

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting Minutes

January 30, 2025, 6:00 p.m.



Welcome and Introduction

Board member and CAC committee chairperson Joe Ferdinando welcomed CAC members (seated at the tables) and guests. He reviewed the agenda and stressed the importance of receiving CAC feedback regarding the budget.

There were 27 total attendees, including 19 CAC members.

FY26 Budget Presentation

Dr. Jeffrey Lawson, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. R. Joseph Buckley, Associate Superintendent for Administrative Services; and Dr. Jenni Hammer, Associate Superintendent for Education Services presented initial information about the FY26 operating and capital improvement budgets, including the following highlights:

Operating Budget:

- A brief review of the CCPS strategic plan, BOE priorities, and system challenges (such as the diverse academic and behavioral needs of students)
- FTE staff and student enrollment data, including increased number of preschool and PreK students (currently 836)
- Increased class sizes (unintended consequence of the Blueprint)
- Plan to keep positions (including positions that were added mid-year) and not make position cuts
- Budget calendar handout
- Reduction in state contribution could lower the local share, putting increased pressure on counties

Capital Improvement Budget:

- Cecil County loaned the State \$40M; the repayment schedule is determined by the county and the State/IAC
- Healthy Schools grant being used for Elk Neck Elementary School roof; CIP money reassigned to the HVAC project at Cecil Manor Elementary

Discussion

CCPS leadership, Board members, and CAC members engaged in discussions regarding the following question/topics:

- The phasing out of ESSER money
 - No more ESSER positions remain; 73 positions added
 - Math expenditures are higher because they were covered with ESSER funds
- Class sizes
- Increased numbers of students from poverty (compensatory education), students with disabilities, and multilingual learners
- Increased participation in dual enrollment and apprenticeship opportunities
- Decreased total enrollment (September 30 enrollment number is used)
- Preschool and PreK costs exceed State revenue
- Concerns that the State will lower the foundation formula

- Paraprofessional salary versus teacher salary
- Grant-funded tutors will be expiring (TSI money)

Adjournment

Mr. Ferdinando thanked all for attending. Attendees were reminded that budget numbers will be presented in greater detail to the Board during several meetings in February. The proposed budget is modified at the Board's discretion before sending the request to the County Executive by March 1. Continued feedback from CAC members and the community is welcome.