

Minutes for Ask the Principal Forum: 10/15 10:30 AM

PD = Principal Davis

SS = Scott Schuler

CT = Chris Truffer

PD: Welcome. Informal Talk today. Questions that repeatedly come to me from parents. This is a place to hear the answers to those questions. Create some consistency within the community.

Mr. Schuler chartered a school bus and took us to see where our students live, their demographics and where there are coming from. That was eye-opening for us.

Mr. Schuler is going to reply to some of the questions you have

SS:

- I was the person who headed the redistricting effort to make decisions for CHS.
- The decisions were driven by the fact that we don't have enough room and we still don't.
- I am concerned about the Middle Schools. Right now, we have room to add 10 classrooms to Arundel Middle. and to build it in such a way that 10 more rooms can be added later if needed.
- Long-term our plans are to have a new MS built near the new high school. But we need to be able to fill it up and right now that school would only have 300 students. The idea is you can't empty out the current schools to fill a new school.
- When we ask for \$ from the state they want to know that the school will be filled right now and not in the future. That is the balancing act we are working with.
- We made a deal that we closed on to build a new elementary school for Two Rivers. That plan is in the Capital Improvement Program. I would like to see it start with 350 students with a capacity of around 600 students, but that's not official.
- With the redistricting Crofton Woods and Crofton Meadows didn't change much but Crofton Elementary did. Two new subdivisions being built
- Two Rivers selling about 20 houses a month, a huge sales pace. 7 sections under construction right now and more to come.
- I did not think the demand for age-restricted communities would be so strong and it surprised me. It will have no effect on the schools, however. Not sure how they are going to get in and out of there and the effect on the traffic will be unknown. Getting onto and off Route 3 for the school buses will be tougher and tougher. Idea is to separate students by sides of Route 3.

PD: We probably have 50 students from Two Rivers.

SS:

- In the fall, they will be going to Piney Orchard. The students on the other side of Route 3 will be transferred there. This puts pressure on us to get the school at Two Rivers off the ground ASAP.
- There is a neighborhood on the other side of Route 3 called Riverwalk that is being redistricted to Crofton Woods. Transportation did not want to come out of Riverwalk and turn left onto Route 3 or make a U-turn, so this left them going to Crofton Woods.
- Copies can be made available of Master Plans with enrollment projections for each school. These take into account the redistricting. They are also available on the website.
- I also have Crofton High School which will open with only 2 grades: 9th and 10th grades.
- Enrollment projections we are required to start with number from the state and allocate growth they are projecting for each area. They don't take into account new construction. Beyond six years in the future they don't take birth rates into account either. We use these numbers as starting points and make

adjustments based on what we know about the area's demographics and its housing markets. We have a student generation rate from a consultant study. The consulting study that we used does not have information for our feeder zones concerning distinct student generation rates for townhouses, single family homes, and apartments. We are working on that ourselves now. The # of young children coming from townhouses is greater and we developed data taking this into account. When these new homes are being built, we are obligated to serve the children, we can't turn them away. We have to figure out a way to accommodate them.

- We have long-term plans for another elementary school here near the High School; we have a lot of land behind Linthicum Walk.
- With the redistricting of the children on the other side of Route 3 Crofton elementary should be okay for the time being.
- What I have projected now, the growth for this area has been very rapid. The way things are looking now I'm looking at an enrollment of 840 which is an increase of 100 students. An increase of 100 students is unheard of at ES level. I was planning for next year the enrollment would have been down about 20 and it will be more. What is going on with Two Rivers is not the only factor. We have a lot of military in Crofton with a lot of turn over. Many students in this area will be going to 6th grade. I am going to be redoing the numbers in January. We should have about 100 students moving from CES with the redistricting.

PD: The last 12 students that enrolled here at Crofton lived in the Triangle not in the redistricting areas.

SS:

- We have to adjust the information we get from the state because it does not account for the growth we have seen/expected in the Crofton area. I can't say for sure that we won't have to expand Crofton ES again. We don't want to put them all in trailers; those are meant to be temporary.
- So, the question becomes: when can we get into the funding cycle and where on the physical site can we add classrooms? The more you expand a school, the less you need a new school.
- The idea of building a school is not to empty out an existing school, but to achieve a balance.
- A lot of the people moving here are white-collar professionals moving because of one or the other spouse's jobs. These people may be starting families. They are moving into the Triangle with families and small children, buying homes from empty nesters, couples whose children have grown. I think that will continue in Crofton indefinitely.
- AACO has been positioned by the builders as an affordable option compared to the other surrounding counties. 60% of the stock of houses being built in AACO is townhouses which is a big effect on the elementary schools in this area. As those children move in, the idea of fitting them all into CES is not feasible. That's why I think the new elementary school will find purchase with the decision-makers.

Parent Question: So, next year the students on the other side of Route 3. Is there anything going to be done at Crofton Middle to decrease class size?

Response: SS.

- Those are good questions and we are asking them ourselves. The hallways are narrow. We're going to have to do something. We go to the State to ask to build a new school and they ask if we've exhausted all other options. What that means is: have we looked at redistricting and relocatables (trailers)? We've done both redistricting and portables here. I personally believe we are going to need at least 7 new elementary school right now county-wide possibly as many as 3 middle schools over the long haul. For a couple of years, it is going to be difficult to build anything because of the schools being

built by Old Mill. 2 new high schools, 2 new middle schools, 2 new elementary schools, plus a new CAT North.

- One of the questions was about transportation. Ryan Chaney is responsible for getting students to school safely. Our problems now are buying new school buses and finding school bus drivers. If there are particular changes you think need to be made about the transportation let me know and I will make sure Ryan hears it.

Parent Question: Are there any creative solutions for the MS like 8th grade going to the High School?

Response: SS

- One suggestion that has come is split shifts, although we aren't considering it, it has been used before. In any case it is not a permanent solution. Another suggestion is to house children in different buildings. Crofton HS will have room for 2 years and then it will be full. Crofton HS has 1700 seats at the behest of the County Executive who wanted smaller high schools, but that doesn't mesh with the number of students we have. Having said that, Arundel HS will have room after the redistricting. They will be losing about 800 students (in round figures; not official). The thing is seeing how far you'd have to transport these 200 or 300 students. Every time you add x number of classrooms you need to add probably another 3rd for ancillary services and other programs students will need
- We're also having trouble with lunch periods and having to run 800 students through a lunchroom designed for 400 students. The number of students we are trying to accommodate is probably closer to 500 maximum per lunch period.
- I do ramble but I hope it helps you understand the world into which Crofton ES fits. Those are the things that are at work that we make sure we build a case for a school construction problem like this so that it deserves the funding and what can reasonably be deferred

Parent Question: I have a 5th grader in a trailer now and can you speak to the fact that the problem will be transferred to Piney Orchard, so when can we expect a Two Rivers school?

Response: SS:

- Planning and Design will take 2 years and construction another 2 years. We just closed on the land for an ES at Two Rivers last week. It's just a little past the traffic circle on the right.

Parent Question: What is the capacity of Piney Orchard right now? They will have an influx of children for the next 3 years

Response:

SS:

- They have an enrollment of 629, their capacity is 694. We're looking to install a relocatable that does not feel like a trailer. It has a bathroom and hallways to 8 classrooms.

Parent Question: Is there a cap to the number of students that will be in a classroom? I appreciate the fact that when there were a lot of Kindergartners here another classroom was added to keep the number of students at 18.

CT:

- We don't operate under a system of a hard cap. But we do recommended ratios. 18 to 1 is the ratio for kindergartners. I think the best thing a community can do is to communicate with the county executive and county council. Your advocacy around full funding of the Superintendent's recommended budget is key. We aren't going to be having varied ratios for each school regardless of the amount of crowding.

Parent Question: What are the recommended ratios for Middle schools

Response:

CT: It is a ratio that is recommended at 23 to 1

Parent laughter

Response: Chris T:

- When you construct a schedule at MS you are not balancing at 23, we do try to keep classes at low 30's. What happens is you get a teaching allocation based on enrollment and it is more difficult to balance at MS.

Parent Question: What about budget for hiring new teachers for the growth?

Response:

Chris T: I'm thinking Dr. Arlotto will be asking for a considerable number of teaching allocations again. We did pretty well for the increase we asked for this year. HR is the biggest part of our budget is taken up with people. The Superintendent has been very vocal about decreasing class sizes.

Parent Question: How many ES will go to Crofton MS next year?

Response:

SS: 4. The students on other side of Route 3 will switch elementary and middle schools.

Parent Question: How many MS will go to Crofton HS

SS: Just 1.

Parent Question: Will there be a time change for Crofton ES?

Response:

CT: Probably not. I can pose that question but not sure when we would know from transportation, but I will pose the question.

Parent Question: Are there any exceptions for the students living on the other side of Route 3

Response:

CT: Some. There are certain circumstances where they will allow that. (Special Education services/curriculum programs). We do have a whole out of area process handled by Laurietta Jones if you have any specific questions about out of area. A school is not supposed to accept out of area if at 90% capacity, which is all schools in this area.

C. Truffer: Please use me as a conduit for questions. Email ctruffer@aacps.org; Office # is 410-626-9746 assistant is Ms. Boston. If you have a question I can answer or get it to the correct person to answer your question.

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