

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

May 6, 2008

Virgil L. Shockley, President
Louise L. Gulyas, Vice President
Judith O. Boggs
Linda C. Busick
James C. Church
Robert L. Cowger, Jr.
James L. Purnell, Jr.

Following a motion by Commissioner Purnell, seconded by Commissioner Gulyas, the Commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:30 a.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room to discuss legal and personnel matters permitted under the provisions of Section 10-508(a)(1), (7) and (8) of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to perform executive actions. Also present at the closed session were Gerald T. Mason, Chief Administrative Officer; Kelly Shannahan, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer; Sonny Bloxom, County Attorney; Kim Moses, Public Information Officer; and Ed Tudor, Director of Development Review and Permitting. Topics discussed and actions taken included: appointing Jack Uram and John Payne to the Commission on Aging; reviewing potential and pending litigation; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing executive actions.

After the closed session, the Commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Shockley called the meeting to order and announced the topics discussed during the morning closed session.

The Commissioners reviewed and approved the minutes of their April 22, 2008 meeting, as presented.

The Commissioners met with Finance Officer Harold Higgins to review bid documents to install a new underground fiber infrastructure network connecting the Worcester County Government Center and the Snow Hill Branch Library to the Sailor Network wireless node located at the Snow Hill water tower. Mr. Higgins stated that designated funds of \$50,000 in the FY08 Operating Budget were available for the project, along with Enoch Pratt Free Library/Sailor Operations Center (EPFL/SOC) grant funds of up to \$50,000. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Gulyas, the Commissioners unanimously approved bid specifications for the project as presented.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Public Works Director John Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Gulyas, the Commissioners unanimously approved a written request from the American Lung Association of Maryland to use the Public Landing pavilion on Saturday, May 31, 2008 for the Chesapeake Bay Asthma Ride Bike Tour and Inline Roll from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Mr. Tustin stated that the organization will be made aware of the

Shoreline Protection project underway at Public Landing, which may cause some disruption to their activities.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Recreation and Parks Director Sharon DeMar Reilly and the Worcester County Recreation Advisory Board and upon a motion by Commissioner Gulyas, the Commissioners unanimously approved the proposed allocation for FY2009 Worcester County Program Open Space (POS) funds of \$147,800 as follows: \$23,648 to Ocean City for park development; and \$124,152 to Worcester County for park development. Ms. Reilly stated that Worcester County's POS allocation had decreased by 89% from the FY08 POS allocation of \$1,349,426. She advised that newly passed House Bill 251 permits Worcester County to spend 100% of the annual POS allocation for park development because the County has exceeded the State acreage goal of 30 acres of recreational acreage per 1,000 citizens. Ms. Reilly explained that the Recreation Advisory Board met with each of the municipalities to review their priority projects. She further explained that with the exception of Ocean City, the municipalities all had significant unencumbered POS fund balances that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has requested to be encumbered as soon as possible and spent before the next General Assembly session in January 2009. She reviewed the unencumbered balance for each municipality as follows: \$247,224 for Berlin, \$81,050 for Pocomoke; \$80,966 for Snow Hill; with Ocean City having no unencumbered balance. She further advised that the Recreation Advisory Board determined that these municipalities have adequate funding to complete at least their number one priority projects for FY09. Ms. Reilly further stated that beginning next year, Community Parks and Playgrounds Grants of up to \$200,000 will not be available to the counties, but will be available to the municipalities. In response to a question by Commissioner Cowger, Ms. Reilly stated that in the past DNR had allowed municipalities to roll over funds from one fiscal year to the next to complete projects that require significant funding; however, she had recently been advised that the State would like Worcester County and the towns to eliminate their unencumbered balance of \$660,497 prior to the 2009 legislative session. She further advised that the Town of Pocomoke recently completed an application to encumber funds allocated in FY07, but not those from FY08. She also stated that the County has POS funds reserved for projects at Greys Creek Nature Park, the newest Worcester County Park, but could not allocate those funds until April 8, 2008 when the County named the park. In response to a question by Commissioner Boggs, Ms. Reilly explained that the State had recently reassigned the responsibility for completing POS applications to the counties, although it is still the responsibility of each municipality to assure that the information provided on their applications is correct. As recommended by the Recreation Advisory Board, the Commissioners agreed to advise each municipality to encumber their POS fund balances by August 1, 2008 and to use the funds before the end of the calendar year.

The Commissioners met with Tourism Director Lisa Challenger, Dr. Memo Diriker of Business, Economic, and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) at Salisbury University, and Patti and Peck Miller of the Berlin Performing Arts Center (BPAC) Initiative Committee to review their proposal to refurbish the Cannery building in Berlin for use as a local performing arts center. Dr. Diriker provided a brief overview of the feasibility of the project, advising that a venue like the proposed 400-seat theater would likely draw 100,000 visitors per year and

generate approximately \$750,000 in gross contributions during its first full year of operation. In response to a question by Commissioner Busick, Dr. Diriker stated that he had not included the OC Jamboree, a privately run, live music theater in West Ocean City, in the feasibility study but had included statistics from the Avalon Theater in Easton, Maryland and other performing arts centers running upwards of 200 events per year.

Mr. Miller reviewed plans for the BPAC, which he proposed to be a public-private partnership, and requested a \$2.5 million commitment from the Commissioners over the next four years for the renovation of the existing Cannery building, beginning with \$200,000 in FY09 to finish architectural drawings. He advised that the local businesses, hotels and the community are in full support of the project, but that the BPAC wanted to secure County funding before beginning its fundraising efforts in the private sector. He stated that the BPAC was prepared to begin construction in January 2009 and could complete the project as early as December 2009. In response to a question by Commissioner Church, Mr. Miller advised that the church currently leasing the Cannery building has outgrown the facility and does not plan to renew its lease. In response to a question by Commissioner Gulyas, Mr. Miller stated that the property has been allocated sufficient sewer capacity from Berlin and an adequate number of equivalent dwelling units (EDUs) for the proposed use. Ms. Miller stated that in uncertain economic times like these, the proposed BPAC would help attract visitors as well as new residents to the area. Following much discussion, the Commissioners agreed to consider the request during FY09 budget deliberations.

Michael A. Franklin, President and Chief Executive Officer of Atlantic General Hospital (AGH) in Berlin, met with the Commissioners to discuss plans to renovate and expand the Atlantic Health Center, an existing building on the AGH campus, to provide four services critical to their goal of providing comprehensive health care services as follows: expanded primary care for low income patients with little or no health insurance; comprehensive diabetes patient education and care center; outpatient mental health program; and child advocacy center. Mr. Franklin stated that AGH has been awarded a \$700,000 matching grant from the Maryland Hospital Association (MHA) and asked the Commissioners for a one-time donation of \$250,000 in the FY09 budget for this project. In response to a question by Commissioner Boggs, Mr. Franklin stated that the MHA grant would only cover the cost of bricks and mortar and the hospital has until June 30, 2009 to secure the \$700,000 match. In response to a question by Commissioner Shockley, Mr. Franklin stated that the hospital must cover 100% of the \$1.4 million construction costs up front and afterward would be reimbursed up to \$700,000 by the MHA. Following some discussion, the Commissioners thanked Mr. Franklin for his presentation and agreed to consider the request during FY09 budget deliberations.

The Commissioners met with Liquor Control Board (LCB) Chairman Don Hastings and members Joseph A. Jackson and Larry Wilkinson along with LCB Executive Director Brian Sturgeon to present the Fiscal Year 2009 LCB budget. Mr. Hastings thanked the Commissioners for meeting with them, and stated that the LCB recently completed a cooperative effort with the National Alcoholic Beverage Control Association and is now on register with every liquor supplier in the country, which should place them in a favorable position to secure more competitive sale prices. He advised the Commissioners that the new store in Pocomoke opened

in early 2007 and has become their showcase store. He further stated that the LCB completed renovations to the West Ocean City and Gold Coast Mall (Ocean City) stores and reorganized the warehouse. Mr. Jackson reviewed budgeted revenues and expenses, noting the LCB's sales and capital improvement projects, including renovation of the LCB store in Berlin. He stated that the LCB generated a net income of \$852,856 in FY08 and anticipates to generate a net income of \$891,912 in FY09. Commissioner Cowger stated that the LCB continues to do a fantastic job year after year. In response to a question from Commissioner Gulyas, Mr. Hastings stated that only the large volume accounts would benefit from privatization while most small businesses would pay more due to upcharges for partial cases and other factors. Following some discussion, the Commissioners thanked the LCB for their presentation.

The Commissioners met with Ms. Reilly to review a request by the Board of Education (BOE) to waive the fee for the use of the Newtown Park fields for the Pocumoke High School (PHS) baseball and softball teams. Ms. Reilly stated that in the past, Worcester County Recreation and Parks (WCRP) paid \$807.84 for use of the Berlin Intermediate School for Youth Indoor Soccer prior to the construction of the Worcester County Recreation Center. She stated that the fees charged to PHS are \$42.50 per game and \$7.50 per practice, which are already reduced by 50% from the standard fees. She stated that the cost associated with field maintenance and preparation for the two fields that PHS is using at Newtown Park from March 1 - May 1, 2008 is \$1,945.98. Furthermore, PHS Athletic Director David Byrd had stated that he had no problem with payment for the fields. She advised that in the past other organizations have requested fee waivers and been denied. Ms. Reilly concluded that when organizations contribute financially to a program and/or park there tends to be a greater respect and appreciation for the services rendered, and she recommended that the BOE's request to waive the fee for the PHS baseball and softball teams be denied. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Boggs, the Commissioners stated that the fees are fair and therefore unanimously denied the request to waive the fees for the BOE.

The Commissioners met with Ms. Reilly to further discuss the offer from the Girdletree Volunteer Fire Company (GVFC), Inc. to donate a 2-acre portion of a 13.8-acre parcel of land identified on Tax Map 79 as Parcel 101 to the County for use as a community park. The Commissioners previously approved acceptance of the property for this use and agreed to have it surveyed and subdivided for transfer to the County. Ms. Reilly stated that staff had assessed the forest conservation, subdivision, and stormwater management requirements of the site and found that the proposed park site is located in a V-1 Village Zoning District. She stated that in order to subdivide the property, 4.5 acres of the existing forest must be set aside in a conservation easement. She further stated that the elevation of the property will need to be raised substantially with fill material in order to be equal to the center line of the roadway and to be graded with a 1% crown in the middle of the property to meet stormwater management requirements. Ms. Reilly advised that the total estimated development cost, including survey, subdivision, master plan, site work and construction would be \$245,000. She recommended the County Attorney compose a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Worcester County and the GVFC, in which the fire company sets aside the necessary forested acreage in a conservation easement prior to subdividing the property. Ms. Reilly concluded that the County does not have designated

funds available for this project at the present time, but should begin the process and identify funding in the future. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Gulyas, the Commissioners unanimously directed Mr. Bloxom to draft the proposed MOU, which would include sharing the survey costs with the GVFC as suggested by Mr. Bloxom, for their review prior to proceeding with plans to transfer ownership of the property to the County.

The Commissioners met with Health Officer Debbie Goeller, Communicable Disease Specialist Debra Stevens and Emergency Services Director Teresa Owens to review and discuss an invitation for the County to participate in the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Office of Preparedness and Response Antiviral Purchase Partnership Program. Ms. Goeller presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the program, which would provide the County with the opportunity to purchase antivirals to treat essential employees and their household family members who become ill during an influenza pandemic. She reviewed the State allocation, which calls for 578,754 treatment regimens to be available in Maryland, with 210,727 already purchased by the State and 368,027 available for purchase by local governments, other state agencies and critical private agencies. Ms. Goeller reviewed the participation, cost, and dispensing requirements. She advised that to date only eight counties in Maryland have considered the proposal, with four of those counties choosing not to participate. She further advised that the State of Colorado, acting on the recommendation of the Colorado Department of Public Health, chose not to participate in the program for the following reasons: scarcity of state resources needed to stockpile medication with an unknown effectiveness, possible side effects, shelf life of only six years for antivirals, unreasonable regulations, ecological impacts and seasonal flu resistance. In response to a question by Commissioner Boggs, Ms. Goeller advised that area hospitals have the opportunity to stockpile these same medicines under separate programs. In response to a question by Commissioner Church, Ms. Goeller stated that she sees significant problems with the proposed program for the following reasons: many strains of the influenza virus have shown resistance to these antivirals, and there is no evidence of their effectiveness in a pandemic; limiting treatment to essential personnel poses ethical concerns; treatment is not preventative and only decreases the length of illness by about one day; shelf life is limited to only 80 months; and legal issues concerning a government agency diagnosing and treating illness. She advised that if the Commissioners are inclined to participate in the program, they must submit a letter of intent by May 9, 2008 and provide the state with a signed Memorandum of Understanding by May 21, 2008 with payment due to the DHMH by June 11, 2008. In conclusion, Ms. Goeller stated that she could not particularly recommend participation at this time. Ms. Owens concurred with Ms. Goeller's recommendations. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Gulyas, the Commissioners unanimously declined to participate in the program.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to reconvene at 7:00 p.m. for the FY2008/2009 Requested County Operating Budget Public Hearing at Snow Hill High School.

The Commissioners held a public hearing at Snow Hill High School on the FY2008/2009 Requested County Operating Budgets. The Worcester County Sheriff's Office Color Guard

began the hearing with the presentation of colors. Commission President Shockley called the meeting to order. Chief Administrative Officer Gerald T. Mason explained how the budget is developed and what factors influence it. A power point presentation was presented to the audience displaying photographs of Worcester County employees and agencies and outlining Worcester County's Taxpayer's Guide to the FY2008/2009 Requested Operating Budgets. Finance Officer Harold Higgins explained the presentation, which included the following graphs: the County's projected population growth through 2020; U.S. inflation figures; Consumer Price Index; Worcester County General Tax Revenues and Estimates; Composition of General Fund Revenues and Expenditures; Property Tax Rates and Comparisons for Eastern Shore Counties; Income Tax Rates and Comparisons to Neighboring Counties; Combined Income and Property Tax Comparison to Neighboring Counties; Board of Education Funding; School Enrollment History and Funding Per Student; Moody's Bond Ratings; Long-Term Debt Obligations Outstanding; Annual Debt Service for FY09 Budget and Planned Future Debt Service for FY10 and FY11; FY08 Emergency Reserve Fund; FY07 Fund Balance Designations; and Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB). Mr. Mason explained that the constant yield tax rate represents the property tax rate that would generate the same amount of revenues the County received in the current fiscal year. As property assessments increase, the constant yield tax rate decreases. In February, the State informed Worcester County that estimated assessments had increased by 13.1%. Therefore, if the County kept the tax rate at the current rate of \$.70 per \$100 of assessed value, the property tax revenues would also increase by 13.1%. This would mean that the County would receive an additional \$14,614,754 from new real property tax revenues. This year the constant yield rate is \$.619. He explained that the County's estimated revenues are \$188,251,384, and the requested expenditures are \$202,666,583, resulting in a difference (shortfall) of \$14,415,199. He stated that the two major factors that account for the increase in the County's Operating Budget are growth in demand for services due to an expanding service population and inflation.

Commissioner Shockley opened the floor to receive public comments, first on the departmental and agency budget requests and then on the Board of Education budget requests.

Harold Scrimgeour, a local developer speaking as a private citizen, stated that in this sagging economy building permits could be down as much as 30-40% and stated that staffing levels should decrease as well.

Richard Neiman of Berlin thanked the Commissioners for holding the line on taxes and asked them to continue to do so in these trying economic times.

Debbie Goeller, Health Officer for the Worcester County Health Department, stated this is the first year she's ever spoken at a public hearing, but felt it was important to do so this year to explain the reasons behind the 27% increase in requested County funding for the Health Department from FY08. She explained that the State and County partnership to fund the Health Department doesn't feel much like a partnership this year because the State has not allocated the funding necessary to cover an employee Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of 2.5%. She expressed concern that state and federal governments have increased requirements for Health Department services and cut funding. She stated that the Health Department is facing layoffs and has delayed hiring for vacant positions to counter pending layoffs. She stated that the Health Department is considering other cuts as well to cover budget needs, which include reducing hours for birth and death certificates, possibly closing the OC Hotboards Clinic in Ocean City

next summer, and reducing Health Services at their Pocomoke office, along with other program cuts. She advised that rather than expanding services, the Health Department is trying to hold the line on staffing and services. She stated that in times of economic crisis the Health Department is hit with a double whammy, as requests for services increase while funding for them decreases. She thanked the Commissioners for their past support and asked them to carefully consider this year's request.

June Walker, Executive Director of the Worcester County Developmental Center (WCDC) thanked the Commissioners for their past support, stating that the WCDC was able to provide day programs to 81 individuals, and residential program housing to 23 individuals. She stated that in the next five years 20 Cedar Chapel Special School graduates will seek services from the WCDC and asked the Commissioners to fully fund their budget requests for FY09.

Dan West and his daughter, Katie, of Berlin thanked the Commissioners for providing the funding necessary for the WCDC to help individuals like Katie develop job skills and work in the community. He asked the Commissioners to provide funding to build a new WCDC facility to replace the building which recently burned down.

Claudia Nagel, Executive Director of Diakonia, thanked the Commissioners for both their ongoing support as well as emergency funding in March 2008 to help the shelter through a financial crisis. She stated that the number of people in need of emergency shelter and other services continues to grow and asked the Commissioners to look favorably upon their funding request for FY09.

Rich Warfield, the new Executive Director of Worcester Youth and Family Counseling (WYFC), reviewed the support services WYFC provides to families and young people through programs like the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Family Connections in Pocomoke and Berlin and other services. He stated that he looks forward to working closely with the Commissioners and thanked them for their support.

Melanie Pursell, Executive Director of the Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce (GOCCC) in West Ocean City, asked the Commissioners to partner with them to erect a sign on U.S. Route 50 to promote activities in the county. She further stated that the sign could also be used for Amber Alerts, and other emergencies.

Todd Ferrante of the GOCCC supported Ms. Pursell's request and stated that the sign would be an important tool for homeland security, and asked the Commissioners to support their request.

Tom Patton of the Rackliffe House thanked the Commissioners for their past support to renovate the Rackliffe House and asked them to provide funding this year to help them cover a State matching bond requirement of \$250,000.

Mark Williams, President of the Worcester County Fair Board, thanked the Commissioners for their past financial support and participation in the fair. He informed the Commissioners of new attractions, including Safe Kids Day, Lawnmower Tractor Pull and Horseshoe Pitching Contest. He stated that last year the fair attracted approximately 10,000 visitors, and that number is expected to continue growing. He asked the Commissioners for their continued support and invited them to attend the fair this year from August 8 - 10, 2008.

Ellie Diegelman of Ocean City stated that the County must work harder to reduce its debt, including possibly making biweekly bond payments and contacting the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) to seek other cost saving initiatives.

Dr. Jon Andes, Superintendent of Schools for the Board of Education (BOE), thanked the Commissioners for their past and continued support and reviewed the various achievements of the County school system. He requested funding for a 3.5% cost of living adjustment (COLA) and a step increase for teachers, staffing for the new Worcester Technical High School (WTHS); assistance for the new State high school assessment testing and graduation requirements; bridges between school and home; expansion of the after school programs in Snow Hill and the northern end of the County for fourth and fifth grade students, new positions to maintain small class sizes and purchase materials of instruction, funds for wireless internet labs in all of the schools; closing the achievement gap; hiring two additional foreign language teachers for Stephen Decatur High School (SDHS) and Ocean City Elementary School (OCES), upgrading technology; and maintaining aging school facilities.

Carl Hansen of Bishopville and the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee asked the Commissioners to support requests for special education funding to train teachers and class aids, and the proposed salary package for teachers and support personnel.

Mike Mowbray of the Snow Hill Middle School (SHMS) School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) introduced three SHMS students, eighth grade students Terrence Blackwell and Jolissa Jackson and seventh grade student Caitlin Grams who reviewed the school's requests as outlined in the BOE's FY09 budget. Mr. Blackwell asked the Commissioners to support the proposed salary package to recruit and retain teachers who are highly qualified in their content area. Miss Jackson asked the Commissioners to approve the hiring of an Arts Immersion teacher at SHMS, and Miss Grams asked the Commissioners to approve the proposed new technology to keep Worcester County public school students competitive with others from around the nation and the world.

Tommie Morrison, of the Worcester County Teachers Association (WCTA), thanked the Commissioners for supporting pay increases for teachers over the past five years. He stated that while teachers' salaries had increased by 13% over that period of time, inflation resulted in an increase of 37% for expenses. He asked the Commissioners to support the proposed salary package to help counter these increasing costs.

Cheryl Townsend of the Stephen Decatur Middle School (SDMS) SIAC asked the Commissioners to hire a full-time foreign language teacher, replace furniture in the science classrooms, provide four new computer work stations and four liquid crystal display cameras, replace the removable wall in the gymnasium and to approve the proposed salary package for teachers and support staff.

Ginger Gillis of the WTHS SIAC thanked the Commissioners for the new WTHS and asked them to hire additional special education assistants, one receptionist, one nurse, one electrical wiring instructor and two custodians to work in the new facility when it opens in September 2008.

Terry Springle, speaking on behalf of the 599-member WCTA, thanked the Commissioners for their past support, which has helped make them the best in the State. Mr. Springle stated that the WCTA is aware of the financial difficulties facing both the State and County in the upcoming fiscal year, and asked them to fully fund the proposed BOE budget to keep students competitive and attract and retain highly-qualified, hard-working employees.

Jo Ellen West of the Cedar Chapel Special School (CCSS) SIAC stated that the Commissioners' continued support is vital to the success of CCSS. She thanked them for their

past support and invited them to visit the school. She requested the Commissioners approve the proposed BOE salary package and hire new teachers to maintain small class sizes. She specifically requested the Commissioners hire one full-time transition teacher at CCSS to coordinate and oversee students at the six work sites throughout the County where CCSS students are employed, replace outdated playground equipment, replace a bathroom sink and vanity with wheelchair accessible equipment, purchase two interactive smart boards, an additional wheelchair lift, and upgrade equipment in the Laundry for Life Skills program.

Marilyn James of the OCES SIAC asked the Commissioners to fund the school's top three priorities, which include funding to continue the existing after-school academy, proposed salary package, and hire one special education teacher.

Thomas Tyndall of the Buckingham Elementary School (BES) SIAC thanked the Commissioners for working to maintain small class sizes and offering salary packages to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. He requested they provide funding to hire one new custodian at BES, provide a wireless network, and continue the after school program for fourth grade students.

Lavon Harmon of the Pocomoke High School (PHS) SIAC thanked the Commissioners for funding after school and other programs at PHS, and asked them to consider fully-funding the PHS renovation and addition project, one additional teacher and one additional educational assistant for the evening learning program, and further requested the Commissioners fully fund the proposed BOE FY09 budget.

Edward Lee, President of the Worcester County branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), advocated for three line items in the proposed BOE FY09 budget as follows: three Ombudsman positions; partnership with "Big Brothers and Big Sisters" to create a pilot mentoring program; and Bridge to Excellence program. He praised Pocomoke Middle School Principal Carolyn Bloxom and ombudsman Alina Meekins for their support of mentoring programs, and stated that only marginal success has been made in closing the educational gap and preparing African American students to pass the High School Assessment Test in 2009 for graduation. He reviewed NAACP 2007 Report Card for Worcester County Public Schools and stated that 19.4% of the Class of 2009 will not graduate under the new testing requirements. He stated that it was imperative that everyone become involved in helping those that have not met the new State standards required for graduation. He advised that the Commissioners have shown strength and commitment in closing the education gap, but have failed to fully fund line items that could have made a difference for African American students. He asked them to join together with the NAACP and the BOE to eliminate the performance gap.

Terri Batze of the Snow Hill Elementary School (SHES) SIAC thanked the Commissioners for their dedication to educating the County's children. She stated that the top budget priorities for SHES include hiring one full time art teacher, allowing the prior part time teacher to transfer full time to Snow Hill Middle School (SHMS) to start an Arts Immersion program, fully fund the technology budget, and fund the proposed salary package.

Diane Jolley of the Berlin Intermediate School (BIS) SIAC expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to present their budget requests and for the Commissioners' past support of education. She asked the Commissioners to fully support the proposed financial package for teachers and support staff; maintain small class size; hire one Para-Professional for BIS and support school renovation projects

Greg Powell of Pocomoke Middle School (PMS) asked the Commissioners to support the Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring program, explaining that students involved in the program were 27% less likely to use alcohol and 46% less likely to abuse drugs.

Anita Holliman of the Pocomoke Elementary School (PES) SIAC asked the Commissioners to fund an additional mobile computer lab at PES and approve the proposed BOE salary package for teachers and support personnel.

Jim McGinnis of Ocean City stated his opposition of technical schools, specifically the building of the new WTHS which he stated was a waste of \$28 million. He stated that schools should focus on teaching students to speak English and to read and write. He stated that even new technology becomes outdated within six months, and the money used to provide them with technical skills would be better served by teaching people to think, speak and express themselves.

Paul Supplee, Chair of the Showell Elementary School (SES) SIAC, stated that he was thrilled with the education his four children are receiving in Worcester County public schools. He stated his understanding that the tight budget year facing everyone would require the Commissioners to heavily weigh the requests being presented. He asked the Commissioners to support the BOE's proposed salary package, a new computer lab and one part-time music teacher for SES. He also asked the Commissioners to support capital improvements at SES to help modernize this aged facility.

Kathy Wool of the Snow Hill High School (SHHS) SIAC thanked the Commissioners for their generous support, which has helped children move forward in the learning process. She informed the Commissioners that according to US News and World Report, SHHS has been recognized as a top performing school, and she asked them to continue to provide salary packages that will help attract and retain highly qualified instructors and support staff; continue funding of extended day learning academy, hire one Reading Specialist for a research-based intervention program called READ 180, and hire a contractual Content Area Specialist to help students meet the new testing requirements for graduation.

Ellie Diegelman of Ocean City asked the Commissioners to consider reducing debt and living within the County's means. She asked BOE officials to consider alternatives to hiring new teachers, including cross training staff and interactive television classes.

Jenny Knapp of the SDHS SIAC thanked the Commissioners for their continued support of education. She stated that she is passionate about the education her children are receiving in the Worcester County public school system, which she attributes to the success of her youngest daughter who received a full scholarship to college. She asked the Commissioners to fully support the proposed BOE FY09 budget.

Stacy Lemay of the PMS SIAC asked the Commissioners to approve continued funding for the PMS After School Academies. She stated that 65% of the students participate in the program for both remediation and enrichment. She further requested the Commissioners support the proposed Arts Immersion program for PMS and the proposed salary package for teachers and support staff.

Harvey Davis of Pocomoke asked the Commissioners to support the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program at PMS to help prevent discipline problems and help kids grow.

There being no further public comment, Commissioner Shockley closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Shockley thanked SHHS Principal Tom Davis and his staff for allowing the Commissioners to use the facility to conduct the hearing. He invited those in attendance to attend the Commissioners budget work sessions on May 21 and May 27, 2008. On behalf of the Commissioners he thanked everyone for attending the hearing and stated that the Commissioners would do their best to approve a budget that would benefit everyone in these difficult times.

The Commissioners adjourned to meet again on May 20, 2008.