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BOARD OF EDUCATION
BALTIMORE COUNTY

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In Re: Northwest Area Boundary Hearing

FEBRUARY 21, 2024

Transcribed by:
CRC Salomon, Inc.

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1 **BOARD MEMBERS:**
 2 Tiara Booker-Dwyer, Board Char (Absent)
 3 Christina M. Pumphrey, Vice Chair
 4 Maggie Domanowski
 5 Robin L. Harvey
 6 Jane E. Lichter
 7 Dr. Brenda Savoy
 8 Felicia D. Stolusky
 9 Emory Young
 10 Tiffany Lashawn Frempong (Absent)
 11 Julie C. Henn (Absent)
 12 Rodney R. McMillion (Absent)
 13 Kayla Drummond, Student Member (Absent)
 14 Dr. Jess Grim – Chief Operating Officer
 15
 16
 17 **ALSO PRESENT:**
 18 Tracy Gover
 19 Maxine Rubin
 20 Tracy Fowler
 21 Randy Jacobs

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1 **I N D E X**
 2 Call to Order 4
 3 Proposed Northwest Area Elementary
 4 School Boundary Recommendation 4
 5 Public Comment 6
 6 School System-Affiliated Groups:
 7 None.
 8 Unions:
 9 None.
 10 Nonprofit Community Groups:
 11 None.
 12 Individual Citizens or Students:
 13 Maxine Rubin. 6
 14 Traci Fowler 11
 15 Unidentified Speaker 14
 16 Randy Jacobs 18
 17 Adjournment 24
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 19
 20
 21

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1 **P R O C E E D I N G S**
 2 **MS. PUMPHREY:** This is Board Vice Chair
 3 Christina Pumphrey, and I call to order the Baltimore
 4 County Board of Education's public hearing on the
 5 Proposed Northwest Area Elementary School boundary
 6 recommendation.
 7 The public sign-up sheet for speakers was made
 8 available prior to the hearing. Each speaker will be
 9 allotted three minutes to express his or her views on the
 10 proposed boundary recommendation. As your name is
 11 called, kindly come to the front microphone to speak.
 12 To my left is Dr. Jess Grim, Chief Operating
 13 Officer for Baltimore County Public Schools.
 14 **DR. GRIM:** Good evening. Before we begin the -
 15 - can you all hear me? Okay. Good evening. Before we
 16 begin the testimonials this evening, just wanted to
 17 clarify the purpose of this evening. The purpose of this
 18 evening was for any members of the community to sign up
 19 to speak regarding the recommendation that was made to
 20 the Board at its February 13th meeting.
 21 The recommendation for the boundary changes for

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1 the Northwest Elementary School Study No. 1 were made
 2 after a series of Boundary Study Committee meetings this
 3 fall that began back in September and ended in December.
 4 There was a community information and input
 5 meeting in November, I believe it was on November the
 6 8th, where the Boundary Study Committee took its
 7 recommendations from 22 down to 4. Those were presented
 8 publicly to the public to be able to provide comment
 9 before the final recommendation was made to the Board of
 10 Education, which, as I said, happened last week.
 11 So again, the purpose of this evening is for
 12 any members of the community to sign up and speak on
 13 behalf of the recommendation to the Board.
 14 **MS. PUMPHREY:** Thank you, Dr. Grim. At my
 15 right, you will see the Board's timekeeper. The timer
 16 lights will turn red to let you know when you have one
 17 minute remaining, and then sound when your time is up.
 18 If you wish to have your written comments or
 19 other relevant information to be considered by Board
 20 members, kindly give that information to the Board's
 21 assistant, Ms. Gover, and she will see that it is

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1 distributed.

2 I would like to call our first speaker,

3 actually, our first and only speaker, Ms. Maxine Rubin.

4 MS. RUBIN: Good evening. Can you hear me?

5 MS. PUMPHREY: Yes.

6 MS. RUBIN: Okay. Don't know how I got to be

7 the lucky person that is the only person here tonight. I

8 am the vice president -- currently, the vice president,

9 past president, of the Williamsburg Community

10 Association. This is our current president, Mr. Glen

11 Charlow.

12 We are the community, Williamsburg, that

13 surrounds Bedford Elementary School on three sides. This

14 school -- we have people with us tonight who attended

15 Bedford Elementary when they were children. So we're

16 very happy to see what you guys have done, and we think

17 that the school will be a very wonderful resource for our

18 community.

19 But I have a concern. I should say we have a

20 concern. The board and a number of citizens are

21 concerned about the fact that when we selected Map C

Page 7

1 during the questionnaire period, you guys came up with

2 Map A. The only difference between Map C and Map A is a

3 little stretch of residential property which you guys

4 label as Idlewood.

5 For your information, and with all due respect,

6 that's not the name of the community. The name of the

7 community is Gwynnvale, G-W-Y-N-N-V-A-L-E. Now, this is

8 a very small community. And currently, there are only a

9 few children coming from that community into Bedford.

10 We have had a tremendously difficult time

11 getting demographics on this community. Some of the

12 board members have been researching it. I've been

13 researching it. And what we basically come up with is a

14 piece of land bordered by Old Court Road, Greenwood Road,

15 and Idlewood, which is the main road in the community but

16 not the name of the community.

17 Somewhere in our research, we have between 54

18 and 59 homes there, with a median age of 37 to 49. We

19 have a 33 percent rate of children living within the

20 homes, and the homes are medium priced at 350,000.

21 Our councilman, Chairman Patoka, said that he

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1 believes it is an aging community. And our concern is as

2 follows. It doesn't matter if you have no children, one

3 child, four children, none of that is relevant in terms

4 of population. What's relevant is it's a lovely little

5 community that within 10 years, you're going to see the

6 major portion of that community moving out to Florida and

7 other places since they are older folks.

8 Because the houses are well priced, you're

9 going to have an influx, as we have already started to

10 have in our community, of younger people buying into that

11 area. And our concern is that if even only half of them

12 have two children, you're looking at a population of

13 another 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 children. And we're concerned

14 about the due diligence that the Board practiced in

15 finding out more about this community and what type of

16 projection you have.

17 Because this is a wonderful resource that's

18 coming into our community, and we feel that we need to

19 protect it. There are some of us that can see a day

20 where the children who live in Williamsburg, which

21 surrounds the school, might not be able to get in there

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1 if you extend the boundaries too far. That's our

2 concern.

3 MS. PUMPHREY: Thank you.

4 MS. RUBIN: No answer? Should I stand here and

5 wait for a response?

6 MS. PUMPHREY: No, thank you. We're not --

7 tonight -- this evening, we don't respond to your -- what

8 we take into consideration all the statements that we

9 hear and discuss as a Board how to proceed forward.

10 MS. RUBIN: Can I ask if you guys would be kind

11 enough to share your demographic research on Gwynnvale?

12 Because we are having a difficult time -- Baltimore

13 County today, and within the past little while, has sent

14 us through seven or eight different people, and we're

15 getting conflicting information on this area.

16 MS. PUMPHREY: Can you please send us an email

17 at boe@bcps.org and we'll try to address your question,

18 please?

19 MS. RUBIN: Sure. Did you get that email

20 address?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Give it to me one more

Page 10

1 time?

2 MS. PUMPHREY: It's boe@bcps.org.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

4 MS. RUBIN: And to whom should we address it?

5 MS. PUMPHREY: It'll go to all -- it'll go to

6 the entire board.

7 MS. RUBIN: Okay. Thank you.

8 MS. PUMPHREY: Okay? Thank you.

9 The Board of Education is scheduled to vote on

10 the proposed Northwest Area Elementary School boundary

11 recommendation on Tuesday, March 5, 2024. Again, if

12 anyone has additional comments that you would like the

13 Board to consider, you may send them to boe@bcps.org, or

14 may contact the Board office so that information can be

15 forwarded to Board members.

16 This public hearing is now adjourned. Thank

17 you.

18 MS. FOWLER: (Indiscernible).

19 MS. PUMPHREY: I believe you had to sign up for

20 comments. Can you send us an email with your comment?

21 We'd love to hear from you; certainly want to hear your

Page 11

1 comments.

2 MS. FOWLER: (Indiscernible).

3 MS. PUMPHREY: Okay. Sure. Can you tell me

4 your name, please, so I can write your name down?

5 MS. FOWLER: Sure. It's Traci Fowler.

6 MS. PUMPHREY: Spell your last name for me?

7 MS. FOWLER: F-O-W-L-E-R. Traci's with T-R-A-

8 C-I.

9 MS. PUMPHREY: Okay. My name --

10 MS. FOWLER: My concern is a little different.

11 It's about traffic. I've noticed with -- I've been here

12 over 20 years. I've noticed within the last year when

13 they changed the red light at -- what is that

14 intersection? It is -- I think it's Milford Mill or

15 Sudbrook. So it's now -- before, on Sudbrook, the lanes

16 were -- the light would change at one time. Now, it

17 change -- you know, it gives one side a turn then another

18 side a turn.

19 I go out at -- during the school is being

20 dismissed every day, and the traffic backs up on Sudbrook

21 sometimes, like, three blocks. And it curves around onto

Page 12

1 Campfield, and I think if you get an influx of students

2 who are further out, there's going to be more traffic

3 because these students aren't catching the school bus.

4 So that's going to be more traffic coming into the

5 neighborhood, so that's really my concern is around the

6 traffic that's going to be coming in.

7 MS. PUMPHREY: Thank you.

8 MS. FOWLER: Okay, thank you.

9 MS. RUBIN: (Indiscernible).

10 MS. PUMPHREY: You can -- can you send us an

11 email with your questions, please?

12 MS. RUBIN: It was (indiscernible) this whole

13 meeting was my question. I'm not sure what the purpose

14 of it is. I've been talking about (indiscernible).

15 MS. PUMPHREY: The Board always takes into

16 consideration comments from the public. That's the

17 purpose of the hearing tonight.

18 DR. GRIM: If I can -- if I may --

19 MS. PUMPHREY: Dr. Grim's going to clarify, as

20 well.

21 DR. GRIM: Ma'am, if I can clarify. The -- so

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1 the Board -- and just to be clear, because even with the

2 first speaker. So the recommendation for the boundaries,

3 as part of this study, came from the Boundary Committee.

4 So when comments are made about decisions around the

5 demographics and what have you, those demographics and

6 those data are provided to the Board.

7 A recommendation per our policy and rule comes

8 from the Boundary Study Committee. That's based on the

9 participation of the makeup of the committee, which is

10 parents, the community group, the principal, school

11 staff. When they make that recommendation, the Board

12 heard the recommendation on February the 13th.

13 The purpose of this meeting was for the public

14 to offer any comment to the Board regarding the

15 recommendation that was made, and any concerns as was

16 shared. Any further comments or concerns can be shared

17 with the Board via email, and then they will vote on the

18 recommendation that was made to them from the committee.

19 So that's the purpose or the tale of time.

20 MS. RUBIN: (Indiscernible). May I?

21 DR. GRIM: That's up to you.

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1 MS. PUMPHREY: Okay. Yes.

2 MS. RUBIN: I just want to make the point

3 that --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could you stand in front

5 of the microphone?

6 MS. PUMPHREY: Yes, please. Because it's being

7 recorded so that way we can hear your comment.

8 MS. RUBIN: What you said, sir, is absolutely

9 correct, that it was the community, that it was parents,

10 that it was teachers. But we attended many meetings

11 where we were not allowed to speak. In other words,

12 these were selected teachers, selected administrators,

13 selected parents.

14 So while what you're saying is accurate, I

15 think it should be qualified that these were people that

16 were chosen to participate in the boundary plan

17 decisions, but the communities were not allowed to speak

18 or talk at those meetings.

19 What you're saying is correct. I just think it

20 needs to be qualified. It was the same people all of the

21 time. We from the community, when we had questions and

Page 15

1 opinions and concerns, we were not recognized. Okay?

2 DR. GRIM: And thank you for that, ma'am. Were

3 you given the opportunity at those meetings --

4 MS. RUBIN: No.

5 DR. GRIM: -- to provide comment via the online

6 survey that was available to all stakeholders? There was

7 another --

8 MS. RUBIN: The online -- yeah.

9 DR. GRIM: So the --

10 MS. RUBIN: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

11 DR. GRIM: No, that's okay. There are

12 mechanisms, and I understand what you're saying about the

13 greater community. The Board has also made it clear to

14 our staff through our policies and rules that they would

15 like to see additional community engagement. So we

16 appreciate your feedback on this matter.

17 MS. RUBIN: And I thank you for that, but I

18 will leave you with this comment. All of the interactive

19 conversation and information online is not 100 percent

20 authentic and does not satisfy the need of the people in

21 the community to speak to the people who are making

Page 16

1 decisions about their community.

2 I understand we live in the 21st century, but I

3 think that what the Board is asking of residents could

4 use a little bit more thinking.

5 MS. PUMPHREY: I do know that the Board and

6 staff, upon the Board's recommendation through policy, is

7 trying to engage the community more. It wants to hear

8 from different parts of the community, especially those

9 that are often unheard. So we would certainly love to

10 hear your comments or suggestions as far as how we can

11 reach community members further and these processes in

12 the future. I would love to hear your suggestions and --

13 we would love to hear your suggestions and

14 recommendations.

15 MS. RUBIN: I think that if there was a

16 period of time after your business was conducted that

17 people could speak. Not everybody feels comfortable on a

18 computer. In our community, we have a disproportionately

19 large number of older people, and a very high percentage

20 of them do not own a computer, and do not know how to

21 respond on a computer.

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1 I'm mildly functional on a computer, mildly,

2 and I get bogged. So it's -- I understand that the

3 world is changing, but not everybody has caught up to

4 what you're asking them to do. And I think that

5 transitionally at least, there needs to be a kinder,

6 gentler way to communicate with the people that this

7 means so much to.

8 MS. PUMPHREY: Thank you very much for your

9 comments. We appreciate it.

10 MS. RUBIN: You're welcome.

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. PUMPHREY: And now, I just want to say once

13 again if anyone has any further comments, please send an

14 email.

15 MS. JACOBS: (Indiscernible).

16 MS. PUMPHREY: Sure, sure.

17 MS. JACOBS: (Indiscernible) anything to do --

18 MS. PUMPHREY: Can you come to the mic so we

19 can hear you, please? Thank you.

20 MS. JACOBS: Hi. Okay.

21 MS. PUMPHREY: And can you -- I'm sorry. Can

Page 18

1 you please also tell me your name?
 2 MS. JACOBS: Randy with a Y Jacobs, J-A-C-O-B-
 3 S.
 4 MS. PUMPHREY: Thank you very much.
 5 MS. JACOBS: Okay. I've lived in this
 6 community for 70 years, my entire life, so I do have a
 7 high -- I consider myself a pretty high stakeholder. I
 8 went to all the schools in this community. My children
 9 went to the schools in this community, so I'm pretty well
 10 versed with this community. I've never lived anyplace
 11 else.
 12 But my question is, before I even send in an
 13 email is, does your group have anything to do with how
 14 they rank the schools? Because I think when we talk
 15 about boundaries and demographics and property values and
 16 how overcrowding affects property values and things like
 17 that, another thing that affects, you know, whether
 18 people want to buy in a community is how a school is
 19 ranked.
 20 And, you know, out of 10, and when you look at,
 21 you know, a school, an elementary school, you know, being

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1 ranked a 3 out of a 10, or a 4 out of a 10, or a 2 out of
 2 10 or something. That's not exactly desirable. My
 3 grandchildren just moved into a Baltimore County
 4 community, and they based their move on the ranking of
 5 the school for their children to stay in the public
 6 school system.
 7 So I'm just wondering -- and I think it's when
 8 you look at -- and I have a lot of friends that are
 9 teachers and retired teachers, and their children are
 10 teachers in this community, in the Baltimore County
 11 community. When you look at a school and you'll see a
 12 ranking of 3 out of 10, and then they'll say, well, a
 13 majority of our population are the ESOL students, English
 14 as a second language. It's not their fault, but it's not
 15 surprising, then, when -- if they can't read or
 16 understand a question on a standardized test that the
 17 school tests low.
 18 Which has nothing, really -- it's just not even
 19 valid to rank -- you know what I'm saying? So I'm just
 20 curious, and when you look at the demographics and what -
 21 - who gets fed into a school, and it affects the ranking

Page 20

1 because of that, it's kind of not fair. So I'm just
 2 wondering if you all have anything to do with that?
 3 You know, I mean, I have a friend who's been
 4 teaching for the last 12 years in a school probably 90
 5 percent ESOL. Their students are ESOL, and again, it's
 6 difficult. It's difficult to do the -- you know, the
 7 state-ranked testing and things like that.
 8 So, you know, you look at the ranking of the
 9 school based on some of that. I'm just wondering, you
 10 know, when you plan -- when you look at communities and
 11 you plan demographics, like how Maxine was saying, how do
 12 you get your demographics? What are you basing it on?
 13 Is any of that ever considered?
 14 MS. PUMPHREY: We do -- the Board does not
 15 produce those rankings. If that was your -- I think I'm
 16 answering your question.
 17 MS. JACOBS: Okay. So who does? Who -- I
 18 mean, how is that determined?
 19 MS. PUMPHREY: It's M5, isn't it? It's MSD.
 20 Excuse me?
 21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Star ranking.

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1 MS. PUMPHREY: Yeah, if you're speaking of the
 2 star rankings, that comes from the Maryland State
 3 Department of Education.
 4 MS. JACOBS: Okay. But it has nothing to do
 5 with when you look at demographics and decide school
 6 boundaries? They don't look at that at all?
 7 MS. PUMPHREY: They look at several factors,
 8 I'm sure.
 9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not star rankings.
 10 MS. JACOBS: Okay. I was just curious. I
 11 mean, I wasn't going to send an email to your group if it
 12 had nothing to do with your group.
 13 MS. PUMPHREY: No, we do not have
 14 responsibility for those rankings.
 15 MS. JACOBS: Okay. And I think, also, one of
 16 the frustrations that we may feel is just like Maxine
 17 said. When you're at meetings, and you're not allowed to
 18 speak, so tonight we were told we were allowed to speak,
 19 but then when we speak, we don't get comments back from
 20 you. That's a little frustrating because we don't know
 21 where our comments to you fall.

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1 And then if you all make a decision, and it
 2 comes back, okay, we've picked A or whatever, Plan A, we
 3 have no idea how you took our, you know, our -- you know,
 4 Maxine was the main speaker, but I think she was speaking
 5 for all of us.
 6 MS. PUMPHREY: Yes. We certainly understand
 7 that, and we've talked as a Board about the fact that we
 8 don't respond to your comments, and it's part of policy.
 9 It's part of the process, but it is something that we
 10 discuss about, you know, and ways that maybe we can
 11 change that or when that's appropriate -- when it's
 12 appropriate to respond.
 13 But we do consider all comments that are
 14 provided in public comment, as well as the stakeholder
 15 surveys that are put out throughout this boundary study
 16 process when we make our final decision on the
 17 recommendation from staff as far as the maps that we're -
 18 - the maps presented to us.
 19 MS. JACOBS: So when the final decisions come
 20 out, there's justifications for it? That comes out?
 21 MS. PUMPHREY: Well --

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1 MS. JACOBS: That's made public as to why A is
 2 chosen over C, or a B?
 3 MS. PUMPHREY: We discuss in a public -- in
 4 open meeting. We ask questions and make our decision in
 5 -- so some of those things may come out in open meeting,
 6 yes.
 7 MS. JACOBS: Okay.
 8 MS. PUMPHREY: Thank you for your comments. We
 9 appreciate it.
 10 And if anyone has additional comments, please
 11 send them to boe@bcps.org, or again, you can contact the
 12 Board office so the information can be forwarded to Board
 13 members.
 14 Thank you all for coming out this evening, and
 15 the public hearing is now adjourned.
 16 MS. RUBIN: (Indiscernible) is it possible
 17 (indiscernible) transcript or a recording of this --
 18 tonight's session?
 19 MS. PUMPHREY: Yes, there will be a transcript
 20 available, yes.
 21 MS. RUBIN: Will it be (indiscernible)?

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1 MS. PUMPHREY: It's -- it'll be posted on the
 2 website.
 3 MS. RUBIN: (Indiscernible).
 4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Seventy-two hours.
 5 MS. RUBIN: (Indiscernible).
 6 MS. PUMPHREY: Seventy-two hours. It'll be
 7 posted on the website, the transcript of this hearing.
 8 Thank you.
 9 (Meeting adjourned.)
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1 C E R T I F I C A T E
 2 I, Vivian Saxe, hereby certify that I
 3 transcribed from audio file the proceedings to the best
 4 of my ability in the foregoing-entitled matter; and I
 5 further certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and
 6 correct transcript of the audio files produces.
 7 IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have subscribed my name
 8 on February 25, 2024.
 9
 10
 11
 12 Vivian Saxe
 13 Transcriber
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 15
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