

SHEPHERD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Minutes from Local School Advisory Team meeting of MARCH 18, 2015

Present: Keith White (parent representative), chair; Aeva Doomes and Eve Lotter, parent representatives; Robin George, Beverly Johnson and Gail Liggins, teacher representatives; Robyn Brooks, staff representative; Tia Holt, Washington Teachers Union representative; Carl Bergman, community representative; David Trimble, PTA president; Mark Pattison and Kesha Pendergrast, supplemental representatives; plus Jamie Miles, principal; Angel Hunger, assistant principal; and Roman Smith, Mary Jane Patterson fellow.

Minutes: Pattison moved, Pendergrast seconded, approving the minutes of the February meeting. Motion carried.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to school budget matters and the relative viability of potential options.

Shepherd lost \$60,000 based on enrollment and per-pupil funds. Enrollment numbers are based on the 2014-15 lottery.

“FY16 School budget” document was distributed.

There are budget cuts across the city, the principal advised, adding that there is a different funding source for at-risk students, and that there is stabilization money meant to even things out from school to school.

Positions required by D.C. Public Schools are based on size of enrollment. Losing 16 special education students would result in a reduction in the number of special education teachers to

which Shepherd is required to staff.

Other positions are “itinerant.” For instance, Shepherd pays for 30 percent of an English Language Learning teacher, the balance of whose salary comes from the budget of other schools to which the teacher is also assigned.

Shepherd was allotted 1.5 positions for language teachers instead of the typical one slot. The school can cover the cost of bringing it to two positions.

On the subject of principal autonomy, some autonomy has been taken away as DCPS requires more and different types of positions to be funded – often, the kind of positions already at Shepherd. But in other ways, Shepherd has been able to successfully argue for sufficient funding for certain of its staffing and operational priorities..

The 2015-16 budget calls for one teacher for Pre-K/3, and two for all other grade levels. The current budget called for three kindergarten teachers, but initial enrollment was not sustained and students from one class were redistributed to the other two, with the teacher taking over for the retiring special education teacher.

In pre-K, there are 37 students split between two classes. The two kindergarten classrooms are at 21 each. To warrant a third teacher, enrollment in each class would need to reach 23-24. If enrollment increased to hit such a threshold in any grade, Shepherd could get an additional teacher, and the school would decide on where s/he would be placed.

There will be no second pre-K/3 classroom until renovations

are completed.

DCPS' "Proving What's Possible" grant has helped pay for field trips and buses. This is the "fun fund" referenced in a Dec. 30 Washington Post article on middle-school extracurricular offerings.

Electronic learning: Type to Learn, Straight A's, ST Meaty, Razz Kids (sp) fall under this. Some are paid for by the PTA. The goal is to NOT have parents pay for each of the e-learning elements.

Custodial supplies: Shepherd buys its own ice-melt solution, albeit from a DCPS-approved vendor. In the past, DCPS has provided a snowblower. These purchases come from a non-personnel spending line.

The PTA also helps by providing supplies and through teacher wish lists.

A mandatory line item now requires every school to buy books for the school library – this after a Post story exposed the fact that DCPS hadn't been stocking school libraries. Ms. Tiffany, the librarian, just ordered \$8,000-\$10,000 in books. DCPS is not letting Shepherd move library book money, at least not yet. DCPS could look at circulation figures in an attempt to change its mind.

Shepherd has a full-time counselor, and now DCPS is requiring us to get a full-time psychologist and a full-time social worker. To have that, we'd have to rework the budget. The principal is going to make an appeal to reduce the psychologist and social worker positions to half-time – which

they currently are – and use the allotment to fund other priorities. Three scenarios exist:

DCPS rejects cutting both positions leaves Shepherd with \$77,736

DCPS rejects one cut, but accepts one cut, leaves Shepherd with \$124,248

DCPS approves our appeal to cut both positions leaves Shepherd with \$170,718

Under these scenarios, Shepherd could hire three aides ... or a teacher and three aides ... or a teacher and something else. It is possible that some money could be moved around to enable Shepherd to hire two teachers if desired.

Aides cost much less, it was noted. Aides could be split between second and third grades, and fourth and fifth grades.

Shepherd's choice with the available money is to invest in people or invest in non-personnel spending. A survey of the teachers showed that their top three choices was a technology coordinator, a reading specialist and an aide.

A psychologist assists students in, or who may go into, special education.

A social worker's role targets the special-education population
A counselor can't do the social worker role, but can reach out to any student.

Shepherd's psychologist goes between two schools but meets all of the needs for Shepherd's assessments.

The principal would like to improve Shepherd's Passport to Peace program.

Projected numbers for 2015-16 are 320 students; 350 is needed for an assistant principal. DCPS allots funds for 0.8 of an assistant principal, but does not require one. And even though Shepherd has one this year, that salary is not charged to that line item; the expectation is for the assistant principal to become a principal elsewhere in DCPS. This funding practice allows for assistance principal budget money to be redirected elsewhere.

Catholic University was cited as an excellent source for student teachers; five have been in the building this school year. It is also possible for some high school students to come in for service credits.

(At this point, the fill-in secretary had to leave the meeting.)

The next LSAT meeting will be held WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, at 4 p.m. at the school.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Pattison
LSAT supplemental member