

**ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

ACTION MINUTES

MEETING OF June 23, 2011

The meeting was convened at 7:04 p.m. In attendance – Julie Carr, Jason Anthony, Dennis Cain, Charles Littlefield and Roald Schrack. Eric Siegel, Tom Gibney (arr. late). Soo Lee-Cho and Sean Hart were absent.

The chair moved, seconded by Jason Anthony, to revise the agenda to have Laura Berthiaume speak first, before taking up the minutes reviews. The motion passed unanimously.

Laura Berthiaume, member of the Montgomery County Board of Education spoke as the invited guest. She is a resident of New Mark Commons. She pointed out that she was not speaking for the Board's positions, since she sometimes has different opinions.

She noted that there have been disagreements between the City and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) for some 20 years. MCPS has blamed the city for a lot of issues and also being hard to work with. There are also conflicting interests. MCPS must look at the County-wide issues, how and where to locate portable classrooms, what needs to be done to avoid development moratoriums (such as coming up with real or "paper" Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) to keep areas from going into moratorium).

The BOE depends on its staff for the data needed to make their decisions. Since the other Board members live outside municipalities, they tend to look askance at the city where the APFO requirements are stricter. There is a bias towards keeping the tax base growing so as to generate the revenues needed to help meet the future school demands. This has led to an appearance that the Board may be too close to the developers.

The BOE has also been complacent when it comes to participating in the planning process. They have been content to just accept land dedications as part of the development, but not push for additional monies for infrastructure. There have also been issues with how the surplus sites have been handled. About 10 years ago the superintendent proposed a program where students in lower-income areas would have reduced class sizes to 16 (the red zone and green zone program). In this same time frame there was a big spurt in new growth approvals – Clarksburg, Germantown, Science City, Fallsgrove, King Farm. This was coupled with a movement of low-income and foreign-born families from the cities to the suburbs. These factors combined generated many more school kids and increased the need for portables.

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There have been schools such as College Gardens that have become more desirable and have drawn more kids.

She noted that about 80% of the English as a Second Language (ESOL) students are native-born. There has also been growth in the Asian population, but they tend to come from higher-income areas of the County.

Dennis Cain asked where there have been any studies of educational differences between students in portables and those in the buildings. Ms. Berthiaume responded that no direct studies have been done. The issues generally raised about portables are more about health and security. She said that there are mixed opinions on the education issue.

Jason Anthony asked how the Board addresses the issues of people chasing resources and getting into a circle of rising demands. Her answer was that the bias of the Board is that they will try and provide all the needed resources to the kids as needed, no matter where in the system they are located.

Some of the school issues are really County issues, such as how and where to build various types of housing. About 40,000 kids are FARM's (Free and Reduced-price Meals Program). She noted a study that indicated the kids from MPDU's (Moderate Priced Dwelling Units) who went to a green zone school did better than ones at red zone schools where the money per student ratio was greater. Without coordination between growth policy, housing policy and school policy, there are always going to be mismatches.

Jason Anthony asked how the overcrowding in Rockville compares with other areas, and has Rockville been penalized? The response was that there are areas like Burtonsville where growth has been much greater than planned. Oakland Terrace Elementary School near the P.G. County border has had to move its kindergarten into the middle school to make room.

The question was asked about how the budget is developed. The County has to look at the overall bonding authority for each year and how much of that will be allocated to the BOE. The ultimate decision is made by the County Council. The BOE then has to balance its own programs based on those final allocations. The costs for new construction have gone up substantially in recent years due to State requirements for things such as stormwater management and LEED certification. In addition, there is wear and tear on the facilities from community use with no cost recovery.

There are two different school fees. One is the school facilities payment that is paid by a developer for each projected student generated that takes the school over 105% program capacity. The fee is based on the type of dwelling unit. To date, no funds have been collected from this program. The other is the school impact fee, which is an amount determined by the location of the project and the number of students to be generated. This fee is collected at the time of building permit issuance and applied County-wide, including the city. Funds have been collected from this program.

Until this current CIP was adopted, there had been a facility planning project for adding elementary school capacity in the city. It was dropped this year.

The question was asked about where there would be an opportunity to raise taxes for schools. The response was that there have already been new taxes imposed – the cell phone tax, the bag tax, etc. Now they are looking at modifications to the employee compensation package for savings to try and hold the line. There needs to be some political will and leadership on this issue.

Ms. Berthiaume believes that there will be a need for two middle schools in Rockville, but the bias of the Board is to just expand Julius West. Another issue to be dealt with is the need for more school bus depots to handle the expected demand.

A question was raised about school core capacities. The new standard is to design for 740 kids. For the older schools, the problem with trying to increase core capacity is that there is so much involved that it essentially requires rebuilding the school. With regard to the Hungerford site, the issues include politics, building and site design, access, and the city's APFO. All these may mean that this project is a good ways down the road.

Dennis Cain asked if there has been any change in the quality of education in the face of all these challenges. The response was that it is hard to say. The system seems to do great on standardize test scores. However, about half the graduating students go on to Montgomery College and about half of those students need remediation. There is a goal to have every kid achieve a score of at least 550 on each part of the SAT exams.

The discussion then turned to consideration of several sets of meeting minutes. The minutes for the April 28 meeting were reviewed and revised. Dennis Cain moved, seconded by Jason Anthony, to approve the revised minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

For the May 26 meeting, Dennis Cain offered some revisions. Other members offered some additional revisions. Dennis Cain will e-mail his notes on his revisions. Charles Littlefield moved, seconded by Dennis Cain, to approve the revised minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

The committee then turned to review of the June 9 minutes. Some minor revisions were noted. Jason Anthony moved, seconded by Roald Schrack to approve the revised minutes. The motion passed 4-1 with Tom Gibney voting no.

The committee then reviewed the minutes from the June 16 meeting. Several revisions were recommended. Charles Littlefield moved, seconded by the chair, to approve the revised minutes. The motion passed 4-0-2 with Dennis Cain and Jason Anthony abstaining.

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The chair moved, seconded by Dennis Cain to hold alternative meetings on Wednesday, June 29 and Wednesday, July 6. These are in addition to the regular Thursday night meetings. Note that staff will not be required to attend the Wednesday evening meetings.

Dennis Cain noted from the schools/growth chart passed out last week that there was a good split between single family, townhouse and multi-family development in the first 5 years, but that in the second 5 years there were only 4% single family, 4% townhouses, and 92% multi-family units. This led to a discussion of what might be the possible ramifications for the city with more and more rentals coming on line. It was noted that there is some evidence that renters in the city have become homeowners in the city as their family needs change.

Roald Schrack voiced the opinion that the APFO has had no impact on the quality of life in the city. Jason Anthony noted that the state of the economy in recent years has likely had more affect on the growth rate than the APFO has. The city is doing well now, but will lose that if we don't keep good schools. There needs to be closer cooperation between the County, City, and MCPS. We are not going to get any special treatment for schools in the city. Part of the committee's report to the Planning Commission should be to let them know what has been learned and observed in the course of the various presentations and the information collected as part of that.

Tom Gibney moved adjournment, seconded by Jason Anthony. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.