



**BOARD OF EDUCATION COMPENSATION COMMISSION**  
**Meeting Minutes – Meeting Six**  
**Nov. 4, 2024**

**Meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams**

**Attendance**

**Members Present:**

Gretchen Blankenship  
Kayon Graham  
Nichole McDonald  
Jaslynn Laurence  
Rachel Watanabe-Tate

**Staff Present:**

Dale Tibbitts, Spec. Asst. to the County  
Executive

Sonia E. Mora, MPH  
Assistant Chief Administrative Officer

Lindsay Bolt, Sr. Executive Administrative  
Aide, Office of the County Executive

**1. Call to Order**

Kayon (Chair) called the meeting to order at 7:11 PM.

**2. Interview of Sami Saeed, Former Student Member of the Board, MCPS Board of Education Member**

**1. What prompted you to run for election for a MCPS School Board Member seat?**

- I looked to represent the average MCPS Student who was not already in a leadership role, I did not start to get engaged until Sophomore/Junior year of HS.

**2. What is the role of the MCPS School Board?**

- The role of the MCPS School Board is to oversee the work of the Superintendent
- The Superintendent oversees the Capital and Operating Budget, programs, curriculum
- Board members are not education experts but rather an appointed official for the community at large
- The Board has the final say, oversees the system
- The Board does not dig into the details but focuses on topics like “funding” or “mental health” – does not get into the weeds

**3. What characteristics, education, and experience are required to be a board member?**

- Board members should have Team leadership, an ability to be collaborative

- Board members should have Public Speaking skills, Board members are routinely asked to speak at engagements, and being able to communicate clearly to their audience is a must
- Board members need research skills, the ability to understand data and statistics
  - Example: Reviewing Math and Literacy rates
- As Board Members we oversee Appeals – as an example 1 appeal could be a 1,000 page document; the Board member must be able to focus on the document and analyze the information
- Critical thinking skills
- Openmindedness
- Personal experience in the Montgomery County Public School education system either as a former student, current parent, teacher etc.

**4. Describe your role in the review/approval of the annual budget of MCPS.**

- Board Members 1<sup>st</sup> edit the Superintendent's recommended budget
  - Question whether we are going to cut any programs or add funds to other areas
- Board Members reach out to the Montgomery County County Council as they ultimately make the decision on the Budget
  - This is where we work together Board and Council to review any recommendations the Council has for the Board to consider
- As a SMOB I came with a unique perspective to the Budget process, I focused on the programs within the Budget and those programs I or other students had used
  - I focused on making sure specific programs that Board Members may not have as much direct knowledge of, were considered for additional funding

**5. How large is the team that directly supports the Board of Education (and are not MCPS employees), and do you believe it is adequate?**

- 7-10 people including a Chief of Staff, 3 or so Scheduler type roles, a Budget person
  - The Deputy Chief of Staff, Communications Person, are newer positions which were added towards the end of my time but I saw a big value in their addition
- While I don't believe every Board Member needs their own Chief of Staff, I don't believe 2 Chief of Staff are enough for the entire Board. I would recommend adding a couple general staff roles

**6. What is your role in the day-to-day operations of the School Board; How many hours per week do you spend on Board of Education work?**

- As a Board Member we were required to attend bi-weekly publicly announced Board Meetings, Subcommittee meetings, twice-weekly unpublicized meetings, look at all appeals, do research, show up for events like Graduations/Conferences, respond to emails, interviews of new superintendent
- As a SMOB specifically I did all that above but also did School visits (approx. 3 visits/week, I visited nearly 55 Middle Schools and High Schools during my term), focus on getting input from students via communication channels I created such as newsletters, Social Media (I had 10K followers on Instagram), created graphic content and posted board meetings so Students would be aware of what was going on.

I would get in the weeds with Central Office Staff and specific System Programs (as an example I focused on Healthy School Lunches, visited the facility, worked with the Dept to create a survey and taste testing events. I submitted a [resolution](#) on Safety and Security. Each SMOB has a Student Advisory Group, mine was over 700 members in which I facilitated the meeting, created the agenda, etc.

- As a SMOB I would say on average I worked 20-25/hrs per week on Board related work. Sometimes as much as 30-40 hrs/week when things were happening. I had an abbreviated School schedule where I only had 4 official classes but SMOB took up my time
- I believe having 2 SMOB representatives vs just 1 per year would allow for more representation of the Student on the Board, each being from a different part of the County would give students more representation

**7. Thinking about the work a board member does, how would it relate to other management positions both within the school system and in the marketplace?**

- I relate the position of a Board Member to that of a Board of Directors for a Company, the Board of Directors have the ability to remove the CEO as does the MCPS Board to remove the Superintendent

**8. Describe the school board's role in the safety and well-being of the students, staff and community they serve.**

- 1 part of the Role is to maintain a public image/public trust via review of appeals
- 1 part of the Role is Legislative, as an example with Safety, the Board could recommend expansion of Social Workers for the Safety and Well-being of Students, while also recommend Professional Development for the Staff and Teachers which is focusing on the Staff and Teacher well-being

**9. If you could use your superpowers to change the MCPS School Board, what would that be and why?**

- I would make the Board Member positions full time, and pay them a full time salary
  - There is not enough time, resources as a part time member to actually review the budget just as 1 example

Additional Question Asked by BOECC: As a SMOB, would you prefer a scholarship or a Salary like the rest of the Board Members:

- I would prefer a salary as I believe it would allow more Students to justify running for this position
  - many students have to work to support their family, offering a Scholarship to those students who may not have College as their next step will not give them the incentive they need
  - \$25,000 Scholarship does not cover a full year of in-state tuition

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Next meeting is scheduled for Tues., Nov.5, 6:15pm-7pm

- Virtually via Microsoft Teams
  - Interview of Rebecca Smondrowski, MCPS Board of Education Member

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsay Bolt