

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

September 22, 2009

Welcome

Andrea Sobel opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explained the importance of attending, as one meeting will build on the next. She also expressed the importance of starting and ending on time. Superintendent Dr. Jack Dale initiated roundtable introductions.

Overview of Organizational Structure

Dr. Dale presented a handout which illustrates FCPS organizational structure of School Board Advisory committees' purposes, their charges, and the governing body each reports to. He explained the Superintendent's Advisory committees are somewhat less structured.

BCAC Operating Structure and Plan for Year

Dr. Dale solicited the committee's input to decide on the operating structure of the BCAC and plan for the year. He noted that in deciding the operating structure it is helpful to have both a historical perspective, but also a new voice to bring fresh ideas. He charged the group with the "homework" of scanning through the School Board Advisory committees to see the issues they are reporting on.

Questions

Dr. Dale gave an overview of the role of the committee. There are several components to its function. 1) Acts as a sounding board for the School Board, to inform; 2) Acts to advise Superintendent; 3) Acts as a key communicator (to take information back to groups for multiple points of view).

- 1) Are there voices/perspectives missing from BCAC?

Brenda Greene stated the value of having 2 or 3 student voices.

Andrea Sobel stated the need for citizens with disabilities and minorities.

John Wittman stated the need for ESOL, minority community.

Patrick Forrest reiterated the need to hear from the ESOL community and added the importance of hearing from military families.

Steve Dietz added recent graduates who entered a Technical school and a local university.

Patricia Velkoff stated that the communication is two-way... Whom do you want to hear from? Whom do you want to speak to?

Dr. Dale responded with the question "Who are our stakeholders" and said that he cannot think of anyone who is *not* a stakeholder, i.e. students, business, retired community. He noted it presents a challenge of how do you communicate in a manner meaningful to all.

Nell Hurley stated that AAA, transportation and the Park Authority should be included for those topics when necessary.

Charles Dane suggested including the Board of Supervisors.

Brian Willey stated that you can't systematically reach everyone. Sometimes there's a need to go out and reach out.

- 2) What mix of experienced vs. newer voices should we have on BCAC?
- 3) Should there be a maximum limit on years of service for individuals on BCAC?

Brenda Greene stated there seems to be a natural attrition that takes place.

Brian stated to keep people who have a passion.

Brad Antle suggested a 3 year term limit at which time ask if they are still interested.

Ramona Morrow stated that as long as there is passion to serve, you can stay. When you've missed more than a couple meetings, need to reevaluate.

John Wittman suggested that an individual or organization being represented could be contacted by the chair to see if the commitment is still there.

Steve noted that you need more than a passion to stay involved.

Linda Rogus commented that the passion needs to be there, but a new perspective is a positive. She proposed a 2 year commitment with the condition that you can only miss 2 meetings/year.

Jay Garant stated that the current regulations state the current committee cap is 40 people. He noted that currently 29 people were in attendance.

- 4) How should the chair be selected? Should they serve for a minimum/maximum number of years?

Brian Willey stated his preference for selecting at the end of the year as it gives continuity to the group when starting up again in the fall.

Member/Other Issues

Dr. Dale noted the distribution of the Bond Facts Booklet.

Tessie Wilson stated the need to vote “Yes” on the school bond. Bonds are needed to fund the building and renovation of schools as they are not financed through the school system’s operating funds.

Nell Hurley asked when was Marshall HS last renovated?

It was stated that Marshall HS is up for renovation with this current bond (and that renovations are done with the intent to last 20 -25 years).

It was noted that no stimulus dollars went to capital improvements.

Jay stated that the Bond Fact booklet will be shipped to schools on October 23 and was produced at a cost savings of \$6,000.

Question: Jennifer Van Pernis asked if distribution will be tracked since the Back to School nights for High Schools were missed and high school/middle school students do not have the weekly communication folders sent home.

Response: The Bond Fact booklet is online on the website and the private Bond committee has been distributing them at schools at back to school nights.

Dr. Dale noted the September 30 State Board of Education meeting at West Potomac High School stating it as a “mission critical” review of Standards of Quality. He urged us all to advocate that the state not change the Standards of quality because of budget constraints. He stressed that they will be taking written testimony for those who could not be at the meeting.

Budget

Tuesday at the Board of Supervisor’s meeting, Dr. Dale will share the budget.

- Enrollment has risen over the past 2 years.
- Currently 500 under projection of 173,000 students
- Past 2 years have grown to meet projection by end of school year
- Trends have been doubling up of families, exodus from private schools, with increasing gas prices, people are moving closer in and to Fairfax County.
- Anticipating next fall growing by a couple 1000 (creates a need for 14-15 million more dollars)
- Decline in sales tax revenue, projection is less than last year
- Expect to see increase in contributions to local, county, state retirement and increase in premium payments
- Health insurance – FCPS is self-insured, cost going up (less than 10%)

All of the above will create a \$100 – \$140 million deficit

To put in perspective, Dr. Dale distributed a handout of FCPS 2010 Authorized Personnel and shared that 85% of FCPS budget is people and that a 5% cut would mean close to 1000 people. He opened the floor for discussions.

Brad Antle stressed that you can't make equal cuts across the pie. You may create greater problems than you are trying to solve.

John Wittman noted that the cuts may cause a standard of quality to be violated and asked what the cost of that would be.

Dr. Dale responded that most likely it would come in the form of a fine. He noted that high schools are currently at their legal limit with regards to standards of quality. At the elementary level, \$32 million (from the stimulus package) currently funds neediest elementary schools (schools with high ESOL, poverty populations).

Luke Chung noted that the issue can be seen as a crisis or a point of innovation. Sometimes out of necessity you can create a new model. Suggested electronic books.

Gene Pettit stated the focus should remain on the primary responsibility of educating. Need to look at how to teach without all personnel. He suggested the possibility of forming a group to look at this issue.

Dr. Dale agreed with the need to look at new ways to educate and provided information about going electronic versus books can get into higher or the same costs because of licensing issues to renew the software. He also stated an issue with parent groups insistent on having actual books to read.

Steve Dietz stated the need to look for additional sources of revenues. Suggested sports user fees.

Dr. Dale reported that FCPS was looking into sports fee structures, AP & IB exam fees and other sources of revenues.

Brian asked the question, "What's the mentality of the school system to get ahead of the wave?" Stating that we are usually reactionary, but need to be in front of the wave. On the Human Resources factor, "What's being done about the "freeze"? He commented that in the private sector, raises and job stability is not based on how long they've been there, but based on how good they are.

Tessie urged other board members to take the message back to schools, "What else can we do to get the word out about the budget?" The consensus in the communities seems to be that things are "not that bad." She charged everyone with the homework of "getting the word out."

Charles added that the 788 figure of jobs abolished was in fact a real number, even though some thought it was less.

Dr. Dale agreed, commenting that 588 jobs were added back due to the increased number of student enrollments. 200 people got pink slips and all but 20 have been hired back.

Mitch Sutterfield, as a retired teacher, offered a suggestion of hiring retired teachers for filling in gaps at a reduced pay rate. Do not need to pay them retirement, already receiving it.

Patrick made the point for dual enrollment in high school and college courses.

Brad suggested looking into the possibility of virtual classrooms for money savings.

Jennifer Van Pernis brought up the handbook of Santa Clara, CA and the fact that they saved money by outsourcing and printing on newsprint and consolidating multiple forms into one book. They also contract out their busses on weekends and made \$500,000. They use grants to pay for AP & IB classes.

Kahan concurred that there is a need for consolidation and technology. What else can you do long term? He advised that we need to be cautionary and become more efficient before making grand changes. He stressed that community dialogs with the county are needed.

HOMEWORK

Andrea stated that the homework for next meeting is to think about the questions, “What can we stop doing?” and “What/How can we do things differently?”

Andrea stated that the structure of the meetings will be one topic for two meetings, so that committee members can take ideas/issues back to their constituency and bring back for discussion.

October meeting – continue budget discussion

December/January meeting – Race to the Top funds

February/March meeting – Professional Learning Communities

April/May meetings – Closing the Achievement Gap

Dr. Dale closed the meeting on a positive note stating that no matter what criteria you use to measure success in the schools (SOLs, SATs, closing the achievement gap), the results/performance are up.