

Business and Community Advisory Council

Minutes

Meeting September 25, 2007

Todd Rowley opened the meeting and called on Dr. Dale for an explanation of his decision to combine two advisory committees into one.

Dale said that BIAC and SCAC have been the two most important committees that advise him concerning what the Fairfax County community is thinking about the schools and the school system. During his time as Superintendent, he has found that the two committees have often brought similar ranges of views on the same topics and that memberships of the two committees overlap. He determined that combining the committees would make this advice giving more efficient.

He said he wants to provide the committee in advance with topics that FCPS is wrestling with so that members can glean views on these topics from those they represent and bring these views to committee meetings. He would also like members to give him advice on what issues their constituencies are concerned about and to act as "key communicators" with their constituencies about FCPS issues.

Rowley asked committee members to introduce themselves. After introductions, Dale mentioned that the meeting scheduled for November 28 was too close to the legislative breakfast; he rescheduled that meeting for October 30.

Dale asked committee members to suggest topics for discussion during the 2007-08 school year.

Ellie Ashford suggested discussion of the recommendations of the transportation task force, specifically as they relate to possibly opening high schools later.

Andrea Sobel suggested discussion of reaching immigrant families, especially in light of FCPS establishing a new position that would include responsibility for community outreach.

Joe Bury recommended discussion of the FCPS strategic plan and how the system is doing in meeting its goals.

Brenda Greene suggested what FCPS is doing to maintain and improve student health, which, she noted, is related to student achievement.

Charlie Dane suggested the ongoing school-capacity study. He said there is a shortage of elementary school rooms and asked if rooms were being used flexibly to ensure most efficient use.

Ginger Shea suggested discussing the School Board's "strategic governance" process. Jeanine Martin said there is confusion as to what strategic governance is and how goals will be met.

Rowley said that transportation and redistricting topics overlap and might be discussed at a single meeting. He also suggested discussion of technology and security.

Johnnie Miles suggested discussing preparation for catastrophic events.

Greene suggested parent advocacy.

Dale read an e-mail from Eileen Kugler, who was unable to attend the meeting. Kugler suggested discussion of building a multicultural atmosphere in a diverse school system.

Rowley asked Becky Parker what business sees as the most important issue. She said it was immigration. Diana Margonie asked how businesses can help schools.

Courtney Bulger talked about the continuing need for more business partnerships with individual schools. Charlie Dane said FCPS ought to quantify this participation and show gaps in business involvement with schools.

Rowley asked the staff to e-mail a list of topics recommended at this meeting to Council members asking them to select the most important topics for discussion at this year's SCAC meetings. {This is being done}

Rowley called on the Superintendent for updates.

Dale said this year's school opening was the smoothest in years; he received no e-mail complaints. FCPS had 1,000 more students this year than had been projected, the largest increase in recent years. Enrollments are also above projections in neighboring school systems. FCPS increases were across the county.

On the upcoming boundary study, Dale noted that it would focus on shifting students from the overcrowded Oakton High School pyramid to neighboring pyramids.

On the School Board's strategic governance efforts, Dale said that these efforts would result in two major changes:

- 1) increased accountability for all FCPS functions, using metrics established for achievement functions or goals. In the case of student achievement goals, this includes competence in a second language for all graduates and life skills. The latter are difficult to test for, and we do not want to test students too much; we are researching ways to have an individual learning plan for each student and evaluate achievement in these areas with portfolios. Dale said he would bring information about evaluating these goals to BCAC to help determine which are most important.

2) School Board engagement with stakeholders and the mechanisms for such engagement. The Board wants to determine how it can know it is listening to the "real" community, and not just those with particular point of view. The School Board has created a Community Leadership Council (CLC) to advise the members. One question is whether political considerations or accountability drives decisions in Fairfax County.

Greene says FCPS needs to educate people about how we really evaluate schools.

Martin asked when the CLC would be selected and who would be on it. Dale said it had already been selected and consisted entirely of community (not FCPS) people.

Dale said projections of how many additional students would move to Fairfax County because of military base realignment have varied substantially, and the matter is still unresolved as far as FCPS is concerned.

Dale said the revenue picture for the 2009 budget is challenging. The county has recommended a zero increase in the transfer; all supervisors are up for election.

Dale said we have presented to the School Board a draft FCPS plan for operating during a pandemic flu outbreak. The regional Council of Governments (COG) is working to coordinate responses in the region and has now established a vocabulary for discussing responses.

Dale announced a new organizational structure in which the FCPS Office of Community Relations (OCR), the Office of Business and Industry Relations, the Office of Government Relations, and various parent outreach activities would be brought together under a new assistant superintendent. He said he would bring the new assistant superintendent to a BCAC meeting. Also, the Cluster 7 assistant superintendent position is being filled.

Dale discussed the high schools of the future initiative and distributed a sheet showing how this was being organized across the county.

Dale noted that when he visited schools in South Korea and Taiwan, he found students much more interested in the rest of the world than are American students. He wants to study how we can encourage our own students to be more internationally oriented.

Loren Rufino said he would like to discuss whether middle schools are meeting kids' needs. Dale said we are constrained by space and that only a few FCPS middle schools have sixth grades. Middle schools that have grades 6-8 have more continuity, but we are not able to provide that systemwide.

Kerri Harris said band, strings, and chorus should be able to be offered after school. Dale said these were offered during the school day to give teachers planning time.

Luke Chung said students should not be taking attendance reports to the office. This should be reported electronically. He also said that, in some schools, the number of students bringing notes to switch buses had gotten out of hand.

Leonard Bumbaca said the School Board's community outreach program was unclear.