



**BOARD OF EDUCATION COMPENSATION COMMISSION**  
**Telephone Conference Call Meeting Minutes – Conference Call**  
**October 29, 2019**  
**Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**  
**Rockville, Maryland**

**Attendance**

**Members Present by Conference Call:**

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

**Members Absent**

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**Guests Present by Conference Call**

Shebra Evans, President, Board of Education  
Karla Sylvestre, Member, Board of Education

**Staff Present:**

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

Note that this meeting consisted of two conference calls only. No other issues were discussed.

**Shebra Evans 7:00 PM**

Chair Espy call the meeting to order at 6:59 PM. She introduced Commission members to Ms. Evans, thanked her for her time, and described the Commission's mission.

Ms. Evans described her background. She was elected in November 2016. She is the current President of the Board. She attended Tennessee State University in Nashville, and has a degree in economics and finance. She's had jobs in cable and energy, with CNN and PGE, and has worked in Georgia, Alexandria, VA and Bethesda. Then she was a stay at home mom and an events planner. After she had children, she became involved with the PTA. She has two children, a 9<sup>th</sup> grader at Argyle and a junior at John F. Kennedy High School.

Ms. Evans noted that the Superintendent is the only direct employee of the BOE. Ms. Evans described the meeting schedule and time demands for members of the Board of Education and additional responsibilities of the BOE president. The BOE has two meetings per month where the full Board oversees policies, guides curriculum, and has quasi-judicial responsibilities. She is also on the Strategic Planning Committee, which is two meetings per month. She also attends briefing and training sessions. In addition, community members reach out to her to attend events. She said that she could be out seven days a week, like a full-time job. As president, she presides over business meetings and meetings with the three employee associations.

She is also a member of the NAACP, the Montgomery County Council of PTAs, and is a spokesperson for the Board. Many groups want her to attend their meetings. For example, she welcomes new employees, such as the new para educators. On Friday evening she attended the annual Maryland state teacher of the year gala. A Montgomery County teacher got an award. She also serves on the Maryland Association of Boards of Education Board of Directors, which meets

every other month from 10:00 AM-2:00 PM. There are 24 School districts in Maryland. She is also on the Policy and Procedures Committee at the state level. That was in Baltimore from 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM. Later, she was in a meeting until 9:45 PM. She serves on an ad hoc State Committee on Equity. She regularly meets with the superintendent; the BOE officers and one additional member meet with the Superintendent weekly. She also meets with constituents. She met with a group today. Then she attended the Thomas Edison Jr. Achievement for financial literacy meeting.

Today she has a meeting with the chamber of commerce. The business community supports school systems. The Board is a partner to businesses. Like business, the Board needs to stay within budget. Board members have to be good stewards. There is also professional development. Certain events are pre-approved, and others she approves as President if they can be budgeted. She attends the National School Board Conference in the fall. She attends conferences such as CUBE that are specific to urban school systems with issues such as poverty and ESOL. She can bring back ideas to Montgomery County and all can learn to be effective in their jobs. They learn about other roles.

There are appeals every month, which require a good bit of reading. Also, the CIP from the superintendent of 1.8 billion dollars is being reviewed by the Board. They are looking at construction and maintenance in the district. On Monday, November 4, they have a work session from 10 AM – 4 pm. On Tuesday they meet with the County delegation from 8:30 AM-12 PM. Then they have a facilities and boundaries hearing from 6:00 PM-10:00 PM. They have meetings during the day on Wednesday, then Wednesday evening is the only free evening. Then have a leadership meeting on the agenda for the remainder of the school year.

On Thursday, November 7, there is a 2-hour meeting with the Superintendent, then 30 minutes for dinner, and they have a facilities and boundaries hearing from 6:00 PM-10:00 PM. Fridays they have for themselves but as president doesn't always work out. On Friday they have a film screening about students in poverty, and then will make comments.

On Saturday they have a mental health fair from 10-2. Sunday is free. Beginning the next Monday, they have a busy week with CIP public hearings. The Board wants the community to see what they are doing. It's community engagement. There are 207 schools and only eight Board members. They listen to what the community tells them. It helps inform her decisions. She also talks to staff and reads materials.

The Commission then asked questions of Ms. Evans.

Vice Chair Spradley asked what she thought the compensation should be.

A. It's hard to quantify. We're missing people on the Board with full-time jobs. Doubling the salary so someone who needs to work can get a part-time job to supplement might be good, but that might not be enough. Now unless someone is retired or has a spouse to carry the load, they really can't serve.

Cm Sawin asked what sort of background, qualifications or education make for good Board members.

A. If no college degree, then some equivalent. Or having been in a management position. It's like running a business, except there's only one employee – the superintendent. It's a leadership role, like being on a committee or being an officer. A person should know how to lead and manage a system, and also must have empathy. Experience in the workforce for a number of years would make a difference. Board members may all think differently but must find a common interest. Not all people can do that. You must interact and work with a lot of different people at different levels, including

local officers, state officials including the governor, and US senators. You need those skills. You must be organized. To run for office requires a myriad of skills.

Cm Sawin asked what kind of skills a Board member must have in a County with diverse schools.

- A. They have to think about a variety of stakeholders, especially those who are hard to reach, and meet them where they are. It's good to have some type of work experience and interact with a variety of people. It takes a special kind of person. You must consider every single student and all the parents, not just those directly in front of you, and be able to see through different lenses. You must be non-partisan so you are acting for all, including those whose views diverge from yours. You must focus on serving and not letting other things get in your way. You must think about the people you are serving. You must be able to listen to be able to understand others.

Cm Washington asked for what her thoughts were about the student member compensation, which is currently \$5,000, and if that was sufficient.

- A. She thinks that it should be more. She thinks that it's great that they get something at the end, plus mileage, but that they should get a stipend throughout the course of service. Not all have resources or cars. Parents take them back and forth. Students wanted extra money for college. If on the Board, they can't have a job; some students need to have jobs. Of the four students she's served with, only one has had a car. She helped take students to events or to a conference at Ocean City. It would help the students to have additional funds throughout his or her time on the Board.

Cm Washington asked how she felt about the option of support staff in lieu of higher salary.

- A. She would come down on salary to get additional support. But there's a good amount of work they must do themselves; a staffer would not reduce work or time. But a staffer could do other things, like research, that she would want to do but can't now. But it would not relieve the challenges. It would be helpful even if it wasn't one to one, but a couple of additional people in the office who could do research to support all Board members. It could benefit all.

They now have a new fiscal officer who came out with fiscal budget recommendations. Previously Board members had to read all the chapters after coming back from winter break. Now someone else is doing that. She is an analyst but not all Board members are.

The Board should come up with goals they all can work toward, rather than having 12 goals that can't get done. Additional staff could provide information for all to share. She thinks the salary should be \$40,000 with staff, and \$45,000 if no staff.

Vice Chair Spradley asked if she had any additional comments.

- A. She thanked the Commission for doing its work. She thinks it is really important. It would definitely serve the County well if the Board member salary was increased. It would get more people engaged in serving. A livable wage would attract more people to run for office. More people will be heard with a variety of views and perspective. Right now, salary is a barrier to running. She would like to see an increase and support staff.

Chair Espy thanked Ms. Evans for her time and mentioned that if she had additional comments to please reach back out to Dale Tibbitts.

## **Karla Sylvestre 7:35 PM**

Chair Espy introduced Commission members to Ms. Sylvestre, thanked her for her time, and described the Commission's mission.

Ms. Sylvestre described her background. She is a new Board member. She was elected in December 2018. She is the only member who works full time. She has two children in MCPS, one in elementary school and one in high school.

To prepare for this phone call she reviewed her calendar. She has day and evening events. She is on three committees, and is chair of one. All require preparation time. The Board met from 12:30 PM – 9:45 PM yesterday. They were briefed on major items such as CIP. She also has school visits. This month it was at Gaithersburg High School where she met with ESOL students. Then she had a half-day meeting with one of the chiefs to debrief with the principal. She also had a meeting with constituents of Seneca Valley. They also had a quarterly performance review of the superintendent. They also have retreats, either for a full day or mini retreats and a Chief of Staff call.

She spends Sundays preparing for meetings. She estimates her total hours per month were, for September – 34 hours, for October - 72 hours, and for November she anticipates that it will be 69 hours. These were not all the meetings she could have gone to. She is very selective about evening events. She attends mostly essential/and or mandatory meetings.

Vice Chair Spradley asked her what she thought the compensation should be.

- A. It's a very large school district with a lot of parent involvement. It could be a full-time job. Compensation could be commensurate with County Council salaries of \$110,000.

Cm Sawin asked her to speak, from her unique perspective as the only Board member with a full-time job. She asked how flexible the full-time job is.

A, You have to love the work of both jobs because you will be busy seven days a week. She first worked on Saturdays and used vacation time for the Board. But it was just too much. Now she takes unpaid leave from her job when she can't use flex time. Her employer is okay with that. So she doesn't work Saturdays any more. She's been with her current employer for six years. She is pretty comfortable, but it is very stressful. Her job is 10 minutes away from the Board. The unpaid leave makes it a little more manageable. The love for her work keeps her doing it. Right now she takes one day a week unpaid leave, plus uses vacation time. Early on she tried to avoid taking the leave.

Cm Washington asked what she thought about the student compensation, and whether it should be a stipend or a salary.

- A. She doesn't have a whole lot to say about the student salary. She hasn't talked to student members, but \$5,000 doesn't go as far as it used to go.

Cm Washington asked if she thought it would be okay if the salary was raised just a little, but staff was added.

- A. They just added a budget analyst this year. She is adjusting to that and figuring out how to best utilize the analyst. For her the bump in salary might mean that she could negotiate a little more time off. She could figure out how to strategically use staff. The challenge is digesting information and being analytical. It's hard to do your own analysis with every topic you face. It would be helpful to have staff.

Chair Espy asked if there was a way to way to accomplish all the responsibilities on a part-time basis.

- A. In order to accomplish all that needs to be done in 20 hours a week, the system would have to schedule things differently. She likes to think that the things that are mandatory are worth her time.

Chair Espy asked if this was truly a full-time job or if it could be done in 20 hours.

- A. Not 20 hours. Looking at October, and it's a CIP year, and there are lots of hearings. She can't imagine not attending those. Maybe the job could be done in 30 hours.

Cm Sawin asked, since she is new to the Board, what has been the biggest surprise regarding the work of the Board.

- A. The biggest surprise was the amount of hours. People said it would be 20 hours, but that's not really the case. Because they don't have staff, some things remain unanswered. The lack of time is a challenge. She doesn't understand how staffing in schools is allocated. She has requested information on MCPS staffing. Board members have to be relentless to get into some subjects. There are so many issues, including religious holidays, curriculum, policy, bus cameras, CIP, etc.

Chair Espy asked if the current student member contributes as much as other members.

- A. Yes, definitely. The previous student member understood everything. He had an agenda, which included visiting schools and proposing new initiatives.

Chair Espy thanked Ms. Silvestre for her time and mentioned that if she additional comments to please reach back out to Dale Tibbitts.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Gochrach