

Thank you for participating in this event.

1. Many schools in Columbia's older villages with high proportions of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services (FARMS) face major challenges in reducing the significant academic gap between low and middle-income students. Studies show that FARMS rates limited to about 30 percent or less can be more effective. Would you be willing to work with the county Housing and Community Development Office to de-concentrate low-income housing and accompanying high FARMS rates? How would you approach this? Additionally, independent of housing, would you support a redistricting policy that prohibits increasing the FARMS rate of any school to greater than 30 percent and aims to reduce FARMS rates at schools in excess of 30 percent to promote a more equitable distribution?

As a Professor of Education, I am familiar with research findings that suggest that students learn better in schools with populations that do not have high concentrations of poverty. One of the reasons I decided to seek a seat on the Board of Education is precisely because of the growing income disparity in school populations across the county and even within Columbia. While schools such as Bryant Woods, Guilford and Swansfield elementary schools have well over the recommended percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals (>40%), Schools such as Clarksville and Centennial Lane have almost none (<5%). This is primarily due to a growing economic segregation within our communities that must be addressed through a collaborative effort between the school system and the Housing and Community Development Office. I would advocate for phasing in a policy that prohibits increases of low income housing in neighborhoods where schools have higher than a 30% FARM rate and mandates availability of low income housing in neighborhoods that have low FARM rates. Until Housing issues are solved through such policies, we will face the challenge of preserving the neighborhood school concept while reducing economic disparities across schools. I would advocate for forming an inclusive taskforce of stakeholders to draw reasonable districting lines that equalizes school populations. For example, in my village of Hickory Ridge, Clemens Crossing has a low FARM rate while Swansfield has a high rate. I would urge such a taskforce to examine ways in which district lines may be redrawn to maintain neighborhood school and feeder systems while equalizing populations. I would also advocate for implementing innovative programs in particular schools and allow limited enrollment from outside their district lines in order to attract more diverse populations.

2. The new school wellness policy and Healthy Howard are steps toward addressing the growing problem of childhood obesity as well as other health issues. What steps will you take to ensure meals and snacks provided through the schools' food service promote healthy diets? How would you incorporate more physical activity into the learning

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environment? What is your opinion on a move to alter school start times in order to work with adolescent body clocks?

The school wellness program includes some excellent criteria for providing healthy meals for our students. However, no policy is successful without monitoring and support. I would advocate for creating a Healthy Meals team of professional dieticians and nutritionists that visits schools to ensure that the meal choices are indeed healthful and appealing to students. I would like to institute a farm to school initiative that links our food service with local growers and farmers who can provide fresh and healthy produce and meats to our kitchens. Meal offerings can also be expanded to encompass vegetarian and vegan options for students with these needs or preferences.

In terms of physical activity, I believe we should revisit guidelines to consider increasing the number of minutes per day reserved for recess and expanding the range of activities that might encourage more active participation. Physical education and related classes should be integrated into middle school and high school schedules throughout the year. Perhaps expanding physical education programs to include such specialty classes as hip hop dance or yoga would be engaging for students and encourage future involvement in clubs and teams.

There is no question that the high school schedule should be altered so that it is consistent with scientific reports on the circadian rhythms and sleep patterns of adolescents. Later start times for high schoolers would also mean later dismissals, thereby decreasing the number of unsupervised after school hours.

3. Howard County schools are regarded as among the best in the country, but regardless of school record, there is a perception that some Howard County schools are better than others. What will you do to promote parity among the experience of our schools dents across the school system? What will you do to change the perception that some schools are better than others within Columbia and Howard County?

Howard County schools have repeatedly been praised at a state and national level. While I agree that the overall quality of our schools are excellent, there is always room for improvement. I would like to state my objection to claims heard during this campaign that the quality of our teachers at target schools and more challenging schools is inferior to those at more affluent school communities. Having supervised and taught teachers at many of the more challenging schools,

I can state unequivocally that they are dedicated and knowledgeable professionals who are devoted to their students. If we want to improve the quality of our schools and promote parity we need to achieve equity in resources, technology, facilities and services across county schools. Funding should be based on the needs of the schools as determined by educators, administrators and parents and may go toward reducing school capacities and class sizes, greater access to technology, increase in support staff, innovative programs, student and parent support services. Lastly, we need to challenge the misperceptions regarding school quality by focusing less on test scores which are scientifically correlated with income and a poor representation of actual learning, and begin to showcase our students' progress through portfolio and other performance based assessments.

4. While schools with economically-challenged populations receive additional funding through such programs as Title I, organizations supporting those schools like the PTA do not have a similar economic equalizer. There is a substantial difference in the fundraising capabilities of PTAs based on the financial circumstances of the populations they serve. Some school districts have addressed this through revenue sharing so PTAs can support their schools more consistently throughout the district. Would you support revenue sharing or some other approach to ensure students and their schools have similar access to support from organizations like their local PTA?

This is not just a county issue but one that plagues school systems nationally. Although it is reasonable to expect families to devote their time, energy and funding to their children's own schools, this does exacerbate the problems of inequitable funding across the system. I would advocate working with PTAHC to develop a fundraising policy that supports home schools and other less economically advantaged schools. Such a policy may require that a percentage of all fundraising revenues go toward a county fund that would provide grants to less affluent schools submitting proposals for consideration.

5. Since members of the Board of Education are elected to represent the community, please explain how you plan to be accountable to your constituents, giving specific examples of ways you would be responsive to parents, students, teachers, and other community members. What will you do to build relationships with your fellow board members in order to enable the Board to work together to the benefit of Howard County?

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We are fortunate in Howard County to have an elected rather than appointed school board. This means that the BOE is a representative body that should solicit input and be responsive to all of their constituents. These constituents include teachers and their representative body (HCEA), parents and families and their representative body (PTA) and various segments of the general community. I believe strongly that all BOE decisions regarding policies and budgeting should be based upon input and collaboration with these constituencies. The BOE has a responsibility not just to hold open meetings and community events for public input, but to consider very seriously the concerns and issues that are expressed. While the BOE must work with the Office of the Superintendent in a spirit of cooperation, it must act as an independent body and take bold actions as needed in order to be responsive to the voters and educators of our county. As a member of the Board I will visit schools on a regular basis. As an educator, I will assess the school climate, the availability of resources, the adequacy of facilities, as well as the quality of instruction in the classrooms. I will form focus groups of educators, parents and students to get direct input on issues, and note suggestions for improvement. I will strive to become a member of each school community, as well as an advocate who will be accessible and responsive to all.

Zaneb K. Beams, MD. FAAP

Oakland Mills Board Questions

1. Equity of resources is an important aspect of ensuring that all our schools, in every corner of the county, are equally high performing. The challenges faced by schools with higher numbers of children from lower income families or children living in poverty reflect the challenges those children are facing at home and in their community.

As a society, we should work to alleviate the causes and extent of poverty in our communities, rather than simply requiring any given school to have more or less students with specific levels of family income. My academic society, the American Academy of Pediatrics, advocates for better nutrition, health, and academic access for all our children at the local, state and national level through providing better access to community programs enhancing children's lives, and addressing problems encountered due to low income.

When included in its mission, the Board of Education should work with the Housing and Community Development office to address problems that arise due to limited affordable housing and strong employment opportunities, as well as access to health, nutrition, quality child care and safe neighborhoods. To whatever extent it is appropriate or possible for the Board of Education to work on this type of problem, I would welcome the opportunity.

2.

A. As a pediatrician with over a decade of clinical and policy advocacy experience, I have dedicated my life to building a brighter future for all of us by working towards optimal physical, social, and emotional health for children and their families. As a Board of Education member, I will work closely with the newly hired nutritionist to ensure that the standards and guidelines we use are appropriate. I would work to ensure that meal choices are equitable and safe. This would require ensuring that breakfast foods are not spoiled or past expiration, and that the choices are equally healthy, and equitably available at all of our schools. As a child health professional with a strong interest in nutrition and physical activity, I would be committed to personally evaluating and addressing the nutritional offerings at each and every one of our schools, in every corner of the county.

- B. There are many requirements placed on educators and students to meet national standards. Because we are attempting to achieve excellence in a broad swath of checkpoints, we must be creative in how we meet goals. Perhaps this would mean incorporating physical activity into other subject areas. Recent studies actually suggest that combining physical activity with academic learning increases learning efficiency as well as test scores. We should work with educators to look at ways to incorporate physical activity in our curricula outside of, and in addition to, Physical Education time.

- C. With respect to school opening times, the science is convincing that later start times are beneficial to adolescent students. This research has been growing for over a decade. My academic society came out with a statement this month encouraging a move to later school start times for adolescents. The challenge is not in knowing whether this is a good idea, the challenge is in finding a way to transition to a significantly different schedule, and accommodating the needs of students with demanding extracurricular and employment schedules, in addition to transportation and staffing challenges. A working group comprised of all involved stakeholders should be convened to find a plausible solution.

3. The best way to overcome illusions and fight gossip or superstition is to present facts. Similarly, it is important to present information about various types of quality at different schools. A particular school might excel at having high SAT scores, and another might excel at entrepreneurial education, or music, or have a renowned fencing team. These strengths should be identified and celebrated across the county, in every school. Beyond the presentation of information on websites or in brochures, this might be achieved through community engagement, media, and neighborhood events, to show that our schools are not just about scores or neighborhood incomes or percentages of students living with economic challenge. Our schools, their success, their value, and their high scores represent OUR CHILDREN and their families- real people who are our neighbors. Additionally, it would be eye opening for families across the county to be paired with families from different schools, to be able to learn from each other and to be able to overcome stereotypes and prejudices. A "diplomacy" program, like a miniature exchange program within the county, with potential for student and family mentoring experiences, would be something I would be eager to initiate.

4. Extensive research shows that access to revenue is a concrete predictor of school scores. In a policy experiment in California and Michigan schools earlier this decade, funds were shared between higher revenue and lower revenue schools, and test scores improved in the lower revenue schools, without decreasing scores in the higher revenue areas. One possibility might be to offer goal oriented fund raising. It might be possible to guarantee baseline funding for all schools through a shared fund, and allow individual schools to fund raise above that if possible. It might be possible to pair schools as fundraising teams to enhance their reach and build connections throughout the county. There could be numerous creative financing solutions if we approach this problem with an open mind and focus on achieving equity of resources for our schools.

5. We are fortunate to have a democratically elected Board of Education. Thus, members are committed to serving our children and our communities. I would propose having board members rotate in service as "ombudsman" to the community. Each member could serve a certain amount of time engaging with students, families, and their neighbors. This would increase interaction, make board members more aware of constituent concerns, and allow us to be more responsive and more responsible to community concerns. It would open a new channel of communication. Montgomery County has begun a very popular ombudsman program through its Board of Education.

Zaneb K. Beams

As far as building relationships with fellow board members, I have been in several roles as a committee member or on a board of directors, in start-up advocacy organizations, health care organizations, and a new health insurance company. Focusing on a shared goal is a basic aspect of maintaining a healthy, functional board. Starting from a position of mutual respect and decency, and insisting on open, honest, and respectful communication is essential. I already have positive relationships with current members and candidates of the Board of Education. In my work, I connect with families from all over the world, all income levels, and all kinds of perspectives. Our shared goal and focus is building the brightest future for all of our children and communities. By maintaining that focus, we are able to bridge all kinds of differences. I will bring this focus on shared mission to my relationships with other members of the Board of Education, County leadership, and our community at large.

Zaneb K. Beams, MD, FAAP
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Columbia's Village Associations

Dorsey's Search, Harpers Choice, Hickory Ridge, Kings Contrivance,
Long Reach, Oakland Mills, Owen Brown, River Hill, Town Center, and Wilde Lake

Board of Education Candidates' Forum

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

7:00 p.m. - The Other Barn

Dear Candidate:

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in the Board of Education Candidates' Forum scheduled for Wednesday, September 17, 2014 at The Other Barn in Oakland Mills. The format for the forum is as follows: Each candidate will submit answers (via email) to the five questions in this letter. In addition we ask that you come prepared to discuss one of the five questions at the forum for no more than three minutes. Attendees will be given an allotted timeframe to ask questions of one or more candidates.

The following questions are representative of those submitted through Columbia's ten Village Boards of Directors. Please provide a written response to each question within this document and return via e-mail to Sandy Cederbaum, Oakland Mills Village Manager (manager@oaklandmills.org), **by September 12, 2014.**

Additionally, please select one of these questions where you feel you have the most unique position or subject matter expertise and be prepared to discuss it for five minutes at the forum. After each candidate discusses a question, we will open the forum to audience questions. We will provide your written responses to all of the questions below as a handout at the conclusion of the forum.

Thank you for participating in this event.

1. Many schools in Columbia's older villages with high proportions of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services (FARMS) face major challenges in reducing the significant academic gap between low and middle-income students. Studies show that FARMS rates limited to about 30 percent or less can be more effective. Would you be willing to work with the county Housing and Community Development Office to de-concentrate low-income housing and accompanying high FARMS rates? How would you approach this? Additionally, independent of housing, would you support a redistricting policy that prohibits increasing the FARMS rate of any school to greater than 30 percent and aims to reduce FARMS rates at schools in excess of 30 percent to promote a more equitable distribution?

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Answer by Allen Dyer:

The central plank of my campaign platform is firm and lasting support for the provision of additional resources to students facing additional needs. I support the allocation of school resources based on student needs. I underscore, however, the need for the reallocation of the school systems most important resource: the more qualified/talented teachers who have demonstrated superior classroom performance. NOW, not later, is the time to transfer our best-of-the-best to the schools that have the highest needs.

Pockets of poverty exacerbate the difficulties facing our public schools and, in the long term, threaten the viability of our country. Unfortunately, there is no long term solution to pockets of poverty that the board of education can achieve without the active participation of the Howard County Council. Meanwhile, the recent opening of the development floodgates without any effort by the County Council to implement enlightened land use planning is a disaster.

I support and encourage the County Council to actively pursue the creation of a cultural, racial and economic mix that is evenly distributed countywide. For example, in January of 2010, I presented a minority report to the County Council that proposed the crafting of such an enlightened land use policy. See *attached: January 26, 2010. A Minority Report on CB 58 and CB 59 Educational Infrastructure.*

While redistricting is nothing more than a stop gap measure for dealing with pockets of poverty, I still support raising the level of the importance attached to the FARMS rate at each school and I would like to see a new face *from the outside* to replace the current administrator in charge of redistricting. We need a change.

2. The new school wellness policy and Healthy Howard are steps toward addressing the growing problem of childhood obesity as well as other health issues. What steps will you take to ensure meals and snacks provided through the schools' food service promote healthy diets? How would you incorporate more physical activity into the learning environment? What is your opinion on a move to alter school start times in order to work with adolescent body clocks?

Answer by Allen Dyer:

I like and welcome the positive changes that have been made recently in the school wellness policy, and, I would like to see even more emphasis made on providing high FARMS student schools with free breakfasts and free lunches for every student attending the school.

Regarding physical activity: I support more recess and expanding the physical education curriculum to include life-time sports such as golf, hand ball, tennis, racket ball, squash, and swimming. In addition, I support the addition of a swimming requirement to the Howard County Public Schools graduation requirement. For persons aged less than 30 years, drowning is one of the top three causes of unintentional death and the drowning rate of blacks is 1.4 times the rate for whites. The disparity between access to swimming skills for blacks and whites results in unacceptable risks for black young people. Howard County Public Schools' inaction in the area of swimming instruction is *de facto* racism. We can, and must, do better.

Regarding high school start times: I am a long time proponent of later high school start times. I have voted, and will continue to vote, in favor of later start times for high school. That said, it is equally important that the later start times be supported by additional programs and policy changes to address the dislocations that could be caused for families and businesses. Improper implementation can result in a backlash that would lead to confusion and unnecessary discontent.

3. Howard County schools are regarded as among the best in the country, but regardless of school record, there is a perception that some Howard County schools are better than others. What will you do to promote parity among the experience of our students across the school system? What will you do to change the perception that some schools are better than others within Columbia and Howard County?

Answer by Allen Dyer:

Please see my answer to Question 1 for some of the actions I support to provide students at all of our schools a more level playing field.

Regarding "perception": I enjoy studying the physics of visual perception and, in particular, optical illusions. As a member of the Board of Education, however, I would expect all of my fellow board members to

Allen Dyer, p 4

make sure that all available data regarding our schools is available without cost to the public and, to the extent necessary, the necessary tools for analysis should also be made available.

The Board of Education is in the business of education; NOT SALES OR PUBLIC RELATIONS. We are fortunate to have an elected board and, as Thomas Jefferson explained:

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society, but the people themselves: and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is, not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

4. While schools with economically-challenged populations receive additional funding through such programs as Title I, organizations supporting those schools like the PTA do not have a similar economic equalizer. There is a substantial difference in the fundraising capabilities of PTAs based on the financial circumstances of the populations they serve. Some school districts have addressed this through revenue sharing so PTAs can support their schools more consistently throughout the district. Would you support revenue sharing or some other approach to ensure students and their schools have similar access to support from organizations like their local PTA?

Answer by Allen Dyer:

When our children were in high school, I was active in the boosters club and I remember that, during the making of the annual budget, our boosters club would designate funds for donations to new school booster groups. As an individual, I still support the notion that boosters and PTAs need to take care of each other.

As for the role of the Board of Education: I support having the Board auditor make regular reports to the Board on the budgets of the various PTAs and booster clubs so substantial economic differences become known in a timely fashion. The Board, however, should be aggressive and use reallocation of public school resources to minimize the differences in economic advantage between communities.

The Board can make special note and be proud of PTAs and boosters who do good deeds, but, the notion of forcing good deeds is a fool's errand.

Allen Dyer, P5

5. Since members of the Board of Education are elected to represent the community, please explain how you plan to be accountable to your constituents, giving specific examples of ways you would be responsive to parents, students, teachers, and other community members. What will you do to build relationships with your fellow board members in order to enable the Board to work together to the benefit of Howard County?

Answer by Allen Dyer:

I believe in the cacophony of democracy.

Elected bodies are not designed to be “efficient” but rather to take the time necessary to discuss and debate all alternative approaches to the task at hand. Democracy takes time. In contrast, if you want efficient government, give your county to a Benito Mussolini or an Adolf Hitler.

I believe every elected official should be completely open with the public. No politician should stand up before the community and say: “Trust Me.” There should never be a need for the public to have to rely on trust. Good citizenship REQUIRES citizens to stay aware of what their elected officials are doing. In turn, a failure by any politician to be completely open with the public prevents the public from doing its job; i.e. holding that elected official accountable.

Serving the public doesn’t mean doing favors; it means being completely transparent. I have never supported, and never will support, keeping secrets from the public. Any time a Board decision is made to keep information confidential, there must be a good public reason given and there should be a specific date for the release of that confidential information to the public.

I can live with a reasoned temporary restriction in releasing information, but, I refuse to accept the notion that anything should ever be kept from the public *ad infinitum*.

**Thank you for this opportunity to address interesting questions,
Allen Dyer, Candidate for the Board of Education**

Thank you!

Allen Dyer, p.6

HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

January 26, 2010

The Honorable Courtney Watson, Chairperson
Howard County Council
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Board of Education
of Howard County

Ellen Flynn Giles
Chairman

Janet Siddiqui, M.D.
Vice Chairman

Frank J. Aquino, Esq.

Lawrence H. Cohen

Allen Dyer, Esq.

Sandra H. French

Patricia S. Gordon

Josh T. Manley
Student Member

Sydney L. Cousin
Superintendent
Secretary/Treasurer

Re: A Minority Report on CB 58 and CB 59 Educational Infrastructure

Dear Chairperson Watson,

Thank you again for inviting the Howard County Board of Education to review and comment on the sufficiency of educational infrastructure in CB 58 and CB 59.

On January 14, 2010, the Board voted to support the Howard County Council's education amendment to CB58. As an individual member of the Board, however, I cannot support postponing the reservation of an elementary school site. I am most directly concerned that the construction of 5,500 new residences in the middle of Columbia will require the County either to build a new elementary school there or to bus the new students to existing schools. The public policy of Maryland, per the recently enacted High Performance Building Act,¹ strongly favors sustainable sites for all public buildings so as to save energy. Plainly, building a school in a new community would be far more sustainable than busing the new students to other neighborhoods; and the County and this Board would be remiss not to reserve a site now.

Moreover, local boards of education must try to reconcile the need to create sustainable schools with the duty to achieve the student diversity goals of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In an era of increasing social, economic, and environmental pressures, public schools can ill afford high density, school sized, enclaves of racial or economic uniformity and the associated transportation costs to bus students in and out of such enclaves.

Of special import, therefore, is the challenge/opportunity provided by high density housing such as the 5,500 residential units contemplated in CB 58 and CB 59.² As a member of the Board of Education of Howard County, I am concerned that CB 58 and CB 59 do not include tools to insure that the cultural, racial and economic mix of this new urban residential community will reflect countywide demographics.

¹ See: *LEED for Schools Rating System*, Sustainable Sites Prerequisites and Credits.

² The Howard County Public Schools System already has one school — Stevens Forest Elementary — that is "walkers only."

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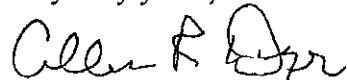
Accordingly, in my opinion the Board should recommend that the County Council anchor the planned new residential community with a new elementary school site without delay and use that prospective new public school as a catalyst for creation of a mixed community of families that accurately reflects the cultural, racial and economic diversity of Howard County. Specifically, the Board should recommend that the County Council:

1. Amend CB 58 to require the granting of a sustainable, walkable elementary school site to the Board of Education;
2. Amend CB 58 to restrict new residential units to locations within a safe walking distance the new town center school site;
3. Amend CB 58 to require new housing demographics to accurately reflect the overall racial and economic diversity of Howard County;
4. Amend CB 58 to include previously proposed provisions regarding checkpoints for determining whether additional schools are needed; and,
5. Having amended CB 58, postpone enactment of CB 59 so as to allow the Planning Board to create and incorporate the tools necessary to make the racial and economic goals of the amended CB 58 possible.

The problem is not whether a school site is needed and where it can be located: the Maryland Education Article delegates sufficient authority to the Board of Education to locate and condemn school sites. The challenge is crafting an enlightened land use policy and working with the developer of this new urban residential community to showcase the cultural, racial, and economic diversity that is Howard County. The Board of Education can build the schools and staff them with the best educators in the country, but only the County Council and the developer can surround that school with a microcosm of Howard County.

Such is the minority advice of this Board member, but, that advice is bundled with a promise to strive mightily to support the County Council and the developer if they choose to take the next step in fulfilling the promise of Brown v. Board of Education.

Very truly yours,



Allen R. Dyer, Member
Board of Education of Howard County
Speaking as an individual member

cc: Board Members
Ms. Mary Kay Sigaty, Vice Chairman, Howard County Council
Dr. Sydney Cousin, Superintendent

Sandra H. French , P I
Columbia's Villages Association
9/17/14

1. Many schools in Columbia's older villages with high proportions of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services (FARMS) face major challenges in reducing the significant academic gap between low and middle-income students. Studies show that FARMS rates limited to about 30 percent or less can be more effective.

a. Would you be willing to work with the county Housing and Community Development Office to de-concentrate low-income housing and accompanying high FARMS rates?

- First of all, I need to see these specific studies before agreeing to this assumption. There are also studies that prove a student's academic performance improves with increased parent involvement in the school. If we were to move a low income student to a school farther from the home community, what transportation opportunities would be available for the low income parent to remain involved? There is no single solution to this challenge, and so I would support the creation of a task force to study these factors in student achievement and to weigh their level of importance.
- Redistricting is a painful process for each student, parent and board member, and should be done carefully and with compassion. I would work with the HCD office if this task force recommended such a procedure and only as far as it is legally and fiscally possible. Under no circumstances should HCPSS release or share confidential student data that is protected by FERPA, the Family Education Rights Protection Act.

b. How would you approach this?

- First, law requires the Board to consider the Superintendent's recommendation, which I would request.
- Before proceeding with HCD as you recommend, I would expect that this would be initiated by the HCD Office with the blessing and/or directive of the County Executive and County Council, and County Office of Law. The Board of Education would then collaborate if requested.
- Third, the public needs to consider our current educational model. Is your proposed move educationally sounder than the current Elementary School Model Initiative for 6 elementary schools – Stevens Forest, Talbott Springs, Phelps Luck, Ducketts Lane, Bryant Woods and Running Brook? Our approach is to educate students in their own neighborhood schools with extra personnel and programs rather than expending those dollars on transportation. This year, 1,000 transfer requests were filed by HCPSS teachers who wanted to become a part of the ESM initiative and teach at these schools. I interpret that as a strong vote of confidence!

c. Additionally, independent of housing, would you support a redistricting policy that prohibits increasing the FARMS rate of any school to greater than 30 percent and aims to reduce FARMS rates at schools in excess of 30 percent to promote a more equitable distribution?

- The Board has already placed funds in the operating budget to hire a consultant to advise on redistricting matters, and the RFP is being written. The consultant's work will inform the Board on current procedures in other school systems, and best legal practices.
- I believe it is important for students to learn in a diverse environment, and am always interested in creative ways to accomplish this. But the Supreme Court and the 4th Circuit court cases significantly restrict Boards of Education in redistricting matters.

Sandra French p. 2

- We would need to consider any possible unintended consequences. For example, could Federal Aid through Title One funding, which relies upon FARMS data, be reduced as a result, thus requiring more in local tax dollar support for programs that would still be needed?
- The current Redistricting policy requires that board members consider 11 factors prior to making boundary line decisions. One factor is socioeconomic. I am reluctant to make this one factor more important than the remaining ten. It could also be challenged in court, and compared to Montgomery County's Eisenberg case in the 4th Circuit.

2. The new school Wellness policy and Healthy Howard are steps toward addressing the growing problem of childhood obesity as well as other health issues.

a. What steps will you take to ensure meals and snacks provided through the schools' food service promote healthy diets?

- Our new Wellness policy #9090 mandates Institute of Medicine Nutrition Standards.
- Now we need to attract reluctant students to these healthier options by providing product taste opportunities as well as learning experiences. The Days of Taste program in the 4th grade could be expanded.
- The Board also hired a Dietician in 2013 and a new Director of Food and Nutrition Services in July, 2014, so continued improvements are expected. A standing committee of community partners could contribute menu ideas.

b. How would you incorporate more physical activity into the learning environment?

- Out of a 24 hour day, school is in session only 6 hours for instruction and 30 minutes for lunch. While every new idea is important, where do we fit it into this cramped time schedule? What would you eliminate to make room? I will continue to support afterschool activities, and seek more funding for activity buses.
 - I will also continue to advocate for Arts instruction and opportunities to play an instrument as early as Kindergarten. Whether playing an instrument, practicing a dance movement, or molding with clay, these activities encourage children to be both physically active and creative. And it creates an out-of-school habit for their hands to be useful rather than to be reaching for more food.
 - For at least the past two years, teachers have been trained to provide "brain bursts", (one or two minute physical activities) between learning units. I have even participated in them when present in the classroom, and they are effective.
 - If we adults were really serious about physical activity, then we should be role models and walk more. "Walking Wednesdays" and similar programs are offered by PE teachers and the various PTAs. But we will have really made an impact when the long elementary parent drop-off and pick-up car lines are decreased significantly on good weather days.
 - The Institute of Medicine Committee recommends that an average of 30 minutes per day be allocated for elementary students in a physical education class, and middle and high school students should spend an average of 45 minutes per day in a PE class. This is desirable, but to make it work without negatively affecting the arts or state mandated curriculum, the community will have to discuss lengthening the school day by at least 15 minutes and the cost implications, which will be in the millions \$\$.
- Almost anything is possible, as long as there is sufficient financial and community support.

Sandra French, p3

c. What is your opinion on a move to alter school start times in order to work with adolescent body clocks?

- Moving the start time later by 30 to 45 minutes is desirable, but we still need to hear all the ramifications of that change from the Superintendent's study committee and our Mental Health Task Force.
- Can we do it with no negative impact to elementary or middle school students?
- Will the approximate \$2 million transportation increase be affordable, especially when we really need to continue salary increases for HCPSS employees? Again, public discourse is needed to set priorities for expenditures of county tax dollars.

3. Howard County schools are regarded as among the best in the country, but regardless of school record, there is a perception that some Howard County schools are better than others.

a. What will you do to promote parity among the experience of our students across the school system?

- We ensure that each high school has the same basic AP Advanced placement courses regardless of enrollment numbers.
- Please note the schools receiving 20 to 30 minutes of daily world language instruction as part of our exciting new Elementary School Model, and those that do not.
- To begin, we provide a standard basic staffing allocation per school based upon enrollment. But then, the individual needs of each school are examined and additional staffing is allocated. For example, for 2013-14, note these K-5 and 6-8 student enrollment data per school with additional staffing provided:
 - Phelps Luck, 548 enrollment; 11.6 additional staff
 - Laurel Woods, 533 enrollment; 10.6 additional staff
 - Stevens Forest, 403 enrollment; 10.0 additional staff
 - Cradlerock, 439 enrollment; 9.7 additional staff
 - Talbott Springs, 404 enrollment; 8.8 additional staff
 - Longfellow, 403 enrollment; 8.7 additional staff
 - Oakland Mills MS, 427 enrollment; 6.4 additional staff
 - Wilde Lake MS, 549 enrollment; 5.3 additional staff
 - Harpers Choice, 513 enrollment; 3.7 additional staff
 - Bushy Park, 594 enrollment; 0.5 additional staff
 - Glenwood MS, 548 enrollment; 0.3 additional staff
 - Clarksville ES, 523 enrollment; 0.2 additional staff
 - Dayton Oaks, 601 enrollment; 0.0 additional staff
 - Burleigh Manor MS, 699 enrollment; 0.0 additional staff

b. What will you do to change the perception that some schools are better than others within Columbia and Howard County?

- Ignore the perception negativity and work on what is truly noble. That is, provide each and every student a rigorous and equitable education so that at graduation time, each student is fully prepared to be both college and high-wage career ready.

Sandra French, P 4

- Look at the new Elementary School Model and see how we are uplifting those students with special attention, full-day Pre-Kindergarten, World Language instruction and personal strengths training.
- I do my best to uplift and praise the assets of each school I visit. I have never said that one school is better than another.
- This competitive ranking is done by parents who want bragging rights, *The Washington Post* and *U.S. News and World Report*. For our children's mental health, adults need to stop playing this King of the Mountain competition game, and ask, "What can I as a community member do to help each child succeed?" We need volunteers in our schools and mentors through wonderful organizations like A-OK Mentoring. Even an HCPSS school with many challenges is better than schools out of county, so why continue this dissatisfaction? Our children feel this discontent and pressure. Our wonderful professional educators are doing the best they can. Why can't we support them and praise them for their wonderful efforts? Obviously you have struck a personal nerve here, because I have never believed in blaming the child for shortcomings, but in helping the child to recognize his strengths and build upon them. It really DOES take a village to help a child.

4. While schools with economically-challenged populations receive additional funding through such programs as Title I, organizations supporting those schools like the PTA do not have a similar economic equalizer. There is a substantial difference in the fundraising capabilities of PTAs based on the financial circumstances of the populations they serve. Some school districts have addressed this through revenue sharing so PTAs can support their schools more consistently throughout the district.

a. Would you support revenue sharing or some other approach to ensure students and their schools have similar access to support from organizations like their local PTA?

- YES.
- With Howard county government funding, the Howard County Arts Council provides Arts in Education grants for PTAs, with special assistance for Title One schools. The same type of approach could be sponsored through local grants.

5. a. Since members of the Board of Education are elected to represent the community, please explain how you plan to be accountable to your constituents, giving specific examples of ways you would be responsive to parents, students, teachers, and other community members.

- I am the Board's liaison to the PTA Council of Howard County and attend their monthly meetings.
- I am the only board member who has both personal home and cell phone numbers on my board business card, thus being fully accessible.
- Board members are elected by the community to serve as a liaison on educational matters between the Superintendent and the community. Since Howard County has very diverse community groups, often with opposing experiences and beliefs, it becomes necessary for the board member to listen to all but then to follow her own conscience on what would be best for the educational welfare of each student. While I may have a preference, I keep an open mind for new information, and there have been times when I have changed my viewpoints.

Sandra French, p. 5

- Prior to making a decision, I rely heavily on the expertise of Howard County citizens who volunteer their time on various citizen, policy, and advisory committees, and I seriously consider how we can implement their recommendations as they are aligned with the Vision 2018 goals that the Board approved.
- I am known to be one of the two board members who can be counted upon to attend the most school events. I also do countless private acts on behalf of the community, such as spending part of my Sunday afternoon to hear a parent or giving resume advice for improvement to a teacher hopeful.

b. What will you do to build relationships with your fellow board members in order to enable the Board to work together to the benefit of Howard County?

- I will continue to listen carefully to each member without automatically dismissing their ideas.
- I am the original co-author of the Board Handbook. Subsequently it has been revised and adopted twice by the Board. This public document delineates the legal, policy and personal roles and responsibilities for board members. If all board members followed it, there would be greater trust and collaboration.
- A board member's loyalty has to be to the child in the classroom, first and foremost. I will continue to observe confidentiality in all matters and to practice the Golden Rule.
- However, it is difficult to work collaboratively with someone that the community voted for with full knowledge or expectation that he or she should be divisive or negative. I am baffled that the public would risk children's success to "shake up the Board". I am reminded of the proverb, "When elephants fight, the grass is trampled." When officials are in discord, the students suffer. And tax dollars are spent needlessly on legal issues.
- Again, we all need to focus on what is best for the child in the classroom, and I pledge to continue doing just that.

Dan Furman, p 1

Columbia's Village Associations

Dorsey's Search, Harpers Choice, Hickory Ridge, Kings Contrivance,
Long Reach, Oakland Mills, Owen Brown, River Hill, Town Center, and Wilde Lake

Board of Education Candidates' Forum

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

7:00 p.m. - The Other Barn

Dan Furman Response

1. Many schools in Columbia's older villages with high proportions of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services (FARMS) face major challenges in reducing the significant academic gap between low and middle-income students. Studies show that FARMS rates limited to about 30 percent or less can be more effective. Would you be willing to work with the county Housing and Community Development Office to de-concentrate low-income housing and accompanying high FARMS rates? How would you approach this? Additionally, independent of housing, would you support a redistricting policy that prohibits increasing the FARMS rate of any school to greater than 30 percent and aims to reduce FARMS rates at schools in excess of 30 percent to promote a more equitable distribution?

I would be happy to work with the Howard County Housing and Community Development Office to identify ways that would de-concentrate low-income housing and accompanying high FARMS rates at certain schools. However, I would state that I also, generally, believe in a community feeder school approach as to not force students to take longer bus rides and to keep neighborhoods intact. These two goals, for me, are not mutually exclusive as many might think - they can both be achieved. Redistricting is one of the most difficult tasks the board of education engages in. I would approach this through a conversation not just with the board and school system school planning staff but with our county government. The individuals in charge of zoning low cost housing have to be a part of this conversation.

I would support a policy that has a goal of ensuring less than a 30% FARMS rate in schools, however I will not bind myself to that hard number. This should be one of our general directives in establishing school boundary lines but I sat on the board when Reservoir High School was opened. I know how difficult redistricting is. Sometimes flexibility is called for, the art of re-drawing school lines will not produce exact ratios.

2. The new school wellness policy and Healthy Howard are steps toward addressing the growing problem of childhood obesity as well as other health issues. What steps will you take to ensure meals and snacks provided through the schools' food service promote healthy diets? How would you incorporate more physical activity into the learning environment? What is your opinion on a move to alter school start times in order to work with adolescent body clocks?

I would like to improve school provided meals and snacks to combat childhood obesity. First and foremost it has to be understood that there is rarely a sustained resource commitment to this goal because the food services department for the school system is a self-sustaining program. In other words, the district treats food services as program that receives its only funding from its current customer base and therefore does not increase investment in it.

The first step is then to make an actual investment, in the operating budget with local dollars, to improve kitchen infrastructure to better menu items and buy higher quality snacks to provide to students. The fact is school lunches have been pretty awful for years - being a K-12 product of the school system, I am in a unique position to attest to this.

On incorporating more physical activity into the learning environment – in an ideal world I would be happy to. However, our schools operate for only so much time per day. The only way to truly add physical activity would be to increase the school day. I would favor trying to find ways to integrate physical exercises into the curriculum, but I won't commit to increasing the school day unless the community asks for it definitively.

I absolutely agree that school start times should be moved later for our high school students. There are numerous reports that demonstrate the benefits of working in a learning environment that operates to their general biological clock. In fact, I originally brought this to the board in 2002 and asked them to commission a study on the matter. It has taken over 12 years to get to the point where are ready to act. If elected I would push hard to get this implemented in the next 2015-2016 school year.

3. Howard County schools are regarded as among the best in the country, but regardless of school record, there is a perception that some Howard County schools are better than others. What will you do to promote parity among the experience of our students across the school system? What will you do to change the perception that some schools are better than others within Columbia and Howard County?

Providing all students with Equity of Opportunity is my top priority. Ensuring resources are delivered to individual schools based on need, in order to make sure all students in this county, no matter where they live or whatever their circumstances may be, has the same opportunity for success as every other member of our student community. We owe that to them.

Some schools, especially those with a high degree of lower socio-economic status students lack the resources necessary to serve those populations appropriately. Equity in funding does not create equal results, some schools require more financial and human resources than others do, in order to meet the needs of their population. Currently schools mainly receive funding based on a formula that multiplies the number of students per school by a set dollar amount. That needs to change because not all

students are the same and neither are all schools. We can no longer afford to treat them all the same and expect success from all. Some schools will need extra support because some student populations may demand it. Changing the funding formula is how to increase parity, schools must be funded on the basis of school need, not on per pupil formula.

In order to ensure equity in resource delivery we must address other problems that plague school system governance. If elected I will take a leadership role in increasing transparency within the operating budget process so we can see where resources are going. I was taught how to read the school system operating budget when I was 17 years old – every citizen should be able to read, analyze and comprehend the operating budget so they know where their tax dollars are going. I strongly disagree with the idea promulgated by some that a “graduate degree” in finance is necessary to understand the budget.

Additionally, I believe equity of opportunity means deploying resources effectively to combat the achievement gap, and making sure any child no where they live in Howard County has the option to pursue a 4 year higher education even if they choose not to. On the other end of the spectrum it also means that we need to provide appropriate resources for enrichment programs because equity of opportunity as I said above, means making sure everyone has the best chance Howard County can give them to succeed. Equity in opportunity should be the driving goal behind resource allocation to schools, not a direct student driven formula. Assessing and providing for individual school needs versus a one size fits all approach is the crux of providing “Equity of Opportunity.”

4. While schools with economically-challenged populations receive additional funding through such programs as Title I, organizations supporting those schools like the PTA do not have a similar economic equalizer. There is a substantial difference in the fundraising capabilities of PTAs based on the financial circumstances of the populations they serve. Some school districts have addressed this through revenue sharing so PTAs can support their schools more consistently throughout the district. Would you support revenue sharing or some other approach to ensure students and their schools have similar access to support from organizations like their local PTA?

I believe that County Council member Courtney Watson has a good idea on how to address this answer, and as a board member I would support the concept of establishing within the county grants program a Student Enrichment Fund for school-based nonprofits to help balance inequities for programs dependent on organizational fundraisers. This will create a grants program to help direct funds towards schools who

Dan Furman, p 4

don't have the same amount of fundraising for organizations like their local PTA. In turn it will allow PTAs to provide parity of event quality to the school communities that are wealthier in this county.

5. Since members of the Board of Education are elected to represent the community, please explain how you plan to be accountable to your constituents, giving specific examples of ways you would be responsive to parents, students, teachers, and other community members. What will you do to build relationships with your fellow board members in order to enable the Board to work together to the benefit of Howard County?

In addition to trying to be responsive to personal requests by way of email, I would encourage citizens to make use of the Community Advisory Committee and the PTA Council of Howard County in expressing their opinion. I underscore these organizations because I would like to provide them with the opportunity to cast an "opinion vote" i.e. a non-binding vote on all policy matters so the board is better informed where these constituent organizations stand. It is also my intention to extend this opinion vote to the Howard County Education Association so educators can also provide their unique perspective on policy matters.

I'm in a unique position of having a personal relationship with 6 out 7 sitting board members. If elected I think I will be in a place to capitalize on those relationships to build consensus in moving the board to becoming a progressive, rather than a reactionary body. The Board of Education should be a body that takes action, rather than waiting for a staff recommendation before involving themselves in educational policy.

Christine O'Connor, p 1

Columbia's Village Associations

Dorsey's Search, Harpers Choice, Hickory Ridge, Kings Contrivance,
Long Reach, Oakland Mills, Owen Brown, River Hill, Town Center, and Wilde Lake

Board of Education Candidates' Forum

Wednesday, September 17, 2014

7:00 p.m. - The Other Barn

Dear Candidate:

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in the Board of Education Candidates' Forum scheduled for Wednesday, September 17, 2014 at The Other Barn in Oakland Mills. The format for the forum is as follows: Each candidate will submit answers (via email) to the five questions in this letter. In addition we ask that you come prepared to discuss one of the five questions at the forum for no more than three minutes. Attendees will be given an allotted timeframe to ask questions of one or more candidates.

The following questions are representative of those submitted through Columbia's ten Village Boards of Directors. Please provide a written response to each question within this document and return via e-mail to Sandy Cederbaum, Oakland Mills Village Manager (manager@oaklandmills.org), by September 12, 2014.

Additionally, please select one of these questions where you feel you have the most unique position or subject matter expertise and be prepared to discuss it for five minutes at the forum. After each candidate discusses a question, we will open the forum to audience questions. We will provide your written responses to all of the questions below as a handout at the conclusion of the forum.

Thank you for participating in this event.

1. Many schools in Columbia's older villages with high proportions of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals Services (FARMS) face major challenges in reducing the significant academic gap between low and middle-income students. Studies show that FARMS rates limited to about 30 percent or less can be more effective. Would you be willing to work with the county Housing and Community Development Office to de-concentrate low-income housing and accompanying high FARMS rates? How would you approach this? Additionally, independent of housing, would you support a redistricting policy that prohibits increasing the FARMS rate of any school to greater than 30 percent and aims to reduce FARMS rates at schools in excess of 30 percent to promote a more equitable distribution?

Christine O'Connor, P2

2. The new school wellness policy and Healthy Howard are steps toward addressing the growing problem of childhood obesity as well as other health issues. What steps will you take to ensure meals and snacks provided through the schools' food service promote healthy diets? How would you incorporate more physical activity into the learning environment? What is your opinion on a move to alter school start times in order to work with adolescent body clocks?

3. Howard County schools are regarded as among the best in the country, but regardless of school record, there is a perception that some Howard County schools are better than others. What will you do to promote parity among the experience of our students across the school system? What will you do to change the perception that some schools are better than others within Columbia and Howard County?

4. While schools with economically-challenged populations receive additional funding through such programs as Title I, organizations supporting those schools like the PTA do not have a similar economic equalizer. There is a substantial difference in the fundraising capabilities of PTAs based on the financial circumstances of the populations they serve. Some school districts have addressed this through revenue sharing so PTAs can support their schools more consistently throughout the district. Would you support revenue sharing or some other approach to ensure students and their schools have similar access to support from organizations like their local PTA?

5. Since members of the Board of Education are elected to represent the community, please explain how you plan to be accountable to your constituents, giving specific examples of ways you would be responsive to parents, students, teachers, and other community members. What will you do to build relationships with your fellow board members in order to enable the Board to work together to the benefit of Howard County?

Thank you!

The Other Barn is the Oakland Mills Community Center and located at 5851 Robert Oliver Place, Columbia, MD 21045. If you need additional information please contact Village Manager, Sandy Cederbaum, at 410-730-4610 or email manager@oaklandmills.org

1. One of my best qualifications for this position of the BOE is my flexible schedule. Being on the Board of education will be my FULL time job. I will make the time to ensure I attend all necessary housing meetings with the county Housing and Community Development

Christine O'Connor, p 3

office AND other county meeting that pertain to this matter. We need to pay attention to who is doing what at all times.

Overcrowding and low income housing concentrations are a big issue in our county.

Government entities need to work together and increase relevant communications amongst each other.

The best way to be a part of all the communications is to be at the meetings and know what is going on.

I would absolutely support a redistricting policy that prohibits increasing the FARM rate of any school to greater than 30% and to promote a more equitable distribution.

I studies show how de-concentration tends to alleviate teacher stress, and improve students performance in school.

Here in our county we need to look at all the schools individually and do the best we can to provide the necessary resources until changes can be implemented.

2. The steps we need to ensure the children's meals and snacks provided in the schools are promoting healthy diets are: **continuing** research on taste tests, ingredients, availability, and parental input.

Incorporating physical activity into the day beyond recess and PE can be provided by effective teacher development.

Its very possible and recommended to get your students up and moving throughout the day!

Kids need to stretch, get their wiggles out and re- boot their brains all day long!

Christine O'Connor, p 4

My opinion on altering school times is this: We need more studies done on this. It cannot be done because one group of people thinks its necessary. Kids adjust. Kids will go from High School into the work force and be expected to arrive to work when the "grown ups" arrive at work. There will be no special treatment for them. Parent should monitor their children even in the teenage years. Turn the phones, computers and everything else off at a decent hour. *Too many other factors would be affected in the younger age schools as well.*

3. Yes, there is a perception that some schools in the county are "better" than others. Promoting parity is a matter of communication and leveling the playing fields for all the schools. Equal resources are a must.

I would try and change the perception of some schools by highlighting what they DO excel in. Also, as I've mentioned earlier, focusing on the individual needs of the schools. *See where their weakness are and do everything to help them overcome these obstacles.* I would also support putting some signature programs in these schools such as the IB, international baccalaureate program. I would definitely look to provide more teacher development and perks.

4. I absolutely would promote revenue sharing so some PTAs can support their schools more consistently. However, this would have to be a community effort. My recommendation would be for the feeder schools to work with their high school. Folks need to know where their money is going and they like to keep it close to home.

For example, Howard high school supports a Bonnie Branch middle school morning intervention program. The HoHS PTSA gave BBMS money to support the students who need extra help in the morning to get them ready for high school, with additional help from another county partner, Bright Minds. This benefits both schools.

Dr. Foose initiated a PTA portal for all the PTAs in the county this year. We now have our own communication system!

Christine O'Connor, p5

I was asked by the tech people for feedback before it was launched, and we came up with an easy, supportive tool to help all of us share info and ideas.

5. Representing the community is second nature for me. I've been doing this as a PTSA leader in Elkridge for 14 years now. I've been on the board and a regular volunteer and coach or coordinator for over 10 years. I was almost always class mom and I was on the animal control board in Howard county for 2 years.

Whatever cluster of schools I am assigned as a board of ed member will see me, I will actually be in the schools. I will be at the PTA meetings. I will be attending community functions and school functions. I will be visible, reachable and happy to be there at all times.

When I'm not actually there, phone number and email will be readily available.

When asked about building relationships with other board members I have to say this. I pledge to be respectful and ethical at all times to them. We will not agree on everything. This is a body of 7 and 1 student members. Some of the best decisions and discussions are heated debates about a topic. I do not take others opinions for granted and I do not dismiss them. Sometimes its even best to take a break, come back when emotions are less hot.

I want to take the time and get to know the other members. Share our experience in life and build a good working relationship.

1. I am aware of studies that show that concentrating vulnerable students from families in lower socioeconomic groups in particular schools complicates closing the achievement gap between them and students from higher socioeconomic groups. Unfortunately, an exception enacted into the County ordinance that requires real estate developers to include “affordable housing” equal to 20% of the residences in a residential project has enabled them to circumvent the laudable spirit of that law. As a consequence, the concentration of vulnerable children in certain schools has persisted or even increased.

For that reason, as a member of the Board of Education, I will urge the County Council to repeal that exception and lobby the Housing and Community Development Office to do everything in its power to ensure that such housing is included in projects and to prevent developers from building more affordable housing in neighborhoods where that type of housing is already concentrated. That approach would be consistent with Jim Rouse’s vision when he designed Columbia and should be preserved and extended to the entire County.

In my opinion, however, immediate measures must be implemented by the Board of Education because the effort to amend the ordinance, even if successful, will provide only a long-term solution. Accordingly, I will support using redistricting as a means to avoid and reduce the concentration of vulnerable students from lower socioeconomic groups in schools.

Mike Smith, p 2

I will do so for two reasons. First, I accept the findings that concentrations impede progress in closing the "achievement gap" which is condition with very serious consequences for those students and for society as a whole.

Second, a quality education encompasses what students learn about life and the community where they live, not just information gleaned from books. I grew up in a relatively affluent middleclass family, but I always attended schools where the student body included significant numbers of children from all socioeconomic groups. By doing so, I learned valuable lessons about what it meant to be part of a diverse community and to be concerned about the welfare of all of its members. I am concerned that concentrating students from lower socioeconomic groups in certain schools deprives children of the type of education that has benefited me throughout my life.

I recognize that accomplishing this goal through redistricting will also take time so I will support taking steps to substantially improve the quality of education at the schools which are the subject of this question. The Model Elementary School Program, offering quality teachers incentives to choose assignments in targeted schools, and implementing curricula and teaching methods designed the meet the students' needs are examples of such initiatives.

2. I am concerned that the lifestyle of too many of our children adversely effects their well-being and has serious implications for our healthcare system. For that reason, I will resist attempts to undermine the goals of the wellness program by interest groups. In addition, I will seek ways to strengthen and improve that program by making healthy

Mike Smith, p 3

foods more attractive and by emphasizing efforts to educate our children about the importance of proper nutrition and daily physical exercise. I will also ensure that we continue to draw on the best science and practices and we learn from the experiences of other school systems.

I personally favor requiring all students to participate in physical education classes that meet at least three times each week. I understand that approach may cause scheduling problems, but that is the importance I attach to ensuring that our children have time for organized physical activity. I do not believe that recess time is an adequate substitute for those classes because some children will probably choose to hangout with their friends during those periods.

During visits to our schools, I observed how teachers find ways to incorporate physical activity into various classes. Such innovations should be encouraged and teachers should receive training on how to use that approach.

Finally, field trips that include nature hikes and "outward bound" activities should be included in the curriculum to encourage an active lifestyle. If exposed to such activities, children may be able to share the enjoyment that I have derived from them.

I understand that the studies have reached different conclusions regarding the need to delay the start of the school day for adolescents. As a father of three, I think a later start would have enhanced their ability to learn because I can attest to the fact that two of my children were definitely not "morning persons" when they were adolescents.

Mike Smith, p4

As with many issues, however, implementing a later start would not be as easy as simply deciding to do so. I have been told that our school system has been studying such a change and ascertained that it could cost as much as \$30 million to postpone until 8:30 a.m. the start of school for adolescent students, primarily due to complications with school bus transportation. As a consequence, I favor continuing to study this issue in order to determine whether and how a change will help students and how it could be implemented in a cost-effective way.

3. I doubt that we can ever totally change the perception that some schools are better than others, but we can take steps to ensure that perception is not reality. The concept of “parity” can have different meanings as used in the context of our public schools, but I interpret it to mean that all students have equal access to the resources needed to obtain a world-class education. Thus, the personnel and financial resources provided to one school must necessarily be higher than the resources provided to other schools in order to “equalize” the quality of their education.

In that regard, I favor taking steps designed to achieve that goal which include: (1) offering training, support, and financial and other incentives to encourage qualified teachers to teach vulnerable students; (2) implementing a rigorous curriculum for those students which is designed to enable them to succeed and providing the support they need; and (3) offering programs to help parents, who may not have succeeded in school, learn what they can do to assist their children.

4. My children attended schools that were supported by PTAs that had the ability to raise funds which were used to support athletic teams and other organized activities and to augment the resources provided by the school system. As part of an effort to equalize the quality of

Mike Smith, p 5

education provided to all students, we must recognize the obligation to address the disparity among PTAs to raise such funds.

We can address that issue in two ways. First, the school system must provide the level of funding to cover the total cost of affording the essentials of a world-class education to all students. By doing so, the need to rely on funds raised by PTAs to achieve that goal—a fundamental obligation of the entire community—will be eliminated.

Second, we should consider implementing partial revenue sharing to fund other activities deemed important to enhancing the educational experience of students. I am inclined to favor that arrangement rather than total revenue sharing for two reasons. If parents of children attending more affluent schools know that a significant part of funds raised by them will be shared with other schools, they may be less motivated to engage in fundraising. In addition, full revenue sharing could create an incentive for parents to effectively weaken PTAs by using alternative ways to make contributions to fund athletics and other organized activities only at the schools attended by THEIR children.

5. I will use social media in order to increase transparency and to make information about my activities and issues being considered by the Board available to parents, teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders and thereby enable them to communicate information and views to me.

I will also participate in regular events initiated by me or others that will be an opportunity for an exchange of information and views. Those events will include, among things, school activities such as the Simulated Congressional Hearings conducted

Mike Smith, P 6

at our elementary schools and the Integrated Arts Day at Thunderhill Elementary School in which I participated during the last school year.

I will build relationships with Board members by following the maxim: Practice Civility. That maxim incorporates respect for their views, carefully considering their positions on important issues, refraining from personal attacks on them in public and private, and spending time with them outside Board meetings.

From: cynthiavaillancourt@msn.com P. 1

To: cynthiavaillancourt@msn.com

Subject: forum questions

Date: Fri, 12 Sep 2014 18:16:56 -0400

1) The school system should not use attendance area boundary lines to cause disproportionate percentages of students from impoverished backgrounds to be unnaturally funneled into particular schools. I believe schools should have reasonable, logical and relatively stable attendance areas that citizens can count on when making decisions about where to buy a home, or raise their families. When there is a choice presented about an attendance area assignment where proximity, walk-ability, and capacity are balanced, we should give significant weight to balancing the socioeconomic makeup of the school community. However, since it is clear that the life cycles of neighborhoods, demographic trends, and the high cost of housing often lead to concentrations of poverty in specific geographic areas - logical, walkable, neighborhood schools can end up with disproportionately high concentrations of students from economically disadvantaged families. While all of our schools MUST provide objectively equal facilities and equally high quality teachers and staff, there are a number of things we can and should do to encourage our larger community to invest in more socio-economic balance in our schools and neighborhoods.

Yes, I would like to see housing policy at the county level encourage affordable housing opportunities throughout the county. As a citizen and as a Board Member I support those efforts and initiatives.

While I am familiar with the research that concludes that students are much more successful in schools where less than 30% of students are eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (the generally accepted measure of economic disadvantage), and I have no doubt it is accurate, I think trying to establish "quotas" would be problematic on many levels - not the least of which would be legal. I would not want to see any child being targeted for a long bus ride out of his own neighborhood on the basis of race or economic status. But I think we can encourage people to voluntarily travel outside of their neighborhoods in order to take advantage of unique opportunities, if we provide those opportunities and the flexibility for students to access them.

First I would continue to argue to re-open "Open Enrollment" so that any family in any part of the county could choose to travel to any other school where there are open seats, or available capacity.

Second, I believe we are failing to provide a full menu of education options to our Howard County families. One option in particular has been shown to benefit the most vulnerable and at-risk populations and working families - the 9/3 Calendar option, where students attend school for 9 weeks, then have 3 weeks off. During the 3 weeks off, the students can either take vacation with family, or participate in enrichment or remediation classes, or mini-camps that would be co-ordinated with Rec and Parks, the YMCA, the Columbia Association and private providers. These calendars have been extremely popular with working parents of all economic levels in other parts of the country, and have proven to be one of the most effective tools in actually closing the achievement gap. Scholarships and other payment assistance should be

Cynthia Vaillancourt, p 2

made available to families in order to make sure all students are able to take advantage of these "mini-camp" opportunities. I believe we should provide this as an option at one or two schools that would be completely voluntary, and allow families who prefer the "traditional" calendar to continue as they are, I believe we could effectively re-balance some of our school communities in a way that would be respectful, voluntary, and enormously successful.

Those are two options I would like to pursue to provide options to our students and families, and encourage more economically balanced school populations.

2) I am incredibly frustrated at the "one step forward, two steps back" pace at which we are addressing these very important student health issues. Years ago other parents and I fought to get "Little Debbie's" out of the schools, and nutritionally sound breakfasts for our students. Last year the school breakfast program offered yogurt and cheese and fruit. I couldn't believe it when, during our 1st day of school visits this year, I saw elementary school students eating LUCKY CHARMS! During the course of the week the students were served "Grab and Go" breakfasts that included Trix Cereal, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Frosted Flakes and Golden Grahams. When I inquired at Central Office I was told "I guarantee you if it was in that bag it complies with the policy". Ugh. I am continuing to try to shine a light on this problem, and asking parents to contact the administration and ask that these sugary cereals be removed (again) from the students' school supplied breakfasts. All of the kids need more time for recess, and free play, and physical activity --- including at the high school level. Kids get more out of 30 minutes in class if they have had adequate exercise and regeneration time than they do from sitting in "back to back" 44 minute classes. Another place where the research is overwhelming and compelling is with the need to return high school start times to a healthier and more educationally effective hour --- no earlier than 8am ... ideally 8:30am. Many people don't even realize our high school students are currently asked to start their academic day between 7:15 and 7:30 am. Where 8:30 is the norm, the kids don't stay up later. Other concerns that are frequently mentioned can be addressed, for example, sports schedules can be adjusted (practices don't start immediately after school at 2:10 anyway, nor do games), and those with jobs or other obligations can be accommodated. We can and MUST do this for the physical and mental health, safety, and academic success of our students.

3) I have always found it very reassuring that most people love their own school, and don't want to be moved when "redistricting" rears its' ugly head. But it is true that there are not only perceptions that some schools are "better" than others, I think it is pretty clear it is true that some schools offer more opportunities, or more elaborate facilities or other resources than others. The refusal of some folks to acknowledge these disparities makes it very difficult to actually address them in a meaningful way. I think the best way for us to change the perception is by actually changing the reality. We are unlikely to ever make every school exactly the same --- I don't even think that would be desirable. Schools develop their own

personalities. Extraordinary teachers in one subject or another can make one school the "go to" place for that subject. Students have different interests and strengths. We should embrace those differences and nurture them, in part by making it possible for high school students to take advantage of "Open Enrollment" in order to take classes that might only be offered at one school, or to attend a school with a "personality" that fits the student. We should also seriously consider expanding our vocational opportunities, dual enrollment with the community college, and concentrations on the arts or sciences. People often worry that if a high school student "specializes" too early, he will limit his future options. I would argue there is nothing that limits their options more than dropping out of high school.

4) I lived in a community in Ohio (Worthington) that tried to address disparities in fund raising by requiring all donations be made centrally and distributed equally among the schools. The result was that donations stopped almost completely. I think a much more effective strategy would be to track actual donations by school, and for the community, county, or school system to provide grant funding to even out the disparities. For example, if School A raises \$10,000 over the course of a year, and school B raises \$5,000 --- school B could access \$5,000 from the community fund. I believe Howard County citizens are generally generous in spirit and in deed, and will rise to the challenge, or at least not thwart efforts to provide equalizing funding.

5) For the past four years I have spent countless hours at schools, community events, and Board of Education meetings and functions. I have communicated with parents, students and other community members via email, telephone, snail mail, in person, via Facebook, and any other way folks have reached out to me, or I have met them. I listen carefully to their concerns and comments, and try to help them figure out what they need and how to help them get whatever that might be. I have made sure to give a voice to all points of view, even when they are not popular, widely held, or are dismissed by others. I have stood up for individuals, groups, and under represented segments of our community on many occasions, often at significant personal cost, while always maintaining respectful and civil tones and words. I value all points of view, and believe the best decisions are made after all views are heard, and truly considered. I have persuaded my colleagues on some issues, and have been persuaded by them on others. While I value and work toward consensus, I do not believe ultimately agreeing to disagree is a bad thing in a diverse and engaged community. At the end of the day, the most important thing is that all of our community members have complete and accurate information about the choices we face and the decisions that are ultimately made --- and that they feel they have truly been heard and had their point of view represented and evaluated in the process. Howard County citizens have a right to expect, and they deserve, to have their business conducted in an open, honest and honorable way.