

APPROVED
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Rockville, Maryland
December 1, 2004

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Wednesday, December 1, 2004, at 7:40 p.m.

Present: Ms. Sharon W. Cox, President
in the Chair
Mr. Steve Abrams
Mr. Kermit V. Burnett
Ms. Valerie Ervin
Dr. Charles Haughey
Mr. Walter Lange
Mrs. Nancy Navarro
Mrs. Patricia B. O'Neill
Mr. Gabe Romero
Mr. Sagar Sanghvi, Student Board Member
Dr. Jerry Weast, Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: None

Ms. Molly Ruhl, Clerk of the Montgomery County Circuit Court administered the oath of office to Mr. Abrams, Ms. Cox, Ms. Ervin, and Mrs. Navarro.

Re: **STATEMENT BY MR. ABRAMS**

"It is nice to be back. Having served before, I do not enter this term quite as bright-eyed and bushy-tailed as the lovely ladies to my right. Rather, I come back with an understanding of just how special this place is, and how lucky I am to be able to serve once again.

This is a night of thanking our campaign staff. So, Judy would you please stand up. Whenever people question whether I have the judgment, disposition, or other attributes to serve in any office, they take one look at Judy and say 'well, if she can put up with him, there must be something there.' I thank you for putting up with me for an undisclosed number of years. I could not do it without you.

In addition, there are a couple of people I want to give recognition to. Bob Astrove taught me a lot in this campaign. He taught me how to listen to voices and issues that have not received as much attention as they should have and he did it in a very, very professional and well-reasoned manner throughout the campaign. If for no other reason, this campaign has brought me a new appreciation for his insights and thoughtfulness and I hope the tenor of his comments, conversation, and dialogue that he demonstrated as a candidate in the primary will continue in his relationships with Montgomery County Public Schools so that we can constructively work toward solving problems that need to be solved in this system.

I also want to thank Marcie Roth for giving me an opportunity to learn through her experiences. They helped me significantly and they are lessons I will carry in this term on the Board.

I always have to thank Esther Gelman. She probably symbolizes more than anyone else the fact that we still appreciate the nonpartisan nature of the Board of Education. We, as a community, come together and do what we think is right for education irrespective of other political wars that we have in other settings. For that respect and confidence, I thank her very much.

On that same note, I am "outing" David Neiman tonight. It is nice to know that a former Board member thinks enough about a current Board member to come this evening, and I appreciate that. Plus, I appreciate all of the kindness you have shown to me since I have been a member of the Board. You are one of the people here that is senior to me in service, David, since you were the first student Board member in Montgomery County.

We are at a terrific place with Montgomery County Public Schools. During the last several years, we have made remarkable cultural changes within the school system. You see it in how we address early childhood education, how we address accountability, and how we address the needs of maintaining a world class school system in an increasingly diverse community. We have made those cultural changes in many parts of our system, but one area has been neglected.

It is my hope, particularly with the assistance of two very capable professional women who are joining the Board, that we bring that culture change to the Board itself in how the Board operates. We have an opportunity to modernize what we do. We also have an opportunity to understand the needs of our staff and our system. But, that will require the Board to examine our procedures and methodologies the same way we have examined what we do in the classroom. MCPS is a much different operation and setting than the Montgomery County schools we are used to. We are a much bigger system and more complex in our operations. We have much greater needs of attracting quality people to be willing to serve in our elected and appointed positions. The only way we will be able to have the good fortune of having excellent candidates continue to emerge is to make ourselves a much more relevant and contemporary institution. I am committed to doing that.

When I walked in this evening, I thought it was a familiar Board meeting, but then I realized that Valerie had taken over. I am looking forward to the perspectives that both new Board members bring to the Board. I have had the good fortune of working with Nancy over the last couple of years through our mutual involvement with Centro Familia. I have been fundamentally impressed

with the efforts and understanding that have gone into creating a grass-roots, bottoms-up organization aimed at integrating our new residents into the vitality of this community. I look forward to working with you as we continue to do that. I am intrigued and thrilled at the

prospect of working with Valerie. Particularly, I know there are several issues where we will probably be 180 degrees apart, but we will certainly do it in a cordial fashion. Surprisingly enough, there may well be several issues that we agree upon, which will cause both of us to reevaluate our positions.

Sharon, just like I got to know you in earlier terms, going through a campaign with you this time I am continually impressed by your commitment and depth of understanding of what this system needs.

Retraining a superintendent is a hard job, but somebody has got to do it. I am thrilled at the prospect of working with probably the best school superintendent in the country and helping the system do things that can be done in no other system but here. We are and should be the model for what things are right in education and we still ought to be significant risk takers willing to continue to try other approaches with the humility of knowing that not everything has to be invented in Montgomery County to be any good.

With that, I look forward to this term, and I look forward to engaging all of you, as I have done in the past, in my normal, non-confrontational manner. Thank you."

Re: STATEMENT OF MS. ERVIN

"Good evening. Tonight we celebrate the collaboration of years of work in the community that brought together so many people from every niche in this great county that we call home.

My campaign for the Board of Education has been more about the journey than the destination. Our journey began with the first step almost one year ago today when I made the difficult decision to run. After a lot of soul searching and consultation with family and friends, we took the first step and made the road by walking.

Tonight, I am joined by so many people who made my seat on the Board of Education possible. I would like to first acknowledge my family who has given me the love and support that was needed to endure a yearlong campaign. I especially want to thank my mother, who traveled a long way to be here tonight, and my son, Jonathan, who spent many nights alone this year but was always my biggest supporter. My 4-year-old grandson, Myon, is also here tonight to share this very special occasion with me. This has been a year of highs and lows for our family. My beloved father passed away last October, and my biggest regret is that he is not here to share with us this special moment. But I know that I have soared on his wings since his passing and that his spirit is always present.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Be the change that you seek in the world." Every person who worked on behalf of my campaign exemplified those words. We believed in a simple message: that public schools are at the heart of a democratic society and that Montgomery

County has one of the nation's finest school systems, but it doesn't perform for all students. I believe we can lead the way in excellence and equity. I believe that every child can learn, I believe that we can institutionalize high expectations for all students. I believe that we can balance the influence of standardized testing with space for teacher creativity and passion for developing communities of lifelong learners.

I am so proud of the young people who worked so hard on my campaign. They brought their intelligence, enthusiasm, wit, creativity and wisdom to us and we learned so much from their example. I want to acknowledge the students who may be in the audience tonight and ask that they stand. I will continue to work with them, to ask for their important input and to encourage them to stay involved in the political process because we are depending on them.

Some of the things that we lived and witnessed this past year were a renewal of faith, the willingness to struggle, and the capacity for optimism. People join together because they believe in a vision of social justice and are committed to something greater than themselves. The journey begins with the first step and tonight I am honored to have been elected to serve Montgomery County residents on the Board of Education. Thank you very much.”

Re: STATEMENT OF MRS. NAVARRO

“Good evening. It is an honor and privilege to serve as a member of the Montgomery County Board of Education. I am humbled by the awesome task of working toward educational excellence for all Montgomery County Public Schools’ students. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my wonderful family who is also here. If they would stand up, that would be wonderful. I would also like to thank my supporters for recognizing my commitment to be a steadfast advocate for all of our students.

The saying ‘Think globally, act locally’ has always inspired me, and I believe that this principle applies now more than ever. The need for all students to succeed in our schools is imperative in order to prepare them to compete in this global economy while bearing the immense responsibility of building peace throughout the world.

Here in Montgomery County we are fortunate to have a school system that is truly a microcosm of a larger society. Our growing diversity provides a unique opportunity for our students to understand firsthand how to be aware of our differences and recognize our similarities. A topnotch education combined with a deep understanding of our society’s many cultures lays a foundation for a competitive and caring generation.

I am inspired by the commitment and talent of my fellow Board members, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and students. Although we will face challenges along the way, I am certain that by working together we will continue to strengthen our public school system. Thank you very much.”

Re: STATEMENT OF MS. COX

"In preparation for this evening, I reviewed the remarks that I made four years ago. I thought about how I and the circumstances in which I find myself have changed, and I and circumstances in which I find myself are still somewhat the same. Also, I searched my memory for defining moments from the last four years, but more about that later.

Certainly running as an incumbent with a record is very different (and you will see that) than running as a first-time candidate. Running as an incumbent who is also Board president does increase the name recognition, yes. Even so, many people helped me in my efforts. Just like four years ago, some of them had to. I could not have done it without my family and my wonderful and supportive husband (his place in heaven is secure). My sons keep me grounded in reality – two are away at college and one is here. He is with the family that had to adopt him because I was never home. So, I want to thank the Keaches as well as Jimmy. For all that time, this is a little bit of recognition that they get. Also, I want to thank my mom and my sisters – one who lives in the area. They all have the amazing skills – I am sure your family members have it too – that simultaneously keeping up your confidence while deflating your ego.

I appreciate those very much who freely offered their time, talents, and assistance, especially Dave and Karen Evens, Ginny Hillhouse, Ann Black, and those friends and folks in the community who sent a donation, took a sign, distributed literature, counseled and advised me, and encouraged their friends and neighbors to support me. A special thanks again to the Keach family for the adoption procedures.

While incumbency changed the nature of the campaign that I ran, what people care about has not really changed. Our citizens want a quality educational system that is the foundation for children's futures, the core of our community, and the economic engine for the county. As I noted on the campaign trail, the results of this Board's efforts toward those ends are evident in the kindergartners' growth in reading, the high proficiency of our fourth graders on Maryland State Assessments, and the record-breaking SAT scores our seniors have achieved, to name a few examples.

The hardest concept to convey in a campaign is how much depends on the ability of the Board to function as an entity, with individual interests not being subsumed but rather enriching the ultimate outcome. I want to thank Mr. Burnett and Mr. Lange for their unstinting contributions over the years to our positive outcomes. Mr. Lange's interest in and focus on performance measures and Mr. Burnett's focus on the whole child certainly enriched our efforts and contributed to improving outcomes for children.

I look forward to working with our new Board members, the superintendent, and staff to build on the successes and overcome the barriers to learning that are keeping many of our students

from fulfilling their full potential. Together, we will strive to ensure that our system provides all our students and their families with the program supports and interventions that will help children successfully turn education into the key for a better future.

We are tremendously lucky to live in a community that so strongly supports education and to have a county government that funds our high quality education so generously. I am eager to continue to work with staff, the community, and my fellow Board members to craft goals and policies, implement strategies, and evaluate our effectiveness against the measures that we have identified as serving the interests of our children.

The best part of this job is that we get to work on our passion. It is always about children's learning, it is always about children's welfare, and it is always about improving our educational system. There are many complex issues that we will be working with the community to address. When the job is more important than any one of us, it is easy to take it more seriously than we take ourselves.

That leads me back to the defining moment that I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks. Strangely, when I was trying to identify that, the first thing I thought of was the time I missed a step coming out of closed session on my way into the Board Room for a public meeting. I not only missed a step. I had a spectacular fall. I may even have done a somersault. It was the kind that your first instinct is to wonder if you actually verbalized any of the coarser language that went through your mind. It was a hugely embarrassing experience. This was a defining moment because I realized I loved this job even when it knocks me on my posterior.

Please note that it is heartfelt and sincere when I say thank to everyone who helped me to continue to be a member of this Board. I pledge, no matter how many times I trip, to give my best for all of our children. Thank you."

Re: STATEMENT OF MR. BURNETT

"I knew this moment was coming for a year now. I have had a year to write down what I wanted to say. I could not do it. I procrastinated even today sitting at my desk. So, hurriedly on my way, I am scratching on a piece of paper trying to figure out what to say because I am going to miss this place very dearly. I will miss the work extremely.

Six years ago when I came on the Board, I was a single parent. My children encouraged me and supported me to run for the Board, to be a member, and put forth all the time that it takes to be a good Board member. Now that I am leaving the Board, my wife has encouraged me to give her that time that I use to put on Board work.

I leave it not the same as I came. I have grown. I have expanded myself, my horizons. I hope that my being on the Board in some way has touched someone else's child as well as my own.

I know it made a difference in their lives. I hope I have made a difference in another child's life as well.

Six years ago when I came on the Board, my mom told me to always do the right thing. If you do the right thing, you will never ever have to look over your shoulder. That is the one piece of advice I remember from her. I can truly say that when I walk out that door this evening, I will not have to look over my shoulder because every decision that I made, I did the right thing.

Education is a community effort. It is not just the Board. It is not just the superintendent. In the end, it is a community effort. The reason that Montgomery County Public Schools is so successful is that the song that I sing from my heart is the same song that the superintendent sings. It is the same song that Nancy King sings at the state level. It is the same song that our Council members sing. It is the same song that parents as well as our children sing. This is what makes our system special: the chorus that is being sung. So, when the community, the next county, and next state hears the song, it is being sung the same.

During my time on the Board, I wanted to make a difference in the early childhood area, particularly kindergarten. When I came on the Board, there were nine full-day kindergartens and now there are 72 schools that have full-day kindergarten. This Board has made a difference, and I was glad to be part of it. We have made changes in special education. We have made changes in the curriculum. We have made changes in the teacher evaluation system, teacher preparation, and teacher training. We have made changes in the number of students taking Honors and Advanced Placement courses. We have made changes in parent involvement. We have made changes in many policies. I was also part of naming the first school in Maryland after an Asian-American.

When I think back to all the people who have helped me, guided me, and supported me, the names are too numerous to mention. Thank you to everyone."

Re: STATEMENT OF MR. LANGE

"I want to recognize and express my appreciation for the honor and privilege to serve on the Board of Education and to be part of the progress that the system has made. Thomas Edison wrote: 'Nothing that is good just works by itself, you have to make the damn thing work.' A lot of people desire credit for making this system work.

First, I want to thank my colleagues on the Board – Pat, Kermit, Sharon, Charles, Gabe, and Sagar. We have spent many hours together, and we generally, but not always, agreed. That is good. There are too many boards where the contention is so great, the work does not get done and the children suffer. I am reminded of the African proverb – 'When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.' We, the Board, are the elephants who did not fight, and the program succeeded, and the children did well.

Thank you to all staff at all levels whose dedication, caring, and sacrifices have made our successes possible: the supporting services employees are credited for the buses running on time, the children getting fed every day, and the buildings getting heated when they need to be and cooled when they should be; the principals and administrators who provide the leadership, vision, glue, and the motivation to keep staff and students going. Thanks to the teachers. I am awed by the craft of teaching. Teaching is changing and the challenges are growing. There is more collaboration and the demands are greater. Our teachers are meeting these challenges.

Thanks also to our elected officials – county executive, County Council, and delegates and senators who are working together with a shared vision to help Montgomery County Public Schools have the resources and community support in order to fulfill its mission. Thanks to Dr. Weast for his tireless efforts for all students and the leadership of staff.

Thanks to all the people who supported me in the campaign, longtime friends who sustained me, and to new friends who shared a vision of opportunity for all children. Thank you to my family for their support and encouragement – Carol and Dan. I also wanted to mention my mother who is an example and inspiration. At the age of 82, she is a mentor to a third grade student at her local school.

It is important to recognize partnerships throughout the school system: PTAs, the Montgomery County Business Roundtable for Education, Interages, Montgomery Youth Works, Study Circles, among others.

As I reflect over the wide range of activities over the past four years, a few things stand out more than others. I hope that I do not offend the many by selecting a few. I was impressed by opera at the elementary level. There is such a sense of purpose, wonder, and integration of curriculum with the arts and life. It is a tremendous example of authentic learning. The student-built houses on Connecticut Avenue are wonderful hands-on experiences. The growing realization of the many different career fields, and the awareness of how academics are related to practical skills. The award ceremonies and graduations are very moving and impressive.

The future is here. The new Board has been seated and will continue the work. There are so many challenges ahead. Welcome Nancy and Valerie. You will be tremendous assets. The budget is in front of you with all its challenges. Continue to build your community ties and advocate your issues. Steve, you need no welcome since you are experienced as a Board member.

Sitting Bull is credited with saying, 'Come let us talk together about the future we will build for our children.' I wish the new Board well, and I hope that the entire community will continue to

work and talk together. We will all build for our children. Thank you for this tremendous opportunity.”

Re: **PRESENTATION TO RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS**

Ms. Cox presented mementos that were reflective of service of Mr. Burnett and Mr. Lange on the Board of Education.

Re: **STATEMENTS OF BOARD MEMBERS**

Board members welcomed Mr. Abrams, Ms. Ervin and Mrs. Navarro, congratulated Ms. Cox on her reelection to the Board, and thanked Mr. Burnett and Mr. Lane for their work on the Board of Education and wished them well in all future endeavors.

Re: **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m. and was followed by a reception.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr