



**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
held Monday, June 15, 1998 for the purpose of meeting with Board of Education
Representative Suzanne Plogman.**

The meeting began at 8:15 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull Thomas X. White and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; David E. Moran, City Clerk and Wendy Wexler, Staff Liaison to ACE

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Suzanne Plogman, Board of Education Representative; Derek Thompson, Leta Mach and Alla Lake, ACE Members and Altoria Ross, News Review

Mayor Davis began with introductions and a summary of the "stakeholder" process.

When asked about the major issues facing the Board, Ms. Plogman indicated that the future of the Board was a concern, because of turnover by members. She also indicated that implementation of the "neighborhood schools" plan was an issue.

Ms. Davis asked about overcrowding at Eleanor Roosevelt. Ms. Plogman responded that the new Ardmore-Ardwick High School should help relieve overcrowding at Roosevelt. She noted that renovation of Greenbelt Middle School was #9 on the CIP list. Ms. Plogman informed Council about the progress on the reopening of Berwyn Heights Elementary.

Mr. White asked about the six year plan. Ms. Plogman responded that all the parties had signed off on the agreement. She stated that the school system was working to finalize the Memorandum of Understanding. She noted that the plan was contingent on funding, but indicated that the Board would begin phasing in the neighborhood schools plan. Mr. White suggested a "kick-off" event to celebrate the occasion.

Mr. White asked about the historic significance of Greenbelt Middle School. Ms. Plogman indicated that she would make sure that the city was notified about any plans and would provide specific timelines to the city. In response to a question about the bus lot, Ms. Plogman indicated that the bus lot would remain.

Mr. Roberts expressed concern about the continued growth of the bus lot. He asked about the possibility of a cooperative agreement for utilization of the ballfields. Mr.

Roberts asked if field renovation could be done during the renovation of the school. Ms. Plogman indicated that she would investigate these issues.

Mr. Turnbull asked about the possibility of staging the renovation to avoid the disruption of moving the children. Ms. Plogman indicated that the Board had been unwilling to renovate facilities while children were present, for safety reasons. Mr. Turnbull hoped that ongoing maintenance needs would be addressed, to minimize the these disruptions.

Council discussed overcrowding at Springhill Lake Elementary and the transfer of the 6th grade to Greenbelt Middle. Ms. Plogman indicated that the addition would replace the existing temporary classrooms, but not provide any future capacity.

Mayor Davis asked about the future of the School Board. Ms. Plogman believed that an appointed school board would be a regressive move. She explained the role of the oversight panel and indicated that the Board had turned over minor responsibilities to this group.

Ms. Plogman noted that a comprehensive audit report was being released. She indicated that while she had not seen the report, perception of the schools, leadership and bureaucracy were identified as concerns. She agreed to provide a copy of the report to the city and ACE. In response to a question from Mr. White, Ms. Plogman indicated that the audit also addressed systemic issues.

Mayor Davis asked about programs for disruptive students. Ms. Plogman believed that more attention was needed at the elementary level. Mr. Roberts asked about vocational programs. Ms. Plogman responded that there was still strong support for these programs. She agreed to provide an update on these programs.

Ms. Plogman discussed the issue of violence in schools. She indicated there was a task force that met periodically. Ms. Mach asked about "character education" programs. Ms. Plogman believed this program was being expanded and agreed to provide information. She stated that the biggest challenge was that these children were products of their environment.

Ms. Plogman thanked the Council for their help through the School Resource Officer program and the CARES discussion groups. Ms. Wexler noted problems, particularly from Greenbelt Middle, in getting support from the school administration for ACE and teen discussion group programs.

Several ACE members expressed concern about the relationships between ACE and the schools. There was discussion regarding the benefits of ACE. It was noted that PGCMA was trying to expand ACE groups to municipalities that didn't have them. Ms. Mach relayed that she had been working with Bowie ACE to try and put together a program.

Mr. Thompson asked about test scores and plans to improve them. Ms. Plogman responded that it was an ongoing effort and agreed to provide information to ACE. There was considerable discussion about the testing process, how it works and how it affects jurisdictions like Prince George's with lower socio-economic conditions. Ms. Plogman stressed that the test was mandated by the State Board of Education and the General Assembly.

Mr. Turnbull stated that the testing system seemed stacked to make places like Prince George's look bad regardless of the quality of the schools. Mr. White believed that if there was a credible analysis that demonstrated the test was "rigged" against Prince George's County because of the socio-economic conditions, this information would be taken seriously by the Prince George's delegation.

Ms. Lake asked about the difference in salaries between Prince George's and other jurisdictions. Ms. Plogman indicated that the Board was attempting to address this issue. Ms. Mach asked about school based management. Ms. Plogman responded that the majority of the Board supported this concept.

Council raised the issue of retention of the Board seat. Ms. Plogman believed that retention of the seat would be good. She stressed that the Board needed the best possible person.

Ms. Plogman thanked Council for the meeting and indicated she would miss working with everybody. Mayor Davis thanked both Ms. Plogman and the members of ACE for coming.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

David E. Moran
City Clerk