legislation, and they work together. She said PSSAM often presents an opinion about Legislation that impacts programming. She said some Superintendents will go to Annapolis and actually testify on certain Legislation. She asked Mr. Hall if that answers his question, to which Mr. Hall responded, yes. Mr. Ford said the Maryland Association of Boards of Education actually employs a Legislative liaison whose purpose full-time is to monitor Legislation that impacts local Boards of Education. Mr. Hall asked if this is similar to MACO, to which Mr. Ford responded, yes. Mr. Davis asked about the PARCC testing. He asked how important it is, and what it does, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, it assesses students in grades 3 through 8, and then in certain areas in the high school. She said some believe it is a measure of how well schools are doing, and others do not believe in that so strongly because it is a one-time testing event. She said, personally, she is in favor of multiple measures of determining whether schools are being successful, and not an assessment event like PARCC. She said she thinks it has its place, but she also thinks it is just part of the overall picture. Mr. Davis said he is reading the email that Mr. Hall referred to from Comptroller Peter Franchot about PARCC testing, and it says that the State could get rid of it, and go back to the California testing, and will not lose any funding. He said it also says the California testing is a lot better and a lot cheaper. Dr. Hanlin said she would need to see what they are referring to. Mr. Davis continued, they say this test costs \$97 million dollars to do, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, that is across the State. Mr. Cannon suggested Mr. Davis forward that email to Dr. Hanlin. Mr. Davis said Comptroller Franchot did a study and broke it down. Dr. Hanlin said she will definitely check that out. Mr. Ford said he thinks what they are referring to is the ESSA requirement which says that a California Achievement Test, or an SAT, may be substituted for something like the PARCC, and he thinks that is what the email is referring to. Mr. Davis said Comptroller Franchot broke it down into how much training a teacher has to go through to administer the test, and compared it to the California test. Mr. Dodd said he knows the PARCC testing was postponed a couple of times due to the weather, and he asked his son about it. He then asked if the kids get to take it until they pass it, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, if it is a high school assessment, they take it throughout their high school career until a certain point when they have other options for meeting graduation requirements. She said, in the earlier grades 3 through 8, they take it once during the school year.

Dr. Hanlin said she wants to make sure all of Council is aware that the Chamber is sponsoring the State of the Schools event on January 29 at 11:30 at Parkside High School. She said their CTE students will be preparing and serving lunch, and she will be talking about the state of the schools. She said she will talk about the current status of the schools, and vision for the future. She said she would love to have Council join them. Mr. Ford added, Councilmembers need to register through the Chamber in order to be able to attend. Mr. Cannon asked Mrs. Hurley if Council has that email from the Chamber, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, they do. Mr. Cannon said he has it on his calendar to attend.

Mr. Joe Holloway said he would like to thank everyone for coming as they do have most of the Board members present, and that is good. Mr. Cannon asked Dr. Hanlin if she will get the maps and graphs to Council once she has presented them, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, absolutely. There was no further discussion.

Signatures on next page



John T. Cannon, President



Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3



Ernest F. Davis, District 1



Marc Kilmer, District 2



John B. Hall, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5

_____ Absent _____

Matt Holloway, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator