



BOARD OF EDUCATION COMPENSATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes – Meeting Eight
November 25, 2019
Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street – 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland

Attendance

Members Present:

Jaye Espy, Chair
Ting Chau
Jennifer Sawin
Mark Spradley, Vice Chair
Jason Washington

Staff Present:

Dale Tibbitts, Spec. Asst. to the County
Executive
Beth Gochrach, Office of the County
Executive

1. Call to Order

Chair Espy called the meeting to order at 7:14 PM.

2. Roll Call

All five Commissioners were present.

3. Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the October 29, 2019, November 4, 2019, and November 18, 2019, meetings were approved with amendments.

4. New Business

a. Discuss progress contained in project tracker

Cm Washington added comparable school district data, and emailed it to the Commission members. He noted that there were some fluctuations in the budgets depending on the size of the school districts. Identified Florida school districts, in general, had smaller budgets but higher board compensation. Appointed board members usually have no salaries, including Philadelphia, which has transitioned back to a traditional, appointed school board model. The Commission can cut that data any way if they need to, and provide school facility size, etc. The Montgomery County student is the only student member who actually has full voting responsibilities (except for personnel disciplinary actions).

b. Review public survey summary results. The public survey questions and responses (see attached) were reviewed and discussed:

Chair Espy opened the discussion. The public survey was completed on November 27. Two-hundred and seventy-four people responded to each question. No respondents skipped questions 1-9, although 128 (about half of the respondents) did not provide additional information in response to question 10.

The survey does not say who responded. There are no demographics. But you can see how each person responded. Cm Sawin said she can do a further breakdown of the responses.

There was discussion about responses to the specific questions.

Question 1: Are you aware that Board members receive yearly compensation? Yes: 77% No: 23%

Question 2: Based on your knowledge and understanding of the duties and responsibilities of Board members, is the current yearly compensation (\$25,000 for Board members: \$29,000 for the Board President) appropriate?

A high percentage thought the salaries should be \$20,000 or less. The Commission needs to make a credible argument for the student Board member since responses were not encouraging. In Prince Georges (PG) County the student Board member receives \$40,000 to use as he or she chooses. But the student member still must juggle with other scholarships. A person familiar with the PG County Board was shocked about how low the Montgomery County student Board member compensation is. PG County Board members receive \$19,000 in compensation. Because they will need for reference, it was suggested that the Commission obtain the compensation information in writing from the PG County school board secretary so that the information is not just anecdotal.

Question 3: Based on your knowledge about the duties and responsibilities of serving on the Board, should the student member's scholarship of \$5,000: Remain the Same, or Be equal to 25%, 50%, 75% or 100% of yearly Board members' compensation?

Question 4: Please estimate how many hours per week a Board member spends on all Board of Education responsibilities, including; Board meetings, preparation, committee meetings, community engagement, and other duties inherent with the role? Less than 20, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 or over 60 hours.

Regarding Board member hours and student compensation, respondents think that the Board duties and responsibilities require fewer hours than they actually do, but still think that more compensation is needed. This makes for a strong argument for the position being considered a full-time job. The student perspective is anecdotal, but the student's workload is similar to the regular Board members, and the student also visits schools, which is a good argument for compensation equal to that of the other members. The student's status is essentially the same as the regular members, even though the student may not yet be 18. It is a very important position. The student is elected by all MCPS middle and high school students. The compensation should be equitable, but the Commission must justify that. The information from Prince Georges County will support the justification. Other counties don't make clear what they give students.

Question 5: Based on your familiarity of the duties and responsibilities of a Board member, what level of education do you believe is appropriate for Board members to have obtained? High School or some college, Associate Degree, Bachelor Degree, Graduate or Professional Degree.

The Commission discussed the level of education respondents thought Board members should have. Most respondents thought that a bachelor's degree was appropriate, but Commissioners

noted that having a specific level of education is not a requirement, so the salary really can't be based on level of education. But it was noted that the point of the survey was to capture assumptions of County residents, who are very educated individuals. But it was noted that 20% don't think that a bachelor's degree is needed, which the Commission thought was high. Currently, only one Board member doesn't have a bachelor's degree.

Question 6: What background, skills, and abilities are necessary to be an effective Board member?

There was a discussion of the response to the question about what background, skills and abilities effective Board members should have. Business and law were included in the responses. A lot of people are looking at the budget. It was suggested that County Stat could analyze the responses. Staff Tibbitts suggested running cross-tabulations or conducting a thematic analysis on the 274 responses to see what answers are consistently repeated, such as PTA experience, being a parent, being a good listener, etc. It was suggested that the Commission could come up with four themes and track the responses or find a way of quantifying skills that would include such things as political ability, responsiveness to constituents, conflict resolution, knowledge and abilities, and other core competences, and other factors such as being an inclusionist.

Chair Espy stated that it does not seem like the public knows what the Board members' duties are. The public's responses are inconsistent with what the Commission has learned through the interviews with Board members. It is apparent that the roles and responsibilities of Board members are not truly understood by the public at large, thus the executive summary should highlight the roles and responsibilities and provide underlying information to determine appropriate salaries. Cm Sawin noted that it was beyond their charge, but perhaps the Commission could educate the public through its report.

Question 7: Per our legislative mandate, the Compensation Commission is considering various recommendations for Board compensation. Please select all of the following recommendations that should be considered: Reducing Compensation, No change, Indexing compensation to a Benchmark, Using a performance-based compensation, Increasing compensation.

There was discussion about the response to recommendations for Board member compensation. The Board has looked at all the five options.

It is noted that Question 8 was reviewed but not discussed.

Question 9: What salary would you recommend?

There was discussion about the responses to the recommended salary range for Board members. Responses ranged from "0" to "this should be a volunteer job" to volunteer to \$180,000 per year. The public didn't have background information, although they could have gone to the Board of Education website for that. There is a lack of knowledge. Some people think teachers make \$80,000 per year.

Question 10: Please provide any other information that you think the Compensation Commission should consider in its determination.

The Commission discussed the living wage in Montgomery County. Some respondents said that Board members were climbing the political ladder, but the Commissioners noted that most Board members don't go on to political careers, so it's not really a stepping stone. There were a few: current Council member Nancy Navarro and past Council member, the late Marilyn Praisner, and former Maryland Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez. Responses to the question will be included as an addendum with summary and highlights.

There was discussion of choosing four questions: #1, #2, #4, and #5 to highlight in the report. The question about number of hours worked was incredibly illuminating for the commissioners. The education question should be included. The public is unaware of how much work the job entails. It's important to include a full description. Cm Sawin suggested putting specific student member needs in its own module. Cm Washington suggested that recommendations be placed in the executive summary and on the first page of the report, then background information could go in the body of the report. The report could state: "this was our directive; this is our response." The report can provide a blueprint so that the next group won't have to go through the building process again. Almost three hundred is a good number of responses.

c. Draft executive summary

The executive summary should be prepared for the December 9 public hearing before the County's Delegation at the County Council building. The Commission doesn't need to provide the full report at that time. But staff Tibbitts noted that it might be advantageous for the public to know the Commission's recommendations at the hearing, because that was the basis for the bill and the establishment of the Commission, especially since the survey showed the public's lack of knowledge about the Board. Cm Washington suggested coming up with a recommendation at this meeting and dropping it into the executive summary at the next meeting.

Chair Espy asked for Commissioners opinion about coming up with a recommendation and if there were any changes, specific dollar amounts or ranges. There was discussion of setting recommendations based on a percentage of Maryland General Assembly members' salaries: 110% = \$55,000. 120% = \$60,000. Alternatively, it was suggested that County Council member salaries could be used as the basis for the calculation. Chair Espy said that comparing delegate and Council salaries was like comparing apples to oranges. There is not a nexus between the two jobs.

Cm Washington suggested using the school system's budget as justification for the salaries. Seven people must make decisions about \$2.68 billion dollars. Compensation equity should be looked at in light of that responsibility. Cm Chau noted that the survey had a wide range of responses, and that the suggested compensation was within those ranges. It can be compared to the state median income: \$50,000 = 70% of state median income. Cm Washington suggested continuing the benefit package. Vice Chair Spradley suggested that BOE officers receive 20%-25% more since general assembly officers receive 25% more than members. There was discussion of recommending cost of living increases and/or indexing at the state wage adjustment level.

Cm Chau noted that education encompasses many issues and that Board members must be multi-focused. Education is one of the most critical elements of life. The Board members' responsibilities are very important, and they deserve to be compensated appropriately. Chair

Espy stated that she is thinking that the compensation for Board members and the student should be \$50,000. The president's compensation should be \$55,000. The president changes every year.

Cm Sawin stated that, looking at numbers from the survey, the higher salary recommendations come from earlier respondents. Looking at everything altogether \$50,000 is a solid recommendation. She is concerned about what people are expecting regarding the student. It's a smaller but vociferous percentage that think there should be no student at all. The Commission doesn't want to jeopardize the student position on the Board. Cm Washington stated that the student should get the raise. Vice Chair Spradley stated that when the student got full voting rights it was justification for the raised salary. The Commission has developed a great deal of respect for the student members who have served, from what they know about their dedication, so they do not wish to jeopardize the student member position.

It was noted that Los Angeles County Board members receive \$120,000 a year. The Commission will make a recommendation. The actual outcome from the General Assembly may be different. It was noted that legislators may be voting for salaries higher than their own, but the Commission believes it is important to make the case that for the purposes of compensation, Board member positions are full-time positions and should be paid fairly. It was noted that County Council members' salaries are \$139,119 per year. The general assembly's president/speaker salaries are about \$65,000.

There was continued discussion about whether the Board positions are full-time. Cm Sawin stated that the Commission doesn't need to make the case that the positions are full-time. If the Commission states that they are full-time, but the compensation is \$50,000, there will be another contingent that says that is not enough. She also stated that not all Board members may work full-time. Cm Washington noted that there is even disagreement among Board members about whether the position is full- or part-time. Cm Sawin also noted that this isn't a one-time study, but an ongoing study. She also noted that regarding salary there is a tension between individuals performing a very necessary job, for which they should be compensated versus the individual's desire to do public service. Vice Chair Spradley stated the Commission should address the need for more diverse candidates, such as background and gender. He said this aspect is different from the position of state delegate, that the school Board is different and should reflect the population and needs of MCPS students.

Chair Espy stated that the Commission didn't need to make any decisions immediately but would have to by December 2. It was agreed informally that all Commissioners want to increase the salaries of the Board members, including the student. There were suggestions of \$40,000 or \$50,000 for the student, and that that amount could be disbursed over several years. It was noted that the legislation is silent on the number of years the compensation could be disbursed. It was suggested that student should choose the rate of disbursement. It was also suggested that there be a scholarship and stipend for the student, although the current legislation mandates a scholarship. But the Commission could recommend that change, even though it would be effective at a later date and no one could be grandfathered in. There was also a discussion about whether a salary change could be effective while a Board member is in office; most likely any recommended changes would be effective for the next panel. But at least the Commission and the general assembly would have guidance for the future. There was continued discussion about the student receiving both a scholarship and salary and that the two combined should equal \$50,000.

Chair Espy suggested that the Commission concentrate on the scholarship first and also recommend a stipend. There was discussion about promoting the scholarship because the student should be encouraged to go to college, but also needs reimbursement and compensation while serving to cover expenses. It was also noted that students may expect a scholarship (as opposed to a salary) when they run for the position. It was suggested that the scholarship be disbursed over a four, five or six year period, paid either yearly or by semester, and to let the student choose the time frame. Concern was noted about the scholarship on the extended disbursement time frame and the effects on other college scholarships. There was also discussion about interaction with college savings plans. It was suggested that the Commission look at current college graduation rates to determine an appropriate disbursement plan. It was noted that if this were to become law, going forward the Board would be paying multiple scholarships at different rates each year.

The discussion was tabled until the December 2 meeting. It was also decided that the Commission would draft the executive summary at that meeting. There was a question about whether the executive summary needed a transmittal letter. Staff Tibbitts agreed to check with Del. Luedtke about that.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Gochrach