**CAMBRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF NEIGHBORHOODS**

**MEMBERS PUBLIC MEETING**

**July 11, 2024**

**MINUTES**

**Board Members Present:** Chuck McFadden (President), Dave Thatcher (Treasurer), Tom Puglisi (Secretary), Kim Miller, Brad Rice, Sharon Smith, and Donna Towers. Seven of eleven members being present, a quorum of the Board was achieved.

**Board Members Absent:** Roman Jesien (Vice President), Andre Duerinckx, Mary Ellen Jesien, and Judd Vickers.

1. **Opening Comments.** CAN President Chuck McFadden convened the meeting at 6:30 pm at the Dorchester County Public Library basement meeting room at 303 Gay Street in Cambridge. The meeting was livestreamed on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/@whcpstudio4716](https://www.youtube.com/%40whcpstudio4716) and FaceBook at <https://www.facebook.com/WHCPRadio/videos> and will be posted on these sites after the meeting.
2. **Treasurer’s Report.** Treasurer Dave Thatcher reported that CAN’s bank balance is $4,035.67 (no change from last time), and that the Email distribution list now contains 771 recipient households. He also reported that there has been a 14% return on letters sent to new residents of Cambridge.
3. **Presentation from Dr. Jymil Thompson, Superintendent, Dorchester County Public Schools (DCPS).**
	1. **Academic Proficiency.** Dr. Thompson indicated that 70% of DCPS students lack proficiency in reading and math, and that DCPS is ranked 23rd out of the 24 school systems in Maryland. His goal as Superintendent is to increase teaching and learning such that DCPS ranks 15th in Maryland within the next four years. Individual goals of administrators and teachers need to be established to align with the overall goal of 23 to 15.
	2. **Tier 1 Instruction.** Dr. Thompson stressed that, to achieve this goal, DCPS needs to improve standard Tier 1 instruction across the board at all levels. Tier 1 instruction should provide all students with high-quality, foundational classroom instruction tied to a consistent curriculum. He suggested that scripted curriculum approaches should not prevent teachers from being creative and innovative. He noted that DCPS is especially focusing on strengthening reading and math performance in grades 1 through 3, as these basic, foundational skills are essential for later learning.
	3. **Instructional Leadership.** Dr. Thompson emphasized that DCPS administrators need to become more instructionally-oriented in order to provide meaningful training, support, and professional development for teachers. Dr. Thompson is working on changing the mindset within DCPS so that all administrators focus on instruction, and are required to provide specific feedback to teachers on a variety of assessment measures. Consultants are being engaged to teach administrators how to do things the right way, including providing good customer service. An audit is being conducted to ensure efficient systems within Central Office.
	4. **Professional Teacher Development.** Dr. Thompson acknowledged that professional development for teachers is something DCPS has not done well in the past. Teacher development needs to be systematized across the system, so DCPS is developing a teacher professional development calendar to implement systematic professional development. Dr. Thompson also noted that teacher effectiveness incentives need to be developed to support teacher development and student success.
	5. **Disciplinary Problems.** Dr. Thompson stated that coordinated multifaceted approaches are needed to deal with disciplinary problems. These approaches include alternative education programs at all levels, systematic assignment of specific providers to specific schools to ensure consistent services for the participating students, and consistent implementation of a social-emotional curriculum in beginning in grades K-3 and continuing through grade 12.
4. **Dr. Thompson provided the following responses to questions from the audience.**
* **School Board Resignations**. The recent resignations of the President and Vice President of Board of Education have made it very important for Dr. Thompson to convince Board Members to focus on student achievement and to convince them of the importance of the priorities that he communicates to them.
* **High Teacher Turnover**. DCPS needs to develop strong relationships with a variety of teacher education programs to create stable pipelines for recruitment. DCPS also needs to develop teachers from backgrounds other than education. To retain teachers, DCPS needs to improve the climate and culture of the school system. This goes beyond focusing on student behavior, and must include meaningful teacher appreciation and strong professional development.
* **Community Support.** As superintendent, Dr. Thompson is working to increase community involvement throughout the system. He is encouraging the Involvement of community members in small instructional groups, especially in mathematics, not only with kids who are behind, but also with kids who are proficient in order for them to exceed proficiency. Tutoring for elementary school students occurs both during the school day and after school. Tutoring at higher level takes place after school.
* **Inadequate 504 plans and Individual Education Plans (IEPS).** Dr. Thompson recognized that 504 plan meetings and the IEP process are terrifying for parents and that inadequate 504 plans and IEPs must be improved. *(Note: A 504 plan provides accommodations to general education students so that they can access the curriculum. An IEP provides a specialized program of instruction to students who have been identified under the law as having a particular educational disability.)* Dr. Thompson stated that he is open to discussing these issues (and other issues of concern) with parents.

Chuck thanked Dr. Thompson for participating in the CAN meeting tonight.

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm**.

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