



## **EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD (ECCAB)**

### **Joint Planning & Economic Committee and Quality of Life/Services Committee Meeting**

#### **Wednesday April 9, 2025 Meeting Summary**

**Board Members Present:** Fisseha Adugna, George Brown, Radwan Chowdhury, Ken Flemmer, Roberta Goldberg, Metassebia Kefelegn, Peter Myo Khin, Len Newman, Tina Oyenya, Mark Pharaoh, Kimberly Price-Evans, and Dan Wilhelm. **Board Members Absent:** LaTonya Brooks, BJ Dawkins, Sheala Durant, Rachael Evans, Susan Price and Calandra Tate Moore.

**Present:** Eileen Finnegan and Rob Richardson, Mustapha Mansur, Valarie Davis

**County Regional Office Staff Present:** Jewru Bandeh, and Ayanna King.

**Welcome and Introductions.** The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by ECCAB chair Peter Myo Khin. Board members, government officials, and public members introduced themselves.

Peter indicated that the original intent was to have the MCPS Superintendent speak at a regular ECCAB meeting but because of scheduling conflicts decided it would take the place of a regular Wednesday committee meeting and include both committees. Accordingly, the meeting would be run like an ECCAB meeting. The meeting had been announced in the regular regional director's communications to the public and at the April ECCAB meeting.

At the April 2 ECCAB meeting, there was a discussion by the Board on the primary topics we want discussed at this April 9 meeting. The possible topics were collected at the April 2 meeting and after that meeting the Executive Committee decided which were the primary topics. Those were then shared with Dr Taylor. There were seven primary topics and seven other issues that could be discussed if time allowed. For the seven primary topics, below is a summary of Dr. Taylor's comments.

**School Facilities:** He indicated the east county has been impacted by the lack of upgrading the schools. Many schools need to be upgraded or rebuilt/replaced. He specifically referred to Banneker MS (opened in 1974, with no revitalizations). Overall, between two-thirds and three-quarters of the schools need extensive work.

In response to a question, Dr Taylor spoke about maintenance. He indicated that county-wide all lead pipes have been removed from all schools, but some schools do have lead paint. The budget process does not place high enough priority on maintenance. MCPS needs to budget 10% of the

building value for maintenance each year over their 70-year life span. HVAC is the hardest maintenance item, especially related to standing water, which can cause mold. MCPS just started testing legionnaires' contamination.

**Early Childhood Care/Education:** He feels this is a great investment to enable children to thrive. Full-day classes are needed since parents have indicated that half-day doesn't work for them because many need to work full-time.

**Student Academic Performance:** Half of the students met literacy standards and only a third are meeting math standards. Students are improving some in literacy but not in math. He feels that the way math is taught in this country has been a failure. The need is greatest at those schools that have free or reduced-priced meals (FARMS). He pointed that this is especially true for black/brown, ESOL, and disabled students. At non-FARMS schools, black/brown students do as well as white/Asian students. Special education instruction needs to be totally revamped.

**Support, Discretion Resources/Services for Academic and Extracurricular Activities:** There is inequity in this area linked largely to the wealth of an area. The lack of transportation home after extracurricular activities is a problem for many families.

**Boundary Studies.** He indicated that boundary studies are coming because two new high schools will be opening in other parts of the county in several years. That will affect high schools throughout the county and will also somewhat affect middle schools.

As part of public comment, Dan Wilhelm indicated that boundary studies also are needed for the NE consortium schools to address two situations. First, a school boundary analysis was done in 2019 which showed that the boundaries of schools in this area are very dated in that many students did not attend their neighborhood school. Too many students travel past other schools to reach their assigned school, some with long travel times. The process of updating the boundaries was stopped by the pandemic and needs to be restarted. Second, with 3000-5000 houses coming with Viva White Oak, a plan is needed for housing the students that will be coming. Presently the assigned schools and projected seats available in 2028-29 (when the first housing units will be occupied) is Galway ES (58), Briggs Chaney MS (54) and Paint Branch HS (-53, which is over capacity). Dr. Taylor said that it takes 3.5 to 4 years to build a school, once construction is approved.

**Attracting/Retaining Qualified Teachers.** Dr Taylor indicated this is a national problem but MCPS does a good job getting the number of teachers needed.

**Higher Concentration (share) of FARMS and Low-income students in East County Schools.** Dr Taylor indicated that about half of the students in the county are in FARMS. East County schools on the average have more than half, but it varies by school.

### **Questions and Comments other than included above.**

**Student behavior problems.** Dr Taylor indicated the pandemic increased the number of problems. Most school systems have teacher aids in the lower grades and classes with special needs students but MCPS does not. With aids, it is easier to address students with behavior problems. When problems occur, police should rarely be called. Rather, it should be a teaching moment. MCPS is falling short in this area.

**Resource Officers:** Dr. Taylor feels that the police should not be assigned to schools. MCPS has a good working relationship with the police. When a situation arises where they should be called, police response is rapid. Student behavior problems all too often occur when expectations have not been effectively communicated to the students.

**Music/art getting left behind.** Dr. Taylor indicated that all schools offer these classes. Some schools have top notch programs. One problem is that the school-provided musical instruments are old since funds for repair and replacement was dropped during the pandemic.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40.