

Cambridge Association of Neighborhoods (CAN)
Unofficial Notes on Dorchester County Board of Education (DCBOE)
Special Meeting, Thursday, February 24, 2022

Submitted by Tom Puglisi

Note: Supporting documents may be found on the CAN website at CambridgeCan.org and the DCPS Board Docs website at <https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/dcps/Board.nsf/Public>

The Board of Education of Dorchester County convened a special Board meeting at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 24, 2022, at the Board of Education Office at 700 Glasgow Street, Cambridge, MD 21613.

1. Regular Session, 2:00 p.m.

- 1.01 Pledge of Allegiance
- 1.02 Motion to amend the published agenda to include discussion of masking options, Board Member Comments, and Superintendent Comments as items 2.02, 2.03, and 2.04 below. Approved 5-0.

2. Items for Board Action

2.01 Proposed Budgets for Fiscal Year 2023. Superintendent Bromwell presented the proposed FY2023 Operating and Capital Budgets to be submitted to the County Council. The General Operating Budget totals \$88,753,543, including unrestricted General Funds (\$76,064,566), restricted Grant Funds (\$9,286,489), and Food Service funds (\$3,402,488). The Capital Budget totals \$7,127,430, including the County contribution to County/State Partnership funding. Superintendent Bromwell indicated that developing the budget has been challenging this year because FY2023 State funding for Dorchester County Public Schools (DCPS) under the Maryland Blueprint for Education has not yet been finalized. He noted that the parameters set by the Blueprint for Education will require that DCPS request a greater portion of funding from the County than has been requested in the past. Superintendent Bromwell indicated that he looks forward to his dialogue with the County Council in this regard. After discussion, the DCBOE voted 5-0 to approve the proposed budget and submit it to the County Council. See attached.

2.02 Masking Optional Discussion. Superintendent Bromwell summarized the history of DCBOE and DCPS actions relative to the COVID pandemic. He noted that 2021 Summer School was completed successfully without a mask requirement and that plans were developed to open the 2021-2022 school year with optional masking until the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBOE) imposed a state-wide masking requirement. Noting that the MSBOE has returned masking policies to local Boards of Education, Superintendent Bromwell recommended that the DCBOE adopt an optional masking policy, subject to anticipated approval by the State's Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive & Legislative Review (ALER). After discussion, the DCBOE voted 4-0 (with Dr. Morgan abstaining) to approve the Superintendent's recommendation. Pending approval by the ALER, optional masking in DCPS will take effect on March 1.

2.03 Board of Education Comments. All Board Members thanked Superintendent Bromwell, Mr. Brooks, and the DCPS Executive Team for their work developing the budget. Dr. Morgan especially thanked Superintendent Bromwell and Mr. Brooks for spending considerable time with her to delve into budgetary details. President Layton, Vice President Hubbard, Mr. Hull, and Mr. Diaz reiterated their support for the optional masking policy. Dr. Morgan explained that her abstention from the masking vote reflected her concern that there is still no vaccine for children five years and younger in DCPS programs and that Dorchester remains a high transmission county with relatively low vaccination rates.

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She also stressed that DCPS needs to ensure that children who continue to wear masks will be protected from bullying. President Layton also noted the need for such protection.

2.04 Superintendent's Comments. Superintendent Bromwell indicated that in implementing the optional masking policy, DCPS will review all the pertinent guidelines, including any revised guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He emphasized that parents should be assured that he and the Board have heard their concerns regarding masking, but that they are obligated to follow State law and implement changes in an appropriate and legal manner. Superintendent Bromwell acknowledged that obtaining the funding required to implement the Maryland Blueprint for Education will be challenging but reiterated that he looks forward to his discussion with the County Council.

3. Adjournment

3.01 Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 2:38pm.