

Oakland Mills Education Committee Report November 10, 2015

The committee met on October 13, 2015

The committee discussed inviting BOE member and Oakland Mills Cluster representative Ellen Flynn Giles to the next meeting to discuss schools in Oakland Mills and general news from the school system. The committee also discussed topics of interest to be shared with Ms. Giles in advance. These include:

- How future redistricting plans could consider the socio-economic/demographic profiles of the schools in addition to other consideration like capacity, transportation, etc.
- The transportation policy modification proposed by the Education Committee and supported by the SFES-PTA that would provide transportation for children districted to a school other than the one closest to them, even if that new school is still within the system-defined walking area.
- What we can do in partnership to “raise the profile” of schools in Oakland Mills to ensure their successes are consistently communicated and they are perceived as successful, desirable schools.
- Opportunities for Oakland Mills Middle students to have more sports or other after school programs. The response the school system submitted to the Town Hall question about middle school activities indicated that while Lake Elkhorn has many activities at the school, the option for Oakland Mills Middle students is the CA Teen Center, which is not affiliated with the school.
- What the community should do to help ensure funding for the planned renovation of Oakland Mills High School, and how we can partner with the Board of Education and HCPSS to lobby county and state officials.

Mr. Edelson contacted Ms. Giles, and she confirmed her attendance at our November 10, 2015 Education Committee Meeting. Ms. Cederbaum sent a community-wide e-mail advertising the meeting.

Mr. Harrington and Mr. Edelson continue to work with Oakland Mills High School to bring a guest speaker to the community.

Mr. DiTomasso met with BOE member Ann DeLacy. A summary of the meeting follows:

The (redistricting) policy is not due to be reviewed this year. They apparently review all policies on a revolving schedule . However, she encouraged us to meet with the school board regarding our suggested update. The current policy mentions demographics in one of its 11 considerations but does not spell out what these include.

We talked about the research that is showing that kids from a poverty environment benefit when placed in schools with children from a middle and upper income demographic. She feels that there is a tipping point beyond which children from the lower income demographic lose the beneficial effects of being in a school environment with children from the middle and upper demographic. That is in line with what our Ed(ucation) Committee has been saying.

Oakland Mills education committee topic redistricting

- Advocate for a county policy to prohibit any redistricting that would create a Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) rate outside a range of 67% to 150% of the county-wide average for the level of school (elementary, middle, or high) considered for redistricting.*

What would this mean in a real life situation?

In 2015 the average FARMS rate for Elementary Schools in Howard County was 23 % .

We're the above standard applied to a redistricting situation, the redistricting would prohibit a school from going below 15.4% (67% of the County Average) . Likewise, schools involved would be prohibited from going above 34.5 % (150% of the County Average). Thus any school proposed to be involved in redistricting that was already above the 34.5% level would need to reduce its FARMS rate as a result of the redistricting. Schools that were below the 15.4% threshold would be expected to have their FARMS rate rise as a result of the redistricting.