

Open Work Session
Quarterly Session with the Board of Education
March 16, 2021

Dr. Donna Hanlin, Superintendent; Dr. Rick Briggs, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Micah Stauffer, Chief Finance and Operations Officer; and Mr. Gene Malone, Chairman of the Board of Education, came before Council. Mr. Malone introduced Board members in the audience – Mr. John Palmer, Mr. Donald Fitzgerald, Ms. Tonya Laird-Lewis, Ms. Anne Suthowski, and Mr. Mike Miller, Vice Chair.

Dr. Hanlin passed out an Agenda, and said there is actually only one item she added to this Agenda, and then there are three additional items Council sent her after it had been created, which she will cover.

Update on Virtual Learning and Extracurricular Activities

Dr. Hanlin said she will not go all the way back a year, and it is hard to believe it has been a year, but, as of February 16, all pre-K to 12 students who wanted to return are in a hybrid fashion. She explained, hybrid is two days a week, either Monday and Tuesday, or Thursday and Friday with Wednesday being an asynchronous day. She clarified, pre-K is four days a week, and has always been four days a week when they have been in person. She said they began adding certain groups of students based upon need – special education, English language learners (ELL), and students whose principals identified as having issues with connectivity, had been disengaged, needed reading interventions, and so forth. She said they began inviting a number of students to come in four days a week as building space allowed, as the CDC and the Maryland Department of Health in their guidance for returning to schools talks about six feet of physical distancing to the greatest extent possible. She said Superintendents across the State meet on a weekly basis with the Maryland Department of Health leaders, and during recent meetings they have been pushing the issue of six feet because, as Council may know, it has recently been in the news what is being discovered about the safety of three feet versus six feet, so they are pushing the Maryland Department of Health specifically for some revision to the guidelines so they can be more flexible than even to the greatest extent possible. She explained, the language in the CDC guidance does not allow them to change it to five feet or four feet, so they specifically asked questions on those calls asking for greater clarity on what “to the greatest extent possible means” and they have been clear that it does not mean just do the best they can, it means with mitigation strategies there may be a place where they could add a student and not be quite six feet. She said it is still very difficult when they do not have clear guidance from them, so they have been, as Council knows, pushing that envelope and inviting students to come back into their buildings as much as they possibly can. She said they have added internet cafes in many of their schools, but they also have to think about hallways, cafeterias, and especially buses. She said all of that is being considered, and she will tell Council that she, and she thinks all superintendents, are hopeful the guidance will change sooner rather than later. She said, with the community metrics and with the number of community members being vaccinated, they have every expectation they will open five days a week in the fall. She clarified, she would like to say they will do it sooner than that, but it will depend on guidance coming from the Maryland Department of Health. She said, in the fall they will also offer a virtual option for families who are still not comfortable returning or prefer that mode.

Mr. Cannon asked, when they go back in the fall, are there any plans or anticipation of students who are really going to be far behind to where they may have to have some remedial learning, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, absolutely. She said, in fact, not just in the fall, but they are actually working with

students now as best as they can, and they have some pretty extensive summer plans in the works and after school programs. She said a lot of the CARES funding will be used for that, which is why they are receiving that money, and it is a great use of that money to be able to help students recover from that.

Mrs. Acle said she wants to comment on some things she has seen recently with students going back. She then asked how they decide who gets to go back four days or two days, and what is the requirement they are following so everyone is clear? She said she knows Dr. Hanlin said students with special needs, special education, and ELL, but there are some kids going back four days who do not fit that category, and some who want to go back four days and have reached out to their principals and have been put on a waitlist. She further asked, when does Dr. Hanlin expect it to be across the board with all schools, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, it has to do with the number of students who selected to go hybrid, but she will give a great example. She said Pittsville had room in their school, so their principal reached out and started to engage families in coming back, but some schools were already pushing the envelope with six feet, so it made having a definitive standard like Mrs. Acle is talking about much more difficult. She said she talked about this at the Board meeting and followed up with a parent message, but the reason she did that was because she wanted parents to make sure they communicated with their principals if they had that desire so they could take a look at who still wanted to come in and be able to move through the list, and since that message they have had hundreds of students who have been invited to return.

Dr. Briggs said principals were already working with their communities to add students, but he will acknowledge that Dr. Hanlin's message to the school community caused the number to tick up a little bit. He said principals are working hard to get them in, but, unfortunately, it is not equal across the board because they have some schools that are at 30 percent of students returning, mostly middle schools, whereas some of their elementary schools are as high as almost 70 percent wishing to return, so it creates some inequities there, but they are getting them in as quickly and as safely as possible.

Mr. Dodd asked if they have any numbers on students who are missing? Mr. Malone asked if Mr. Dodd means students who have not been hybrid or virtual, to which Mr. Dodd responded, students who they do not know where they are at. Dr. Hanlin responded, they have located all students, but that does not necessarily mean they are all fully engaged to the extent they want them to be, but they have located all students, and in some cases withdrawn them if they have transferred or have gone to homeschooling.

Dr. Briggs said, in regards to extracurricular activities, both as a former athletic coach and parent, it was all of their goals to get students reengaged in extracurricular activities as soon as possible in addition to sports, band, chorus, and drama because they understand the value that brings to students beyond the instructional component. He said they are happy to report that on February 13 their students and all students from the Bayside Conference were able to reengage in fall sports. He said, as one parent told him, it did her heart good to be at a soccer game and listening to the drumline of a band practicing in the background. He said he thinks it did a lot of people's hearts good to see the students reengaged. He said they are currently in fall sports, which will run through April 17, at which point they will kick off spring sports, which will run through June 19. He said Council may have heard they are restricting capacity at events. He said the Bayside Conference supervisors wanted to have a consistent procedure across the entire Conference, and they were in support of that. He said some Counties went as low as two tickets per student athlete, but Wicomico decided to go with four, and that seems to be working well. He said it does create a larger size at the football games because of the larger team size, but it is very manageable and they are working with that. He said they hope that with the Governor's guidance

they will be able to revisit that for spring sports as a Conference, and hopefully be able to open it up to guests of opposing teams. He said it has been nice utilizing technology for live streaming of almost all of their events. He said he has heard from several coaches whose team members have family members outside the area whose grandparents could never see them play, but because of COVID, now they get to see their grandkids play by livestreaming on their computers. He said they are happy to see the kids are engaged, and hopefully they will be expanding on those opportunities over the coming weeks.

Mr. Cannon asked if four tickets per student adds up to about 250, to which Dr. Briggs responded, it depends on the size, and they were stretching it when the capacity was 250, to be honest. He said, depending on the size of the football team, many have 40 to 50, so they are looking at a little over 200. Mr. Cannon said he thinks the most important part of what was said is that most people say the Board of Education is doing something, but talking to Dr. Hanlin is always a bit of an eye opener because it is really the State of Maryland putting the mandates down throughout the State, and they just simply have to go by those guidelines. Dr. Briggs responded, in this case they were originally working off the Governor's cap at 250 and, again, trying to be consistent across the entire Bayside Conference.

Mrs. Acle asked, what about the prom, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, graduation is the easier of the two, and they are very confident they are going to have traditional graduations. She clarified, they are still uncertain where since the Civic Center is not available to them now because it is a mass vaccination site, and she did not even know that at the last Board meeting, so they are looking at outside venues and hopefully will have some answers. She said they reached out to a number of venues, including the Shorebirds and other organizations, to try to find a location, and then they will be able to determine how many tickets. Mr. McCain said he knows colleges typically have theirs outdoors, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, then they would have to arrange rain dates. She said proms are a little more problematic because, as they can imagine, allowing students to dance is a little more problematic, so they are working through some options for the senior class. She said last year they allowed the seniors to put their senior class funds in escrow to be able to have an event later, but they still, obviously, have not been able to do that. She said there could certainly be a scenario allowing them to do something that is a little bit more like a grand march photo op, and then allow parents to do something. She said they are looking at all kinds of options, and they know parents want those answers sooner rather than later, and they are hoping that within the next week or so they will be able to let them know something definitive.

Mr. Dodd said last week the State discussed allowing graduates to come back and play sports. He then asked where that stands, to which Dr. Briggs responded, there is proposed Legislation in Annapolis, and they have not asked the County's opinion, but he is not a fan. He clarified, while he feels bad for the athletes who missed some of their season, he sees it being problematic with students no longer in the school system representing their athletic teams. He said he also sees a disparity in age where they could have 19 or 20 years olds playing against 14 year olds, and he thinks it is a bad idea, but that is just his opinion. Mr. Dodd said at first he thought it was a good idea, but then on the flipside, if someone's kid did their time and moved up, but then a graduate comes back and somebody is going to have to sit the bench because the graduates are playing, that is not fair. Dr. Briggs said college teams are having to sort that out, and he will let the colleges have it. Mr. Dodd said he sympathizes for the kids who missed.

Update on Progress of Capital Projects

Dr. Stauffer passed out a handout on progress on Beaver Run and said they are really excited about this, and this will show Council where they are with construction at this point. He said the second page shows

an aerial view coming from Old Ocean City Road, so this kind of looks at what the front of the school will be. He said they can see the outline for the cafeteria, the gym and stage, as well as the main entry and classrooms on the backside of the school. He said the second aerial is coming from the southwest, so this would be from the professional businesses in Winterplace Park looking from that angle seeing the back of the school mostly looking at where the classrooms will be. He said the third aerial is coming from due west, and they can see how that fits into the current property and the existing school as well.

Dr. Stauffer said, at this point in time, all major trades are currently working on site including masonry, carpentry, roofing, mechanical systems, plumbing, and electrical. She said currently the project is on time and within budget, so it is anticipated to open for students in the 2022-2023 school year, so this exciting project is coming along, and Council can ride by and see the progress at Beaver Run.

Dr. Stauffer said they have made significant gains in just a few short months regarding the design for the major renovation and addition project at Mardela. He said they will be receiving the schematic design later this week, and if it is approved as is, it will be submitted to MSDE for their review and approval, and then they will go into the design development phase for Mardela. He said he has seen some of the pictures from the design, and it is really exciting to see what is going to happen at that school.

Dr. Stauffer said the Westside Intermediate roof contract approval is going to be at the April Board meeting. He said they appreciate the County Executive's recommendation in the FY2022 CIP for the Council to approve that to be funded utilizing pay-go so they can actually go ahead and get that project done this summer, and that is their goal for the Westside Intermediate roof.

Mr. Dodd asked if those are solar panels in aerial 3, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, yes. Mr. Dodd asked if they are the Board of Education's solar panels, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, no. Mr. Holloway asked whose they are, to which Mr. McCain responded, they are Perdue Farms.

Dr. Stauffer said the next item is a letter Dr. Hanlin sent to the IAC regarding capital funding from the State. He explained, Dr. Hanlin wrote to the IAC, State Superintendent Dr. Salmon, and the Director of the IAC, Bob Gorrell, that the State funding for the Beaver Run project was shorted about \$1 million dollars in the final State allocation, and that is a concern for them as they move forward, obviously. He said that is something they could pick up the following year, but, as this is the final allocation from the State and they will be finishing that project for the 2022-2023 school year, they were hopeful that they would get the full allocation from the State for that. He said Council may remember that House Bill 1 is a very large House Bill for school capital projects across the State, and their concern is that some of that funding appears to have been allocated away from the IAC itself. He said the IAC projects are approved projects that they, of course, put in their capital plan just as all other school districts across Maryland put in their capital plan. He said that total budget was reduced a little bit in funding for House Bill 1, so it was kind of shifting some of that funding from one pot over to another pot.

Mrs. Acle asked if House Bill 1 is something where the projects need to go through the approval process, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, it has been approved. Dr. Stauffer clarified, the Legislation has been approved, but the actual school projects do not go through the IAC process, they go through the Maryland Stadium Authority. Mrs. Acle said it is unusual that it is going through the Maryland Stadium Authority, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, this is the funding Legislation that gives a very large percentage. He explained, about 89 percent of all of that funding goes to six Counties, and then the other 17 Counties split up the remaining 11 percent. He said, in that Legislation, it is concerning that

potentially some of the funding came away from the IAC, which is the approved projects, and when that reduction occurred they could see that their allocation was reduced by about \$1 million in FY22.

Mr. McCain said it is probably too early to answer this question, but with the recent passage of the Relief Act, he assumes there are going to be some pretty significant dollars coming to the State and a significant portion of that will be able to be used for capital projects. He then asked if there is a feeling that this can fill these gaps, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, the intent of the letter Dr. Hanlin wrote is for the IAC to consider doing what they need to do in order to reinstitute the funding they need to finish the Beaver Run project. He clarified, they are confident they will be able to finish the project, they just do not want to have to delay it or have to divert funding from somewhere else to do it, but how it works at the State level remains to be seen for sure.

Dr. Hanlin said she thinks she understands what Mr. McCain is getting at with the federal funds, but they do not yet know specifically what the allowable costs for school systems will be for that funding. She said certainly, if all else fails in their efforts, that might be a possibility.

Dr. Stauffer said, just looking at what eligible projects are for CARES 1 and CARES 2, they all relate to air quality and improving air quality in schools specifically through HVAC projects, doors, windows, etc. He said the American Rescue Plan Act that is coming was approved, and they have not received any information on it, but that would require a change in eligible projects from what they have seen so far.

WCPS Facilities Cleaning and Maintenance

Dr. Hanlin said the next item is one she added to the Agenda, and actually she will give Mr. Palmer credit for it. She explained, they often come to Council to ask for funding for major renovations and new school buildings, but they do not often talk publicly about all the things they do behind the scenes to maintain their buildings, so they wanted to take this opportunity to share a bit with Council. She said the handout is a rather lengthy copy of a PowerPoint, but Dr. Stauffer will go through it quickly and include some information about what they are currently doing in terms of COVID response.

Dr. Stauffer said a thorough cleaning of all facilities, floors, and all surfaces has occurred, obviously, since this last started a year ago. He said the first two weeks were spent on cleaning and disinfecting all of their school facilities from the top all the way down to the bottom, and cleaning of the HVAC equipment and coils, and maintenance of the equipment has occurred as well. He said they have also looked at CDC and ASHRAE guidelines, which have informed preventative maintenance schedules, so they ensure preventative maintenance for HVAC systems and equipment throughout their school facilities are being maintained. He said they have also consulted with engineers from various local industries to look at their system control for fresh air intake, as they have heard a lot about fresh air and how important ventilation and air circulation is, and how many air changes are occurring each hour, so they have set up their controls for the systems within their schools. He said systems are running in what they call occupy mode, which is full tilt from 6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., and are staying in operation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week so air is constantly being circulated.

Dr. Stauffer said he wants to highlight some things their maintenance and operations and energy staff have done throughout this past year to make sure their buildings and facilities are ready for staff and students, and are clean, safe, healthy environments for students to learn in and staff to teach in. He said the first page of the handout looks at all the different chemicals they used in the past for cleaning and

how now they have simplified it. He said they use TruShot and EvaClean systems to be able to disinfect their buildings and clean them properly, and those are all CDC and EPA approved.

Dr. Stauffer said the next page of his handout shows the difference, and the left picture really does not do it justice, but they might think that is a really clean hallway because they can see the shine. He said, when they see years of putting wax on and buffing it, they can see how all of their hallways look now after being stripped and cleaned down to the surface.

Dr. Stauffer said they also acquired different types of equipment to clean the way they need to in order to keep their facilities safe, and there are some pictures in the handout. He said, in addition, this helps them schedule their staff in a more efficient way. He explained, the equipment is linked to computer programs that can really give them an idea of how long it takes to clean certain parts of the building and the hallways, and then they can schedule staff according to the needs that schools have as well.

Dr. Stauffer said the next page shows how they have been able to maintain some of their facilities and utilize the funding for furniture and fixture replacements, and PPE and equipment they have been able to acquire to keep their schools safe and make sure it is available for all their students and staff. He said the lower picture shows hand sanitizing stations that are about 4 feet high and located throughout the school buildings in the areas where entering school, in the cafeteria, and other places as well.

Dr. Stauffer said they have supplied all teachers and instructional staff with what they call teacher PPE kits, which have TruShot disinfectant and what they call a K-fly system, which is a microfiber system that almost looks like a masonry trough. He said they are able to spray the disinfectant on the desks and let it sit for the required amount of time, and then without having to touch the desk or a rag that may have touched a desk, they can use it to wipe those off very quickly. He reminded Council that teachers are disinfecting throughout the day as they have a classroom with students who may go out for a short period of time to lunch or specials and then come back, so a process and procedure for that has all been put in place to make sure the instructional time is used as efficiently as possible. He said in the evenings they use the electrostatic disinfectant system that sprays EvaClean tabs, which are kind of a chlorine solution. He said it is actually charging that spray so when it goes out of that electrostatic sprayer it will be able to cling to all kinds of different surfaces, and then once it stays there and dries it is cleaning that surface and disinfecting it. He said it is also CDC approved against COVID and those kinds of things.

Dr. Stauffer said the next page shows a chart of the types of data they are using for their control systems to ensure the amount of fresh air going into classrooms, the amount of air changes that are occurring in classrooms, and the temperature controls in those classrooms. He said, as Council can see, those are all things that are being looked at and being used when setting up their systems as well.

Mrs. Acle said this is some really extensive healthy schools, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, he is not trying to overwhelm Council with information, but he wants to make sure everyone sees the extent they are going to in making sure the schools are maintained and cleaned properly. He said they hear a lot about ventilation and fresh air, and how they are able to do that and how they control those systems. Mrs. Acle said they are definitely taking steps to gear up to open schools, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, absolutely. He said he knows in the news they see articles about opening windows and doors, so they have been trying to inform their staff that they are pumping as much fresh air as they can into those classrooms, and it is cycling out the air on a regular basis every hour, even without having to open any windows or doors. He said they are doing that because an open window is going to bring in

fresh air, but with the way their HVAC systems are cleaned and filtered, it is bringing in filtered fresh air, and he thinks that is important for everyone to understand as well.

Dr. Stauffer said they put in controls for their food service coolers just to make sure they are monitoring those systems. He said they are set up to automatically send notifications to the managers who operate the systems, so as soon as a system is not operating effectively, they get a notification.

Dr. Stauffer said, to maintain their facilities they are changing out wooden steps for metal steps, and they have a digital sign project adding two or three digital signs to their school system per year. He said, if a school does not have a digital sign yet, it will very soon, and they are going through about a five-year window to make sure all of their schools have one. He said that has been important during this last year to get messages out to the community, and they have had COVID awareness alerts on the signs as well.

Mr. Dodd asked if the sign at Wi Middle work, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, they have to hook it up to run electrical wires, so it is not running yet. Mr. Dodd said he saw it but did not see messages, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, they recently installed that sign and will be hooking it up very soon. Mr. Dodd said he thinks those signs are important.

Dr. Stauffer said they are also maintaining their parking lot facilities. He clarified, these things are constant, so they try to hit two or three schools each and every summer to maintain their facilities.

Dr. Stauffer said something that has been very exciting has been the gym projects, and they started with the high schools and have been working down the list as they try to hit about two gyms per year. He said they are stripping the floors down to their natural color and refinishing them and upgrading the bleachers. He explained, in many cases there were old, wooden bleachers that really had some issues, so they are upgrading those and painting in the gyms, and just making it a facility that is something that will be welcoming to their students and their community because their gyms are used quite often, not only for different events at the school level, but even on weekends for different rec leagues.

Dr. Stauffer said the next page shows some of the painting they are doing on a constant basis. He said they have their work order system where painting projects are put in and then they just go through schools in a very systematic way to make sure they are looking at the condition of the school, and then take steps to address it in a very strategic manner and linking projects together. He clarified, they are not just going in and doing a gym floor or going in and doing a digital sign, they are trying to link projects so when they leave a school they have really remodeled it in a much more effective and efficient way.

Dr. Stauffer said their energy management is another way they are tracking the actual energy use from their utility bills, so they get that data and are able to see the meter readings and make adjustments as necessary. He said, obviously, their utility costs in some ways have gone up over the last year because they are running their HVAC systems differently, but they also have LED lighting projects they are currently doing. He said they were able to take advantage of rebates and acquire a number of LED lights and light fixtures, so they are going through schools and installing those LED lights. He clarified, while some areas are costing more to be able to operate under these circumstances they have been in, they are saving money in other areas through these LED lighting projects, and that is helping to reduce costs.

Mr. Hastings asked what they are doing as far as renewable energy to be helpful for their schools to offset the cost, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, they are very excited about the LED lighting because they have seen significant savings from it, so that has pushed their staff to do more of those kinds of

projects. He said, as far as renewable energy, they have done some things with solar, and that is not to say that they will not continue to go down that path, but this last year they have really been focusing on improving the systems they have, but will continue to look at those other types of avenues as well.

Mr. Dodd said he asked about solar panels because he was wondering if they were starting that now. Mr. Hastings added, it would be nice to have something like that. He said he is sure it is way out of his league in responding to any of this, but it would be nice to have geothermal at Mardela, and he does not know to what degree that is happening, but, as much as they can take advantage of now, the better. Mr. Dodd said he thinks all new schools are getting geothermal, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she thinks so. Dr. Stauffer said he is not sure exactly which system is going in, but that is what they are designing for Mardela. He said he knows there are a number of new systems coming into place to take advantage of sometimes mixing two systems together, and their engineers will design whatever is best and most cost effective for the particular school they are talking about, whether it be Beaver Run or Mardela. He said, as far as the solar fields currently at Mardela and Bennett, they help offset the costs of the utilities for those schools. He clarified, the Mardela solar field offsets the cost for Northwestern and Mardela, and Bennett's solar field offsets the utility costs for Bennett.

Mr. Dodd asked if the project for energy management at Parkside is complete, as he thinks it was supposed to be a three-year project, so it should be by now, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, yes, that school is complete. He suggested, if Council has not had a chance, maybe they can find an opportunity in the near future to walk through and see the renovation projects and remodeling they were able to do because it looks amazing. Mr. Dodd said it is probably a lot different than when Dr. Stauffer was the principal there, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, it is, and just the LED lights make a 100 percent improvement. Mr. Dodd then asked what other schools are getting LED lights now, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, he will have to get back to Council on that, but he knows they have done several schools, and most recently at Glen Avenue. Mr. Dodd asked if they are taking advantage of the rebates, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, that is correct. He explained, they currently have a store of LED lights and light fixtures, so they are constantly going school to school putting those fixtures in.

Dr. Stauffer said, just as students are excited to get back into schools, the community is excited to get back into schools as well, so they have an event management system that helps them with that and also helps them control the systems even on weekends and holidays for various rentals they have as well.

Dr. Stauffer said the last page shows the LED lighting project is averaging a 60 percent reduction in electricity that is used for interior and exterior lighting, so they are excited about that particular project.

Maintenance of Effort (MOE) for FY22

Dr. Stauffer passed out a handout and said this agenda item talks about MOE for FY22, but also Thornton funding versus Kirwan funding. He explained, the Thornton funding formula in the past was recently supplemented with Maryland Blueprint grants, which were based for pre-K, supplemental instruction, special education, mental health, and concentration of poverty, which was based on their free and reduced meals (FARM) percentage. He said, if they think about the old funding formula, it was then supplemented with the Maryland Blueprint grants in each of those areas for the last couple of years. He said the Kirwan funding formula is going to take those grants and the old formula and mesh them together into a new funding formula, so that funding will not come in the way of grants any more, it will just be a part of the funding formula itself. Mr. Dodd asked if FARM is still used, to which Dr.

Stauffer responded, FARM will absolutely still be a factor, especially for State aid, but will be factored into that funding formula and the grants will not be based upon that, but more of the formula will be based on things like FARM, and populations of special education and ELL students.

Dr. Stauffer said he knows MOE has been a topic recently in the news, so he wants to walk Council through MOE funding as they look at FY22. He said the County Governing Body according to State law appropriates local funds to the school operating budget in the amount that is not less than the fiscal year 2021 local appropriation, and that is then divided by the greater of the fulltime equivalent (FTE) enrollment in September 2019 or the three-year average of the FTE enrollment in September 2017, 2018, and 2019. He said, in the past, funding was based on enrollment from the previous year, but now moving forward it looks like funding is going to be based on either the enrollment of the previous year or the three-year average from the three previous years, whichever is greater. He said, looking at the chart in his handout, he will repeat what he said so they have some understanding. He said the FTE enrollment in 2020 was 13,865, and the three-year average for 2018-2020 was 14,238.33, so the higher of those two numbers is the second number. He said the appropriation from this year was \$47,682,518, and that is divided by 14,238.33, which comes to \$3,292 per pupil. He clarified, the required per pupil increase, which is the 2.5 percent increase, is also in State law. He said, if the County's education effort, which is defined as County appropriation divided by County wealth, is less than the Statewide average, that amount gets multiplied by the lesser of whichever is the least, in this case the County increase in local wealth per pupil, which is a combination of personal property, commercial property, new construction, or the Statewide average and local wealth per pupil, and both this past year were about 5 percent, or the lesser of the fixed rate, which is 2.5 percent. He said that is where the 2.5 percent comes in, so the \$3,292 per pupil gets multiplied by 2.5 percent, and then that amount is now \$3,374.79 per pupil, so that is now the adjusted amount. He said that amount is then multiplied by the multiplier, and the multiplier is whatever is greater of that average, which in this case would be for 2018, 2019, or 2020, so that average is multiplied by the three-year average, whichever is greater, and that is the \$14,238, which comes to the \$48,000,051 amount they see for the total local share in FY22. He said that is how the maintenance of effort is determined in that formula that is brought about by State law.

Mrs. Acle asked how they are going to get those kids who went to private school back to public school, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, first of all, in their decrease, the number of students who went to private school is probably a more minimal amount than those students who went to homeschooling, but the biggest difference is the students who did not come to them in pre-K and stayed in childcare. She said, to answer that question, they are going to be advocating and reaching out to their homeschoolers, and doing their regular communications that they are opening as they are normally, and they expect and hope to have an uptick because of the number of individuals who are asking that they reopen and come back as they normally do. She clarified, they may not get everyone back, but they also believe they may get some homeschoolers to come to them in the first place because of the virtual learning opportunities that will be available to them, so they are working on a couple of different avenues there.

Dr. Stauffer said, in FY23, House Bill 1372 and Senate Bill 965 are also something that County Councils and local school districts are aware of, and the difference other than what he explained already is that enrollment for 2020 will not be counted in the three-year average moving forward, so in FY23 it could be that the average comes from FY18, FY19, and FY21. He clarified, moving forward, that House Bill is proposing that 2020 enrollment would not be counted in determining what the school funding will be.

Dr. Stauffer said hopefully that explains the difference between Thornton and Kirwan, and that the grants they were receiving will just be assimilated right into the funding formula moving forward, and the difference between how MOE was calculated in the past, which was based on just the previous year's enrollment, versus how it will be calculated in the future, which will be a three-year average enrollment potentially excluding FY2020 in that calculation.

Mr. Cannon said he appreciates the explanation. He said he tried to review the Bill for Kirwan and it is a nightmare trying to decipher everything. He said, with regard to Kirwan, he is glad to see progress being made as far as teachers are concerned giving them the training and accountability as well as rewarding them for such. He said he thinks Wicomico County is well ahead of what is necessary for pre-K.

Mr. Cannon said CTE is a huge push, it appears, in Kirwan, and he thinks that is probably one of the most important programs they have in Wicomico County. He then asked how they think they will be moving forward with the CTE program, to which Dr. Briggs responded, he thinks it is safe to say they are very proud of their existing CTE program under Mr. Ashby's leadership. He said he thinks they have one of the strongest programs in the State, and they are always being recognized both at the State and national levels. He clarified, they are always looking to expand access to it. He said they have almost maxed out capacity at Parkside CTE, but they are also looking at CTE programs, such as business, accounting, and other areas that can expand back into the homeschools as well. He said they often think of CTE as being 100 percent at Parkside, but they also have CTE programs at their other high schools, and that could be an opportunity for growth in the future. Mr. Cannon asked if he read correctly that 40 percent of students have to have some CTE, to which Dr. Briggs responded, that is the target. Mr. Cannon said that is a large number, to which Dr. Briggs responded, it is a large target. Dr. Stauffer added, in the past he would also say that the Perkins funding has been instrumental in being able to fund some of the things they are doing at CTE, and what Mr. Cannon mentioned is specifically in the American Rescue Plan Act looking at that Perkins funding and how it may be able to expand eligibility in other areas of CTE. He said currently Perkins funding is used for equipment and curriculum, and there may be other uses as they move forward and look at staffing and things that Dr. Briggs was talking about, even for facilities.

CARES Funding Expenditures

Dr. Stauffer said he is going to talk mostly about CARES 1 because CARES 2 is currently in progress, but they expended approximately 94 percent of their CARES 1 funding at this point with a total expenditure of about \$4.4 million in purchases. He said the original CARES grant was a little more than \$5 million, but they needed to make sure the private schools in the area received their allocation, so that actually came through Wicomico County to expend to them so they could do the things behind CARES as well. He said their allocation was somewhere around \$4.7 million, and they have expended \$4.4 million. He said about 5 percent of that went towards cleaning supplies and equipment like he showed Council earlier, and another 5 percent went towards health and food service supplies, and he would like to give a little shout out not only to their facilities staff but also their food service workers. He said, since March 16, 2020 they have truly been on the frontlines this entire time working very hard nonstop making sure they were distributing meals to the community as a whole. He said about 15 percent of that funding has been expended towards PPE supplies for students and staff, and approximately 75 percent of the funds went towards computers, hotspots, and technology.

Dr. Stauffer said, going forward with CARES 2, that allocation is now \$21 million for Wicomico County Public Schools for over the course of the next few years. He said they are currently in progress of working on that application, which is due to MSDE on April 2.

Mrs. Acle asked what allowable expenses can they use for that funding, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, some of the things to highlight that are allowable are developing and implementing procedures and systems to continue to improve the preparedness of schools for welcoming back all students; training and professional development for staff, and, in regards to that, providing mental health services and supports to students during this time as they come back, as they see a real need in that area when students return to them in full; planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and after school programs addressing learning loss among students, specifically at-risk populations, and school facility repairs and improvements. He said, where CARES 1 was mostly about technology, PPE, and cleaning and disinfecting of facilities, CARES 2 is more about mental health, addressing learning loss in students, and also facility repairs and renovations that are needed to improve air quality, so really looking at HVAC systems and the replacement of those types of projects, as well as doors and windows, and projects just improving the overall environment and air quality of a school.

Mrs. Acle said she thinks these conversations are going to need to continue to happen between the County with the funding the County is receiving allocated at the local level. She said they know it cannot go to small businesses or the public school system, but how are they going to help citizens through this, and how are they going to get people back to work if they cannot go back to work because their children are not in school, so she thinks they need to have more of these conversations.

Internet Connectivity

Dr. Briggs said it is their wish that every family in Wicomico County has access to highspeed internet. He said, as a resident and community member, he thinks they can all agree that their hope and desire is that every person has that, but, unfortunately, that is not the case right now. He said they have probably between 10 to 13 percent of their student population who do not have access to highspeed internet and need a hotspot. He said right now they have close to 2,000 hotspots on loan that are being used by students and staff when they are home, and the cost of that is about \$750,000 annually. He said, if they were to keep this up and stay in the internet business, which he is not a proponent of, it would basically be about three-quarters of a million annually, and he only anticipates that would go up and not go down. He said they are fortunate, as Dr. Stauffer just eluded to, that they have access to CARES 1 and CARES 2 to offset that cost, and it has definitely been a blessing for their families, so he is glad they could do that. He said he thinks the energy and focus from the entire community needs to be on how all residents in Wicomico County can have access to highspeed internet or rural broadband.

Dr. Stauffer said something to keep in mind is that these are one-time grants, so they have been very strategic on how they utilize these funds because they cannot utilize them for things that are going to be recurring costs.

Mr. Cannon said he thinks so many people are rather uncertain on how to deal with broadband because it is a real big bite of an apple. He said he thinks it would be very beneficial if the County worked with the Board of Education together with the Tri-County Council and Maryland Broadband. He said Greg Padgham is making a strongly concerted effort to stay on top of all the funding and infrastructure that is out there to be had. He said they have already made some expanses into the Hebron and Quantico

areas through Maryland Broadband, and money has been granted to Talkie Communication as one ISP, but the key is to put everything in place as far as Maryland Broadband putting the trunk lines in, and find out what ISP they might want to use, whether it is Comcast or Talkie. He said he thinks the key factor is that a lot of the driving point directing the funding is to establish the need, and he really feels the Board of Education recognizes the actual household needs more than anybody out there. He clarified, more than Comcast or anyone else, he thinks the Board of Education knows exactly which homes need this. He said education is one thing he thinks appeals to every government agency, and somehow or another if they can try to work this out with Tri-County Council and go back to the State with the metrics or whatever data they want to put together and tell them exactly what the needs are. He then asked if they think that is feasible, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, yes. She said she thinks if the County were to establish some kind of taskforce with the Tri-County Council, for example, they would be very happy to have a voice at the table. She said Bob Langan has a lot of expertise in this area and is in communication with the individuals Mr. Cannon is talking about, including the Rural Broadband Office of the Governor.

Dr. Hanlin said she does not know if this was the most recent funding, but she just got some information last night that the County, including municipalities, in the Relief Act are getting \$40 million, and one of the allowable expenses is infrastructure for broadband. She said she does not know if together they can approach that, but they would be happy to talk about the need and have a voice at the table.

Mr. Cannon said he thinks Worcester is putting together an MOU with certain internet providers, so he thinks Wicomico needs to get moving because they may be behind on that, but it is simple enough to catch up.

Mr. Dodd said Wicomico County has been very fortunate to get these grants and he was thinking about that. He then asked if the Board of Education is planning on buying laptops for every student in the future, to which Dr. Briggs responded, there is no going back now. He said they were fortunate to get CARES one-time funding to get one-to-one, and it is their goal to set up a plan using general fund dollars in the future to maintain that. Mr. Dodd clarified, that is why he asked that, because he did not think it would make sense to go backwards when everybody was getting access to internet and computers.

Pre-K Enrollment

Dr. Briggs reported, in 2016 they had 547 pre-K students, in 2017 it was up to 559, in 2018 it was up to 625, and in 2019 it was up to 688, so pretty consistent increases, but then this past September it dropped to 417. He said he is happy to say that as of this morning it is back up to 481, as they have added 64 pre-K students since September, so they are happy to be able to report that. He said, as Dr. Hanlin eluded to earlier, they are hopeful and confident that this number will increase as they return to their buildings. He said they recognize that parents of 4 year olds need childcare, and where they were not able to provide that fulltime, many chose to pay for daycare. He clarified, some had the luxury of paying for daycare, but they understand the hardship it caused on many families.

Mrs. Acle said she knows Dr. Hanlin's initiative was universal pre-K and she just wanted to see where they were, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they were progressing nicely until the pandemic hit.

Legal Fees

Dr. Hanlin said a Councilmember wanted to know about their legal fees for January through December 2020, so not a fiscal year, but a calendar year, and Dr. Stauffer can give Council that figure.

Dr. Stauffer said, in calendar year 2020, WCPS spent a total of \$126,000 on legal fees keeping in mind this is approximately 1/20th of 1 percent of their total budget. He said those legal fees were expended for policy reviews, personnel matters, MOU reviews, contract reviews, updates and alignments with Legislation, Board consultation, special education services, litigation, and legal interpretations.

Mrs. Acle asked if it was \$126,000 total, to which Dr. Stauffer responded, yes. Dr. Hanlin clarified, for the calendar year. Mrs. Acle said she has been copied on letters from attorneys dealing with parents and things she did not even really want to read. She said she guesses her fear is just, if they are dealing with citizens through attorneys, that makes her a little bit nervous. She said she does not want to get into the weeds of the specifics, she just wants them to know. She said she does not know if anyone else here has been copied, but she knows that other Senators and Delegates have been on these legal letters.

Enabling Legislation Related to Expanded Reporting Requirements

Dr. Hanlin clarified, she is not sure specifically what Council wants to discuss in terms of this next item.

Mrs. Acle said she wanted to clarify any questions they may have, and Mr. Wilber is here so he can speak to the State law. She said, if it is not something they are all comfortable doing this year, how are they going to get to the place where they can bring Wicomico County up to what the other Counties have this next Legislative year. She said she just wants them to think about that as they have these Work Sessions through the year and taking it back to the Board and seeing what they want to have. She said this enabling Legislation was the very basic bare minimum, but they could elaborate to do more of what Prince George's County has, Anne Arundel, or Montgomery, so they can write it to whatever they want.

Dr. Hanlin said she is very happy to collaborate and figure this out because she guesses she does not understand the very basic question from the beginning, and this is a sincere question – what is the connection between the County Executive form of Government and this enabling Legislation, because she does not see that connection. Mrs. Acle responded, when they first created this Legislation for the Executive form of Government, it was that the Board of Education Superintendent would be communicating with the County Executive, and it was to ensure that the County Legislative Body was receiving the same information, so that is how it was developed. She said, as they can see with Anne Arundel, Montgomery, and Howard, they expanded on what they wanted to see when they were doing their budgets. Dr. Hanlin asked if the other five Counties that have a County Executive form of Government but do not have this Legislation are working on this also, to which Mrs. Acle responded, Montgomery has it, Howard has it, Cecil, and Anne Arundel. Dr. Hanlin said, in trying to understand this, there are nine Counties with a County Executive form of Government and those Counties that are listed in the law that have additional reporting requirements are Anne Arundel, Cecil, Montgomery, and Prince George. Mrs. Acle said those Counties have over and above what they were asking for. She clarified, what they were asking for was the enabling Legislation, which is what all the other County Executive form of Governments have, but the ones that Dr. Hanlin listed have over and above that.

Mr. McCain asked who “we” is, to which Mrs. Acle responded, we means we. Mr. McCain clarified, Mrs. Acle said “we” were asking for that, to which Mrs. Acle responded, we the people. She said she believes Council as a majority voted for it, to which Mr. Dodd responded, it was a majority. Mrs. Acle said, again, the Council as a majority.

Mr. Malone asked what Mrs. Acle means by over and above, to which Mrs. Acle responded, the original one was enabling Legislation to provide the budgeting twice a year, and then Dr. Hanlin mentioned Anne Arundel and Prince George's, and they have something over and above.

Dr. Hanlin asked if Mrs. Acle knows what the law is that it is above, to which Mrs. Acle responded, she would have to defer to Mr. Wilber to explain that. Mr. Wilber said he will send it to Dr. Hanlin, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, that would be great because that will help them understand where this is coming from.

Mr. Malone asked, what is it that Mrs. Acle expects to gain from this that Council is not getting now? He said maybe they are getting into the weeds now, and they can deal with that at a later time and talk about it, but that is what he could never quite understand. Mrs. Acle responded, for herself, it is bringing Wicomico County up to what other Counties have.

Mr. Cannon said he is a bit confused when Mrs. Acle says Council as a majority made that decision. He said he knows there was a letter request to be sent to the Eastern Shore Delegation in reference to some type of additional oversight, and his impression was that Council did not vote for that letter to go to Annapolis, it was voted down. Mrs. Acle responded, it was voted by herself, Mr. Dodd, Mr. Holloway, and Mr. Davis, so that is four. Mr. Cannon then asked Mrs. Hurley if that is correct, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, she believes there was a majority.

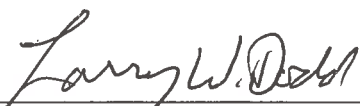
Dr. Hanlin said, this may not be relevant to what Mrs. Acle is concerned about, but a citizen spoke during citizen comment at the February Board meeting about transparency, so Dr. Stauffer and their Comptroller Jesse Reid met with that citizen. She said, in response to that they actually made some modifications to make it more user friendly for the general public to understand what is on the transparency portal. She said the citizen was very satisfied with that meeting and the outcome of that. She said they are doing their very best to be transparent, if she has ever given the impression otherwise, to which Mrs. Acle responded, it is really not due to not providing transparency, it is bringing Wicomico County up to what the other Counties with the Executive form of Government are doing.

Dr. Stauffer added, in meeting with that community member as well as taking notes from the last time they discussed this with Council, they wanted to make sure they looked at what was being done in Anne Arundel. He said specifically they looked at Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties because that was where they could find most of the information, and they have updated their transparency portal. He said, while those systems do not necessarily have the same information Wicomico has online, they reached out to see what they are doing, and they updated their transparency portal to have it aligned differently in the reports. He said, for the typical community member who may be viewing it, they can easily see from the general fund to food service, to a proprietary fund to grants, it is aligned so the categories are the same and the information is the same, so they can go across the descriptions and their purchase orders. He said they have added that to all of the reports so they do not have to go to a different report to find some of those things, so they definitely tried to take all the feedback that the Council and community provided them, and the other school systems they see that have the Legislation Mrs. Acle is looking at to ensure that it is as user friendly as possible. He said they were trying to be as transparent before, but obviously when they are in the weeds using these reports on a daily basis, it looks different to them, so they value that feedback and have made those changes in response to that.

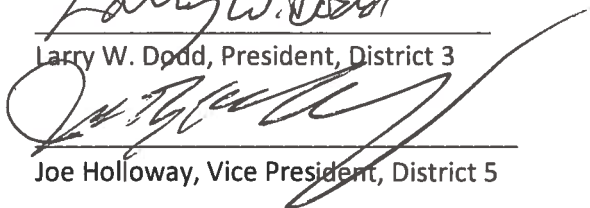
Mrs. Acle said Dr. Stauffer and Dr. Hanlin are not going to always be here. She clarified, there is going to be someone else, or there may be a new Superintendent in ten years and new Councilmembers in ten years, so why not put it in State law as the other Counties have so they can maintain that.

Mr. Cannon said Council can also send them the January 19 Work Session minutes, which have been approved, and that will give them an idea of the discussion that prevailed.

There was no further discussion.

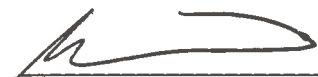


Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3



Joe Holloway, Vice President, District 5

John T. Cannon, At-Large



William R. McCain, At-Large

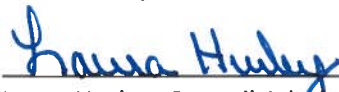
absent

Ernest F. Davis, District 1



Nicole Acle, District 2

Josh Hastings, District 4



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator