

Business and Community Advisory Council

Minutes

Meeting March 25, 2008

The meeting was opened and the roundtable introductions beginning with Superintendent of Schools Jack Dale.

Jack Dale began the meeting with the latest new and information

Budget Update

There was \$33 million in cuts proposed and seeking \$66 million from the county.

This would mean a fewer Full Day K schools would open this coming school year, and that there would be no FLES expansion. It is projected there will be 2,500 new student over the next two years.

There may be a 0 to 3 cent tax increase. One cent would equal \$22 million dollars and three cents would equal \$66 million.

County is losing interest income when Federal Government lowers tax rate. This is a \$23 million loss in state revenue.

Boundary Study

There will be a study on South County Secondary next year.
Studying the IB/AP issue at South Lakes.

Grading Scale

FCPS is researching the ways it grades students. It is a complex issue including but beyond “what do colleges and universities look at?”

A Transportation Update was provided by Dean Tistadt

Dean Tistadt discussed why FCPS transportation is efficient. There was discussion about the real efficiency of the transportation team and mention of some buses running almost empty.

Tistadt noted that the hour for some high school starts may be is too early. Several task forces were formed and conducted in the 80’s, 90’s and 00’s studies/recommendations. In each of those studies the recommendation was to leave start times generally the same.

Tistadt said that one bus & driver equal a teacher’s salary. The late 90’s task force was representative of the community and did not recommend change. Current task force says it can be changed – some say at no cost by flipping the bell. Multiple service delivery charges are included in the 00 task force recommendations.

Tistadt noted the he would like SB direction to have/allow staff to develop a new bell schedule. James Madison HS was selected as the pilot with MS starting at 10:00 a.m. The community turned it down.

Jack Dale suggested that the earliest that the development of a new plan could take place within a few months with the earliest implementation in the Fall of '09.

Tistadt said possibly later if the School Board wanted additional community input.

Nell Hurley asked about activities and child care issues. A change in schedule would be an issue with IB students and darkness especially on rainy days. Suggested that efficiency could be bound in unique ways like doubling bus routes for MS/HS on the same property like Frost/Woodson, Twain/Edison, Hughes/South Lakes

Dick Reed recommended that everyone should read the task force report and then updated the committee on highlights of the report. Including:

- The task force was asked to look at ways to save by re-engineering. More than half of the committee time was spent on impacts like day care.
- The group did not suggest solutions to impacts.
- The 320 page report is a resource for the county.
- A change to the bell schedules was proposed.
- The task force members did speak with Dean and the senior staff about general costs.
- The task force was formed because they wanted to help the school systems do research.
- Some of the task force were not convinced that HS students need different sleep patterns.
- There was no overwhelming consensus with the proposed changes for ES 7:30, MS 8:30, and HS 9:10.
- The task force tried to keep opinions out of the report
- There are both positive and negative impacts but it was determined that changing the bell schedule offered more benefits than negatives.

Cathy Lange asked is there were there any general concerns?

Dick Reed noted that this could impact activities/clubs. Parks would adjust to the change. Employers would adjust, and the MS after school activities would have to adjust.

Katie Lynch noted that activities don't start right after school because teachers are still teaching

Luke Chung noted the capacity utilization issue could mean there would be lots of empty buses

Dean Tistadt said the length of run also matters.

Luke Chung asked if there would be a plan B for snow days. Would there be central pick-ups at Tyson's Mall?

Dean Tistadt said the snow day decisions are made primarily for walkers and drivers.

Debbie Lane noted that teachers from outside Fairfax are also an issue.

Dick Reed suggested decreasing the number of bus stops.

Dean Tistadt said there were complaints about too many kids at one bus and that yard gets trashed.

Eileen Kugler said that's a non-issue in this deliberation.

Dick Reed said there would be no grandfathering for boundary changes. Currently there are 100,000 kids on 15,000 runs. We think that this schedule would work.

Dean Tistadt said that long distances are a problem.

Lynn Dysant asked about other districts. San Diego charges riders or does not allow a child to ride.

Dean Tistadt said all of the comparable systems have the same start times as FCPS. Buses are the safest way for kids to travel.

Dick Reed noted that the task force looked at other systems that changed start times and their issues. Brevard did this at no cost.

Dean Tistadt said Arlington's changes cost 10% more.

Jack Dale said our MPS study says were "ultra" efficient

Dick Reed said that committee had 45 or 46 voting members. The committee started with 65 people.

Eileen Kugler said too many people in FCPS/county respond to the squeaky wheel. If you are organized and squeaky, you can get your way in FCPS.

Andrea Sobel said the push and pull of issues are consistent and beyond transportation. An example is special education. What other issues could come up?

Dick Reed said we had representative from all sectors of FCPS and placed them in 3 subcommittees.

Jack Dale said at today's LT meeting, Dean discussed how special education impacts all of FCPS. The board does need to wrestle with the issues.

Eileen Kugler said the board did the right thing on the boundary changes but that it was full loopholes.

Barbara Hunter said we are looking at ways to improve communication and community impact.

Eileen Kugler asked about translators and parent liaisons.

Nell Hurley noted three transportation issues, complaints about bus parking, deaf and hard of hearing schools are not spread about, and about high school age drivers out during peak traffic hours.

Dick Reed said it was addressed in the report.

Michele Menapace said the committee looked at many things but did not make recommendations about them, like: The traffic division could not answer all of the questions about traffic changes. Teen driving alertness was discussed. Consortia/program delivery of bus routes was also discussed. We also looked at "out of boundary" issues but did not make recommendations. Community based programs also need adjusting (dance classes was an example)

Jeanine Martin asked how many HS students drive.

Dick Reed answered 48/49% of students went to school in a car and 40% went home in a car.

Leonard Bumback said there is a huge diversity of opinions, but very strong positions. A country wide solution may be too huge.

Member Issues

Dick Reed when talking about the budget issues suggested that better schools attract even more students and that improving schools now should be our budget approach. When others are cutting, if we're rising – that's good news. He noted 66 million today equals 350 million tomorrow.

Dean Tistadt said that a police officer complimented him and FCPS because we keep kids in school. Because we keep kids in school we keep crime down.

Brenda Greene said she was glad to see the survey results. Is community outreach next?

Luke Chung asked if there is there any way that the PTA can provide input on principal performance?

Bill Ochlein said that the Principals are most evaluated. They are evaluated from the top by Cluster Assistant Supt.'s, from the bottom up by staff, and from the side by PTA's and students – and on a 3 year cycle.

Leonard Bumback noted that there were two snow days that we did not use and asked what would come of them.

Jack Dale said no discussions were occurring.

Dell Hurley said daylight savings time gets us all up an hour earlier and that's not factored into transportation issues.

Dick Reed said studies show that teens must wake up after 6 a.m. because sleeping occurs between 4 & 6 a.m.