

**MONROE COUNTY COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION**  
**BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES**  
**Regular Meeting, February 16, 2010**

**MINUTES**

The Board of School Trustees of the Monroe County Community School Corporation met in a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 16, 2010, in the Auditorium at Bloomington High School South, 1965 S. Walnut Street, Bloomington.

Board members present:

Jeannine Butler	President
Valerie Merriam	Vice President
Vicki Streiff	Secretary
Keith Klein	Assistant Secretary
Jim Muehling	Member
Lois Sabo-Skelton	Member
Sue Wanzer	Member

Also present:

John T. Coopman	Superintendent
Tim Thrasher	Comptroller
Peggy Chambers	Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and Personnel
Mike Scherer	Director of Extended Services
Kathleen Hugo	Director of Special Education
Jan Bergeson	Director of Secondary Education
Cameron Rains	Director of Elementary Education
Janet Tupper	Administrative Assistant
Andy Graham	Reporter, <i>The Herald-Times</i>

In addition to the above, 590 citizens signed the visitor list (which is included as a part of the official record of this meeting) and two representatives of Bloomington Community Access TV were present.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

President of the Board, Jeannine Butler, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She explained that the agenda for this meeting had been shortened to allow for comments regarding proposed expenditure reductions. She said in January the school system received the last bad news about school funding cuts. She announced that when this meeting adjourned the Board would convene a news conference in the Auditorium to respond to specific questions from news media.

2. **CONSENT AGENDA**

Dr. Butler called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda: (a) a field trip request, and (b) Allowance of Claims. Ms. Wanzer so moved. Mr. Muehling seconded the motion. Aye: Butler, Klein, Merriam, Muehling, Sabo-Skelton, Streiff and Wanzer. Motion carried.

3. **CONTRACTS**

Mr. Thrasher recommended approval of an amendment to the lease with the Department of Natural Resources as proposed. Mr. Muehling so moved. Ms. Wanzer seconded the motion. Aye: Butler, Klein, Merriam, Muehling, Sabo-Skelton, Streiff and Wanzer. Motion carried.

4. **PERSONNEL REPORT**

Ms. Chambers recommended approval of the Personnel Report as submitted. Ms. Merriam so moved. Ms. Wanzer seconded the motion. Aye: Butler, Klein, Merriam, Muehling, Sabo-Skelton, Streiff, Wanzer. Motion carried.

5. **RESOLUTION: Reduction of Board Member Compensation for the Year 2010**

Ms. Merriam moved that the Board adopt a resolution approving a ten percent (10%) reduction in the annual stipend paid to Board members for 2010. Ms. Wanzer seconded the motion. Dr. Butler read the resolution, which is attached to and made a part of these minutes. Aye: Butler, Klein, Merriam, Muehling, Sabo-Skelton, Streiff, Wanzer. Motion carried.

6. **EXPENDITURE REDUCTIONS**

Dr. Butler reviewed procedures for receiving information and comments regarding expenditure reductions. [Handouts explaining procedures for addressing the Board as well as information regarding proposed reductions had been made available prior to the meeting.]

Dr. Coopman said this was an attempt to try to answer questions to offset misinformation. The text of his comments follows.

A great deal of time has been spent carefully reviewing the options for cost containment in the 2010 budget. Of course, one must realize MCCSC was put into this dilemma and not something created as a result of any one or any one action or omission, except the State of Indiana not meeting its obligation to fully fund the general funds of public education institutions, including state universities and Ivy Tech. However, it is now our obligation to make sure we are meeting the federal and state budget accounting statutes requiring us to end the budget year with a positive balance in the general fund. With that said, we know the incoming revenue and we know the expected expenditures and we must account for a 4.5 million dollar shortfall in revenue for the MCCSC general fund.

Since the 1972 budget freeze, MCCSC has experienced several issues related to the ability to generate enough revenue to meet the demands because they were fiscally responsible and had a low tax rate and minimum expenditures. As a result of being frozen at the level with the legislatively mandated freeze, MCCSC has always been in the bottom 25% of all school corporations in the state relative to the amount of revenue available per student. The gap has never been closed and has actually widened over time when compared to other school districts. So, over the course of the last 38 years, MCCSC has had to reduce expenditures several times in order to meet the balanced budget obligation. The most recent was in 2005 when a budget shortfall of 2 million dollars was realized.

In 2008, the state of Indiana took over the general fund budgets for all Indiana school corporations at the same time they were reducing assessed valuations and property taxes. Budgets supported with property taxes were replaced with revenue supplied by income taxes and sales taxes which are economically dependent. When the recession occurred, income taxes and sales taxes plummeted, leaving tax supported entities, such as schools, with revenue shortfalls. We have made public announcements at every board meeting since September about the impending budget shortfall and the probability of expenditure reductions so as not to allow this as a surprise for anyone. With the state taking over the general fund and with the budget revenue decreased by the economy, the State of Indiana could not meet their financial obligations for the Indiana public schools. Therefore, it reverts back to the local school districts to make decisions to make up the budget shortfall.

Following the trend of being underfunded, MCCSC was expected to have "new revenue" for 2010 in amount of .67%. In order to meet expected expenditure obligations, MCCSC required 2% in "new revenue" so we were behind from the beginning of the budget year. Then the expected student enrollment that the budget was estimated on 18 months earlier fell short by 285 students leaving another revenue gap. MCCSC is a self funded

health insurance provider and pays a portion of the health insurance premiums for the employees. Health insurance premiums increased 20% leaving a further gap in revenue to expenditure expectations. As we approached the beginning of the 2010 budget in January, we anticipated a revenue shortfall of approximately 2 million dollars related to the aforementioned issues.

On or about December 8<sup>th</sup>, the Governor announced an immediate budget reduction for all schools' general funds of "3%" or about 1.8 million dollars in addition to the 2 million dollars mentioned above. However, the calculations used were not computed correctly and the "3%" went to "4.55%", which amounted to another 700,000 dollars in revenue shortfalls. Therefore, MCCSC was faced with revenue shortfall of 4.5 million dollars at the beginning of the budget year in January. Remember, this is a general fund issue and funds cannot be transferred from the other funds to the general fund by statute. (Explain other funds and their purpose.) Also, remember, as required by statute we must end the budget year in December with a positive cash balance, so action must be taken now to balance the budget. With our General fund accounting for salary and benefits in the amount of 92% personnel is the foremost and primary location for securing the 4.5 million dollars necessary to balance the budget. However, we must recover more than the base of 4.5 million dollars to balance the budget due to other considerations such as unemployment compensation that I will ask Mr. Thrasher, Comptroller, to elaborate.

We also have statutory requirements and collective bargaining agreements that relate to how and when we reduce budget expenditures, so very hard and fast timelines must be adhered. I will ask Mrs. Chambers, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, to discuss these issues.

We have consulted information from American Association of School Administrators, Indiana Association of School Business Officials and the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents to make sure we have left no stone unturned. We have also consulted with our colleagues from other districts to see if we could glean any additional suggestions for budget reductions. We used the IDOE suggested "checklist" for items. We placed information on the MCCSC web site that allowed staff and patrons to post suggestions as well as email suggestions to the superintendent and board members. We met with our principals, leadership team and the school board on several occasions to seek information and suggestions. We asked the principals to have discussion with their staff regarding expenditure reductions as well as the teachers' association. I share that so you can be assured we did not try to do this on our own. I believe when one reviews the lists from the foremost experts from around the state, one can ascertain that we have also compiled a listing of recommended budget reductions commensurate with suggested guidelines.

This not pleasant for any us and is regrettable that this is happening to school districts across the state and across the country. This is not an MCCSC problem or issue in isolation, this is happening in nearly all school districts across the state and across the nation. No one person or entity is to blame as we are falling victim to the economic and harsh realities throughout our state and country. I truly hate it for all public schools and the children we serve. I have worked for 36 years to build programs to better support the needs of all children and it is being dismantled in a matter of months. I fear that public education will never be the same again. I also fear this is not the end. I predict we will be going through similar exercises in 2011 and 2012. With budget reductions for 2010, for the State of Indiana to meet their financial obligations for the general fund revenues, the state must take in 1.1 billion dollars for us to stay even or we could experience another reduction in December.

With that said, we must look forward to solutions for future budget years as well. I will recommend convening a school and community blue ribbon panel to begin assessing what the community values and prioritizes for its schools and the students. Many difficult and tough decisions are yet to be made as we move forward together. We have identified the enemy and the enemy is not us.

I would like to commend our MCCSC board school trustees for the difficult and courageous leadership they have demonstrated as they have struggled and deliberated in trying to make the right decisions for the right reasons. I want to thank our leadership team, principals, and teachers for the countless hours they have poured into making suggestions and costing out various scenarios so as to meet our budget obligations.

I will now ask Mr. Thrasher speak with us about the revenue and expenditure picture that will allow us to balance our budget. Mrs. Chambers will follow with the contractual and statutory timelines required for us to

follow. Dr. Butler, MCCSC Board of School Trustees' president, will provide direction and guidance for the remainder of the meeting.

Thank you for your attendance.

Mr. Thrasher assured that although talking about numbers may seem cold, there is no one who does not understand that we are talking about people. He said a number of expenditure cuts must be recommended to reduce expenditures by \$4.5 million but due to contractual obligations already in place we will realize about one-third of the savings in 2010. He said they tried to look at areas of the budget that would realize immediate savings and many of those are in non-personnel areas. He said the recommended reductions include almost \$2.3 million in 2010 and almost \$6.0 million in 2011. In doing that he hopes we will end up with an operating balance of \$528,000 or eight-tenths of annual expenditures. Mr. Thrasher said the State Board of Accounts recommends maintaining an operating balance between eight and ten percent of expenditures. He said this does not allow for much margin for error with payrolls each month and we have been hearing there may be additional cuts in the funding formula for 2010. He added that this does not allow for any increase in salary or benefits for any employee group. He said after 2010, with cuts in place, the operating balance will go up some and at the end of 2011 we would be looking at an operating balance of about 3.8%. He said states relied on stimulus money in 2009 and that money will run out. He said unless the economy turns around substantially, in 2012 we are still going to be facing a worse financial situation.

Ms. Chambers explained that personnel decisions are implemented according to the collective bargaining agreement, state law, School Board policy, enrollment projections, student registration responses, program needs and funding. She said a staffing needs committee meets in each building and submits a report and the Board responds by the second meeting in February. At that time class ratios and program needs are established. She said the next step is by March 1 to identify positions and locations of reductions that may take place and then notification begins with posting of those positions. Ms. Chambers noted that senior teachers in buildings can volunteer for a transfer and from March 22-26, notices of contract non-renewal are delivered. She said final Board action will take place on March 27; after reductions are identified and the involuntary transfer list is created it is compared to the system seniority list and those with the least seniority will be on the RIF (reduction-in-force) list. She said all of this process is done with a great deal of care and consideration and individuals on the list will be offered positions if they become available. She said staff can be recalled after the April 1 deadline. She added that all of this information will be placed on the school system's website for review.

Mr. Muehling noted that for five years he has repeatedly talked about the funding formula for Indiana schools. He cited examples of the inequity in funding, including the fact that if MCCSC is funded the same as Muncie (a school similar in size, etc.) we would have \$3 million more in the General Fund. He mentioned that Senator Vi Simpson participated in a work session with the Board and she confirmed that Legislators listen to parents; therefore, he urged parents to contact Legislators (their contact information is included on the front page of the school system website: [www.mccsc.edu](http://www.mccsc.edu)). Mr. Muehling reiterated that salaries are paid from the General Fund and the state now sends money to schools for this fund; prior to this change, money from local property tax came from us to the state and back. He further explained that during that time we had to borrow tens of thousands of dollars to meet obligations because the state held our money and we had to pay interest on loans to meet obligations. He said the state is now going to fund schools through sales and income tax. He added that homes built in the 1960s for \$50,000 stayed on the tax roles even though they now may be worth \$500,000; statewide reassessment was completed and these people were upset so they backed off and put on a cap of 1% and that is what is causing the shortfall for schools. He said not just schools are affected – it is safety, policy, roads, etc. He said under this new funding system we are against the wall. He thinks it is fair if you live in a \$500,000 house you should pay taxes for that amount. He noted that his mother lives in another state and although her home is one-third the value of his, she pays 40% more in property tax; however, his annual property tax savings is only

about \$850. He suggested remediation instead of 'scraping' the way schools are funded. Mr. Muehling said he wanted to share the complexity of this problem and to restate that only the voters can change it.

Ms. Streiff said she is the only Board member who has children enrolled in MCCSC at this time and she is very involved as a parent and trustee. She said they chose to live in Bloomington and they love it here. She said she is terrified for what this will mean to every child in the system. She said she received some e-mails and the ones that broke her heart were the ones who wanted her to not vote on the proposed expenditure reductions because it is damaging and it is a bad idea. She said she knows it is bad and she does not want to vote for it because she thinks it is good; however, we have to cut \$4.5 million plus a cushion from the budget without damaging our school district and you cannot cut that much without damaging our school system and it is going to get worse. Ms. Streiff said there is nobody at this table who is doing this because it is a good thing. She said even if we had a different Governor the whole country is in trouble; she related to a situation she knows about in another state and said we are doing terrible things because we are stuck.

Dr. Sabo-Skelton confirmed that Board members have agonized over this for several months, but said we have something called property tax reform that has not reformed anything. She said mandates come from the state and if we do not comply we do not get any money. She said e-mails she received indicate our community is dedicated to our children's education. She said Board members read every e-mail and comment received. She urged citizens to send messages to the Governor and the State Superintendent for Instruction and then start calling all the people they know and ask them to make these contacts. She said voices must be heard from all over this state if we are going to take hold of our children's education. She urged people to share comments made at this meeting with the State House.

Ms. Wanzer said serving on the Board has been humbling but being forced to cut \$4.5 million is most humbling and the reason for the cut is the state's decision to change the way schools are funded. She hopes that we can acknowledge that we have erred in removing funding from local property tax and that the state will reverse this decision. She said she wants to improve education for all children in that she believes in public education and it has been all things to all people. Ms. Wanzer mentioned various budget cuts the school system has experienced through the years and said she is not happy to cut anything from our public school system. She said giving property tax breaks to the wealthy was irresponsible and shifting the bulk of taxation from homeowners was irresponsible. She said education is the best investment in economic development and we need to pay for education through our taxes. She said she is sorry we have been put in this position by the state. She added that this is about what is best for our entire corporation and it is more distressing that more cuts are to come. She said she is concerned that public education will never be the same and thanked those present for their support of public education.

Ms. Merriam thanked everyone who was holding signs and umbrellas today (at the Governor's luncheon). She said she decided we had to do something and about 75-80 people joined together in silent protest. She said the Governor mentioned that the average teacher salary is the highest of Indiana state employees and recommended that corporations adjust salaries to compensate for reductions. She said we lost over \$1 million when the Project School opened this year and we also got about 20 Project School students back but after the official count which amounted to another \$106,000. Ms. Merriam said she would reiterate what had already been said. She noted that she is a musician and the daughter of a professional musician and her step-daughter is a librarian in Alaska. She understands the impacts of the proposed cuts and does not like it. She said it is only going to get worse and we have to work together. She added that ultimately we have to have a referendum

Dr. Butler said she wholeheartedly agreed with everything already said. She mentioned the ways the Board and administration reviewed and solicited recommendations and what they have done to try to tell employees and the public about various ways to implement savings. She said early this year the

Comptroller reported that we would have a budget shortfall. She said he continued to keep the Board updated and Board members as well as the Superintendent included comments about the topic at each meeting to keep the public informed; since October this has been in our minds and hearts. She recalled that Dr. Coopman held an all staff member meeting in January where he, Mr. Thrasher and Ms. Chambers answered questions. She said in early January a link was created on the school system website for the Board to receive comments and suggestions from the public and she responded to those who asked for a contact. She said Dr. Coopman met several times with building administrators and the leadership team and shared information through the press. Dr. Butler commended Andy Graham for doing a phenomenal job of reporting events in *The Herald-Times*. She said Board members answered e-mails; she personally answered more than 150 e-mails and had 70 more this morning that she has read but has not had a chance to respond. She apologized for not answering the latest messages but said she had run out of time. She continued by saying that there have been regular meetings between the administration and the MCEA (Monroe County Education Association) and Dr. Coopman has scheduled a meeting with PTO presidents.

Dr. Butler said that she and Mr. Thrasher were here in the mid-1970s when many people received RIF (reduction-in-force) letters and she was one of those who received a notice. She said she went from her administrative position back to the classroom, was fortunate to return but for four years after that she received a notice that she would not have an administrative position. She noted that the destruction of her morale seemed never-ending and some teachers have had the same experience. Dr. Butler said she is devastated by the budget cuts and believes the public school system as we know it today will never be the same until appropriate funding is allocated. She said in the past MCCSC teachers and administrators stepped up and provided the best education possible and they will again but it gets more difficult each year. She said whatever we have to do we will still provide the very best education possible for our kids although the cuts will affect many personal friends of everyone. She said no one is more of an advocate for public education. She said she spent the past 50-plus years working in education and loved it and she believes that public education is the mainstay of our society. She concluded that ‘we are agonizing over decisions because in the end it is our students who will be affected and we are sorry.’

At this time, Dr. Butler announced the Board would hear from the public and reviewed the guidelines for speaking. A summary of comments received follows {Note: \* = unable to understand speaker’s name}.

- Verna DeLuce, Librarian at Summit, commented about the *Read Across America* initiative and how the library provides services directly to children. She invited those present to visit their school’s library.
- Becky Rupert, English teacher at Aurora, said she has always felt supported and valued by the Board, school system, students, parents and community. She said Aurora needs a small pupil-teacher ratio and small school environment to meet the needs of these at-risk students. She said many of these students are taking one last chance to graduate and we will lose those lives if Aurora is closed. She talked about the individualized program and asked the Board to reconsider closing Aurora, noting that it will not be a savings in terms of lives lost.
- Three University Elementary students shared some comments about what they have learned from their school’s librarian and asked the Board to keep their librarian.
- Josh Wolf, Monroe County Public Library, said they partner with the schools throughout the year and school librarians are crucial to their efforts. He said they are very concerned about the absence of librarians in the schools. He said information literacy runs throughout the curriculum and librarians are essential and they are teachers.
- A BHS North student said their classes are already at capacity and they deserve an adequate

education. He believes we should start cutting administrators' pay before cutting teachers.

- Kerry Thompson thanked Board members for their service; she said she values what they do for those who have so little. She said she volunteers and sees the difference it made for students. She said this is a resources issue and attracting resources for education is our job. She said one way to do that is with a referendum. She admitted that tax increases are not popular but it is the only option we have in Monroe County. She asked the Board to consider a referendum to save teachers.
- Daria Smith, art teacher and Fine Arts Department Chair at BHS North, noted the various ways she is involved, including membership on the bargaining team. She said the only thing on this list that she had input was review with her principal for class size review. She said she is most concerned about the lack of true discussion. She said people in the school system can help and she asked for the MCEA leadership to be active participants.
- Tim Fick, social studies teacher at Aurora, said nothing he could say would be more impressive than comments made by former and current Aurora students and parents who were present for this meeting. He invited everyone to the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Aurora graduation on May 28 at Buskirk Chumley. He said Aurora helped more than 300 students and their families in these 15 years, plus empowering students with confidence to get their GED. He said the Teen Learning Center was housed at Aurora 15 years ago and the school system made a commitment to alternative programs. He asked the Board to not take that away from them.
- Linda Richardson, MCEA President, said they had been requesting this list for weeks and they should have been planning. She said she is a collaborative person; many people work with her and spend lots of evenings. She said they want to be at the table when these things are discussed.
- Ashley McCammon, 2002 Aurora graduate, said she was broken when she came to Aurora but promised her mother that she would try Aurora. She said she had given up but the staff helped her realize she was a valuable person and she began to trust again and have confidence they would help her. She asked the Board to give other students this opportunity. She said it is not just a school; it is a family. She said Aurora is a positive place to be and asked the Board to reconsider closing the school.
- Mary D'Eliso, University librarian, reviewed the various skills (research, literacy, inquiry, etc.) that students learn from their school's librarian. She reviewed a specific lesson she gave to students recently and asked how students will become critical thinkers if we do not teach them the skills.
- Layla Purttlebaugh, Aurora student, said at BHS North she was just a number; she raised her hand in class for ten minutes and finally a teacher responded. She said she did not know the principal at North whereas every morning she can now say hello to her principal. She said she knows him as a person and she knows her teachers. She asked the Board to give them some hope.
- Angie Shelton, Rogers parent, thanked the Board for delaying the vote on this topic. She said the most objectionable cut to her is elimination of librarians and middle school foreign language. She said it seems the purpose of Aurora is to help students who are in danger of dropping out and they need that place. She suggested some other places should be cut and said she did not see athletics anywhere in the list of reductions. She realizes athletics can be self-supporting but a few athletic directors and coaches could be cut. She suggested that it might be possible to have community fundraising for the General Fund. She urged everyone to contact Legislators.

- Jessica Barger, Aurora student, explained her personal circumstances that brought her to Aurora. She said she tried hard and was accepted at Aurora and it was the best decision she has made. She said before she was never excited about going to school and never felt so welcome. She asked the Board to please keep Aurora open.
- Shirley Fitzgibbons, retired professor of Library Science, said she has been a teacher and professor and was dismayed at the lack of school librarians in Indiana. She said she now has seen many gains and an educated student body. She believes some of the list is a smoke screen but she believes the board has not done the process. She said if these things would have been put out there earlier people would have responded. She recommended that the Board not vote on Friday. She said there is nothing worse than dropping a program that took so long to get and it will never be recovered. She suggested that the Board start the process over and make cuts across the Board.
- Samantha Wray, Aurora student, said Aurora means so much to her and the students and teachers; it is family. She said knowing she can be happy at school and that she has a chance with education is very important. She said at North she was so isolated but Aurora is totally different. She hopes the Board will keep Aurora.
- \* - voiced concern about the increase in class size ratios. She said she worries about safety of kids and there was so many kids in one class at North that some had to sit on the floor. She asked what will happen to safety issues.
- Carol Hall, substitute teacher for 20 years, said this past year she worked full time at Aurora. She said there is not one school that she has not worked in but she was fortunate to have a job at Aurora this year and she went to Aurora because it is so much different than any other school. She said students are not in competition at Aurora – they work with each other. She said conflicts are put aside because students are there to graduate; students are working hard to be contributing members of society. She said creating its own culture takes time and Aurora has a wonderful culture. She said please keep Aurora open.
- \* - A University Elementary student heard the Board was talking about cutting librarians and she wanted the Board to know that she would read a lot less if she was not under the influence of their librarian. She asked the Board to cut something else.
- \* - A parent said Aurora is family and she knows of no other school where they support each other in such a way. She said if Aurora is not funded they will not go to North or South but will drop out. She asked the Board to find something else to cut.
- Mark Hagerty, friend of Aurora student, suggested that a lot of our money is in Iraq and Afghanistan and that is one reason for funding problems. He said some money is going to banks, insurance and health providers and some is going to fund Hwy 69. He said a small fraction of any of these budgets would solve education funding problems. He said this is an extremely affluent community, consequence of high paid university people, and if we cannot come up with \$4.5 million in this community then we are not a community. He said obviously certain stakeholders have not been invited to be at the table but this can be remedied.
- Mary Beth O'Brian-Mood, family and consumer science teacher at Tri-North, said cutting family and consumer science would be giving up personal skills and ways to transfer those skills to the work place. She said classes are offered to all students with the intent they will feel good and all middle school students need to feel success. She said this class includes life and careers, work

ethics, goal setting, decision-making, relating income and career, understanding credit and savings accounts, caring for the environment, nutrition, team work, etc. She said this is one subject area that students make application with real life and asked the Board to please keep this program.

- Paul Farmer – parent, teacher on the bargaining team and insurance committee member – said the Board should consider the idea of utilization rates and staff at the high school compared to middle school. He said his principal did a wonderful job of explaining how pupil-teacher ratios are calculated but he thinks it is also important to understand utilization rates. He encouraged the Board to talk with the Superintendent, the Comptroller and principals about what it is costing to maintain the current utilization rate at our two high schools. He said he is talking about shifting FTE (full time equivalent) by increasing utilization rates. He said there are many ways to look at utilization rates.
- Brenda Galyan, family and consumer science (FACS) teacher at BHS North, said our schools will not be in compliance if the middle school consumer science program is cut. She said the high school programs need the middle school programs and the cost is only \$250 per student. She asked the Board to please keep the middle school FACS program.
- Denise Hill, Tri-North Librarian, said she feels strongly that we need to keep the library program intact. She said she collaborates with teachers and is an instructional partner. She said librarians develop the library collection and instill a love of reading. They continually evaluate resources to educate students. She said she is the middle step in developing lifelong learning and it is a wonderful opportunity to interact with all middle school students. She said she is passionate about the program and asked the Board to extend the time for voting to seek more community input and involvement with the bargaining team.
- Carlene Quinn, Clear Creek parent and social work faculty member at Indiana University, encouraged the Board to consider that many alternative programs want to immolate Aurora. She said what we want is connectedness to schools. She said the strings program works because it does not discriminate. She said the Board should look at cutting across the board. She said an alternative school is something you cannot buy; it is a culture.
- Sandy Larson, Clear Creek librarian, said she meets many children whose families do not take them to the library and she is about making an impact on each child in her school. She said the internet has given our world an explosion of information and students need to learn to evaluate what they read. She said the NCA (North Central Association) requires quality media programs and asked the Board to please support our children and save our libraries.
- Lindsay Smith, Aurora student, said she knew she was a future drop-out when she went to Aurora. She hoped the Board would see student devotion to Aurora and how much they care about their school. She said if Aurora is shut down it will not have a positive outcome.
- Jean Heidt, Rogers and Unionville Librarian, said they connect students to stories that are likely to spark imagination. She said professional librarians are the interface between students and libraries and without librarians libraries will become warehouses for many students. She asked the Board to not single them out for complete elimination.
- Chuck Holloway, Principal at Aurora, said he understands the Board is not responsible for the school system's financial situation and he also understands no decision will be without question to some portion of the community. He said for the last 15 years Aurora has been MCCSC's first

line for kids at risk of dropping out of school. He said Aurora served nearly 1000 students, 300 graduates and an undocumented number have earned a GED. He read a list of goals that emerged from the 2006 High School Task Force after a year's work and research. He noted that every one of the goals describes Aurora. He pointed out that the school system had just spent \$1 million renovating Aurora and Aurora received grant money this year and a new partnership was formed with the Teen Learning Center. He said Aurora students felt they did not matter in their home high schools; he asked the Board to please not send a message to these kids that they do not matter.

- \* - The parent of a student at Unionville spoke in favor of keeping librarians. She said Ms. Heidt has ten volunteers at Unionville helping the students. She said we need a plan to keep librarians. Her daughter, Kara, said the heart of the school is the library and if we do not have a librarian then we do not have the heart of the library or the school.
- \* - A former Aurora student said she attended BHS South for one semester and finished the year at Aurora. She got into trouble and was involved with the Juvenile Justice system and the Aurora principal took on the responsibility of knowing where she was in school for the rest of her school career. She said she had a child and could not go to school but the principal was 'like a string around her finger' with a support system until she received her GED. She said she has several friends who are unlikely to graduate and now one is valedictorian of her class and one has been chosen as a "Comeback Kid"; she said Aurora makes it happen for so many kids. She said she is now a nursing aide with two children of her own and she hopes that others have an opportunity to achieve their academic goals.
- \* - A citizen thanked the Board for receiving public comment and noted that no one disagrees these are tough times and realize funding cuts must be made. He said there is something in the reductions about athletics and the best athletes train year around. He said they have to put in dedication and motivation and that is part of teaching and learning as well. He said great swimmers who go to state train year round and one proposal is to eliminate the availability of pools during non-season and to close Batchelor's pool. He said some clubs have membership fees that limit participation for some. He said by eliminating pools the long term effect would be eliminating swimming as a non-sport.
- Andrea Jones, Aurora graduate, said she was a child that fell through the cracks. She said at Aurora they are a family. She said she learned that the Board does care about their education and that budget cuts have to be made but she thinks they are being cut in the wrong areas. She said 300+ grads would not have made it without Aurora and she was one of them. She mentioned the renovated facilities and how excited the teachers and students are with new books and a projector. She said Aurora has helped so many and will help so many more; she asked that the Board reconsider closing Aurora.
- George Turchyn, Arlington librarian, voiced appreciation for an opportunity to share input. He said cutting foreign language programs and librarians will affect many children. He said librarians are instructors and teachers. He said the Indiana University Library Science program is ranked number one in the nation and it is because of librarians that children understand literacy and its components. He said librarians are leaders in literacy and they are teachers and educators. He said this is not a good thing and he feels we are 'dumbing down' education.
- Heather Boltinghouse, Aurora graduate, said she made D's and F's at BHS North but was on the honor roll at Aurora. She said it is like a family and the teachers and principal are always pushing students to continue their education. She said closing Aurora would hurt so many people; she

made it through high school, has a baby and a job and Aurora made it possible. She said she understands making cuts but said Aurora is part of her life; please don't close it.

- Barb Hall, BHS South, said you can tell a lot about a school by its librarian. She said many of us will go back to the classroom and do not think much of savings but she urged the Board to not eliminate librarians.
- Rob Norris said the most decisive damaging blow you can give this school system is to shut down Aurora, the program that works the most. He said this is a basic human rights issue in that cuts will have to be made and he cannot imagine how difficult it is for the Board. He urged the Board to reconsider Aurora because it is the wrong thing to do to shut it down. He said he would work on getting a referendum passed but in the meantime he would like to keep Aurora open.
- Jeff LeBeau, coach at Bloomington Swim Club, said closing of pools is expensive but they have a suggestion to help with that issue. He said one of the ironies of not having pools available in the summer affects high school students. He said they propose to work with the Board and as a club to see if there is a way to raise funds to make sure the pools are kept open. He said they want to offer help; they know cuts have to be made but they want to have conversations regarding the amount of funds needed for the entire season.
- Ashley Hartgraves read a letter she wrote to Governor Mitch Daniels expressing her difficulty when she attended Batchelor Middle School and changes she experienced when she attended Aurora – even making the honor roll. She said she found new talents and now believes in her dreams. She said it is unfair to close Aurora; they do not deserve to be shut down and it is important to receive their diplomas from Aurora.
- Melinda Hamilton, Binford librarian, said school libraries work and staffing them with professional librarians impact student achievement. She asked the Board to rethink and try to spread cuts across the district rather than cutting the library program.
- Melinda Weaver, mother of Aurora student, said her daughter deserves a decent education. She recalled when she was in school an alternative program was a part of BHS South and it did not work.
- Judy Williams, Childs Librarian, said perhaps people think librarians just shelve books but they collaborate, co-plan and co-teach on a daily basis and work on collection development. Students in schools with fully staffed libraries learn more, have higher grades and do better on tests.
- \* - An Aurora senior said she thought school would always be terrible and that teachers did not care but since attending Aurora her experiences are so different. She now has a scholarship to Indiana University and suggested that closing Aurora would be counter-productive.
- Sylvia Turchyn said she is a librarian and noted that librarians are educators. She agrees that we do need to do something about property tax. She said if we need a referendum, she will help.
- Tom Fister, parent, said when he reviewed the list he realized that he does not want to save one in favor of another. He wants the Board to consider maintaining all of these programs. He noted that the Board recommended that citizens contact the state and hoped everyone had done that. He recommended that comments are mailed as well as sent via e-mail. He also asked the Board to look at every opportunity to raise the money. He suggested that if the referendum does not come through that they do a fund raiser. He said many will see a drop in property tax and he would

agree to commit the amount saved annually to maintain MCCSC's excellent education program.

- Daniel Reed, parent, said this is a political call to action. He said all of the cuts are devastating and he brought attention to the importance of outdoor education. He said teaching toward standardized tests has marginalized our education and outdoor education goes beyond tests in that it teaches our children in an experiential way. He said the Bradford Woods program is already down to two and one-half days; students need an outdoor education experience and Bradford Woods is the best.
- Austin, an Aurora student, asked the Board to really listen to what Aurora students were saying. He said when a student at North he was apathetic toward learning and did not care about his GPA. He said students who do not learn at that pace or in that environment are left out; he said his education is no more or no less important than kids at North and South.
- \* - A preschool teacher at Montessori School and from Chicago said she learned in Bloomington that we care about each other. She does not want any of these programs cut; she wants every person to step forward to do what they can to support our schools. She wants the newspaper to print e-mail addresses and telephone numbers and she wants us to open our purses and start a "Save our Schools" fund. She wants everyone to work together to raise money for our children.
- \* - A mother of triplets said she came here for an interview a few years ago and after living in three countries and seven states they were delighted to find Bloomington. She said the public schools were so good that they did not have to send their children to private schools. She read a letter from her son in which he also supported funding for schools. She said she had never heard of Aurora but she admired students for rallying for their school and said it is time for us to rally and protect our schools.
- \* - The father of two daughters spoke in favor of the strings program, noting its value and the value of many arts programs. He said he also learned at this meeting the value of Aurora and he realizes the importance of the middle school foreign language program. He said he also recognizes the positive impact that librarians have on children. He said athletics provides the same for some students as Aurora and although some may pick on administrators, we cannot run schools without them. He added that no one is more valuable than teachers. He said if 1000 people were given budgetary decisions, there would be 1000 different solutions. He suggested that the answer is not for us to talk about one being more important than another but to talk about how we can raise revenue and how we can support our schools.
- Chris McGlaun, Jackson Creek Librarian, said she is concerned about education of children and she thinks the Board should work on how to restore some of our lost funding. She asked what steps are being taken to put a referendum on the May ballot. She said all items on the list for cuts are important and personnel should be the last to cut.
- Jennifer Staab, Healthy Schools Coordinator, talked about healthy schools programs that are in place and the importance of emphasizing healthy lifestyles for children. She said she is a licensed counselor and will bump another counselor but her position is paid 100% with grant funding. She said by collaborating with other agencies she has brought \$2 million to \$3 million to this school corporation, including afterschool programs, alcohol and drug prevention programs, etc. She asked that her position be kept for one year as grants are written to make up shortfalls.
- Susan Schooler, teacher at Jackson Creek, introduced Chris McGlaun (librarian) and reviewed all of the roles she plays at the school. She said Chris works directly with students and teachers

every minute of the day and asked the Board to not take this critical person and her counterparts away from our students.

- Kathy Loser, BHS North media specialist, said she believes every educator is the heart of the classroom and that it is terrible news to hear consideration is given to cutting librarians. She said she does not understand why this list was developed in a draconian way. She proposed that we resolve to solve this problem together and comb through the budget to come up with a more acceptable approach.
- Mary Beth Long said she worked as a teacher and at the State Department. She said the real power is here – and when you think about power being some place else it takes away from solutions. She said when we start to believe we are the state it makes a difference and communities that lose power is when passion tears them apart instead of coming together.
- \* - A 2008 graduate of Aurora said she loves her school and does not know what many students will do if Aurora is closed.
- \* - A father of five children in the school system, including four at Aurora, noted that in an earlier statement it was said that no one is at fault. He said even though he has written several e-mails and letters and made phone calls he is at fault because he is not doing enough. He said none of us is doing enough. He said Aurora is a wonderful school and many of the students there would not drop out but they are overwhelmed by large schools. He said we may not like living without expensive swimming pools and giving up programs but we cannot live with closing a school that has shown so much success.
- \* - Another citizen said it is documented that music students do better on tests and have higher GPAs. He said the elementary orchestra program has produced several Indiana leaders of tomorrow. He shared his children's successes, although their school experiences were different. He said he did not see why Aurora was on the reductions list and nothing was mentioned about New Tech High School; he said the Aurora kids are just as important.
- \* - An Aurora alumni parent agreed with comments already said about Aurora. She said her oldest child started at North and the principal gave a speech about all the awards and championships the students won and she was wonderful about the 'regular' students. She said it seemed that awards were of most concern, whereas at Aurora that is just a part of it. She reviewed Aurora's beginning in a small building and how it had grown under the leadership of gifted teachers and principal. She said it seemed they were coming to the Board to beg for their school.
- Natalie White, BHSN graduate whose sister graduated from Aurora, said Bradford Woods, LOTS and Honey Creek are wonderful programs and cutting them will deny other children these experiences. She commended the work of the BHS North librarian and the principal at Aurora. She said to move Aurora to another building would not provide the same opportunity for students. She said she teaches at Indiana University and knows that many students lack basic skills needed to be successful. She noted that her sister is working in a public library and she is a doctoral student in music education. She said her participation in music was a very important part of her career. She asked the Board to take more time to identify ways to meet budget shortfalls.
- Hope Lukens, parent, said she thinks that moving Aurora and TLC (Teen Learning Center) into a large high school will destroy those programs. She said her children participated in the strings program and they could not have afforded private lessons. She talked about the skills children learn through participation in orchestra and suggested that the quality of the music program at the

high schools will be reduced if the elementary strings program is eliminated. She said it will also result in lost scholarships.

- Maria Maxwell, parent of son at BHS North and a child who swims and is an avid reader, said if the elementary strings program is cut many students will be totally lost. She asked why build such a strong program and take away the elementary program. She said no one wants to see cuts but asked that the Board not eliminate the elementary strings program.
- Eric Knotts said the state needs to drop everything and restore money to the schools. He said Tippecanoe County organized a referendum for the May ballot two weeks ago and if the Board will contact the chair of the County Council they will set a special meeting for this purpose. He said the Board has a higher priority and that is to get the request to the County Council and let voters know the importance of passing a referendum. He said it may not be approved but it is the Board's obligation to get it started, noting 'you need to initiate it to get funding for schools.'
- Dennis Delap said he has two daughters in MCCSC. He said OT (occupational therapy) is contracted out and that is an issue because some need services daily. He thinks it might be important to bring up details of various positions and contracts. He said in the past the Board fired a poorly performing superintendent and paid a severance of \$500,000 and then an interim superintendent received a package because of contractual irregularities. He said based on the track record of the School Board he believes the vote on expenditure reductions should be postponed because the community has not had time to review everything.
- Ross Grimes, University PTO, said one of the best things he heard came from talking about utilization. He said the new Fairview is a beautiful elementary school that will hold 400+ students but less than 250 students attend that school. He said the state gave us money from federal stimulus and we have \$1.4 million in our CPF (Capital Projects Fund). He said let's be creative; 'we are looking at getting rid of a bunch of stuff.'
- Duane Busick, citizen, said this community has not been included but wants to participate in this process. He said he knows you are in a serious problem but thinks you do not understand the past. He mentioned Batchelor Middle School and talked about the educator for whom it was named; he noted that Stella Alexander and some other hard working elementary teachers developed the living history program that evolved into Honey Creek. He suggested that the Board rethink this process and consider other options. He said the Board took a cut in compensation and if administrators and teachers do the same it will make a difference.
- Kristy Smith, Templeton parent, said she tried to help coordinate people in 2006 to go to the state house and she came forward when they talked about eliminating the Director of Literacy position. She said she has a child at the Project School and our community cannot be torn apart because of the Project School. She said parents should be able to have a choice. She asked the Board to please not demonize other programs in the community; she appreciates the Project School.
- \* - Another citizen said it terrifies her about what schools will be like when her three-year old starts school. She said she wants our schools to be good ones but if you cut programs people will look for other options. She said we need to talk about the future and need to know what we can do. She said she could not vote on a referendum until it is on the ballot.
- John Jeffries, BHS South teacher and former MCEA President, referred to comments about utilization rate. He explained that all teachers have prep time and elementary teachers have about 200 minutes per week and it moves around but amounts to 6 or so days (each day is 300 minutes)

during the year. He said he would get 16 days in that amount of time and North teachers have about 24 days. He said when you have to make cuts he hopes the Board does not do the easy thing. He said it is easy to cut programs that help the socio-economically disadvantaged. He said by the time he gets students in high school there is little he can do; it is important for the elementary and middle schools to have programs they need and most elementary schools need assistant principals. He said he has taught classes of 42 and 45.

- Paul Rose, parent, said he is afraid his two-year old will not have the same opportunities their older child has. He said it does not make sense if you have to cut 10% that you have to cut one or two programs but can cut back on programs instead of shutting down Aurora or completely eliminating library programs. He said targeting does not make sense; being under represented is different than cutting all librarians in that it changes the entire culture. He said some programs pay for themselves and asked if there has been collaboration.
- Michelle Cutshall, PTO President at Childs, thanked the Superintendent for rescheduling the meeting with PTO presidents (due to inclement weather). She said she loves the MCCSC and our teachers. She suggested that the School Board had to get our attention and it is her job to go out and get support for a referendum and to contact our Legislators. She said she has sent letters to the media and to the Governor. She said we need a chance to keep our librarians. She said she is a volunteer in the library and she shelves books and keeps it tidy and we have many volunteers but they are not trained librarians. She voiced concern for teachers who will lose their jobs and for those who will face large classes.
- \* - A parent said her daughter was shocked that the elementary strings program may be cut and also librarians; that is her home. She said she is concerned about kids behind her. She said children must have foreign language and to know internet and how to do research and music. She said if it takes a referendum then we have to move forward in that direction.
- Susan Tague, coordinator of the Alternative-to-Suspension (ATS) program, said some think ATS is a babysitting service but kids do assignments given them by their teachers. She said students are assigned ATS from one to ten days and sometimes weeks and she often gives them final exams. She said she is a licensed teacher and students do a reflective essay. She said they have over 2,500 visits amounting to over 6,000 days and she has been doing this for nine years. She said OSS (out of school suspensions) is down 70% in nine years. She said with classroom sizes increasing, she thinks behavior will not improve; she has had 38 to 40 kids in her classroom and she feels now is not the time to cut alternative education.
- Leslie Skooglund, Director of the Youth Outreach (YO) program, said 22 years ago she came to Bloomington and served on an alternative school committee; 17 years later she became director of YO, our community's only alternative to expulsion program for middle school students. She said she knows this is about money. She said she and Chris Harmon (YO teacher) propose continued funding for him for one year and she will find money to fund the program and remove this expense from the General Fund.
- Caitlin Holmes talked about her school experiences and feeling of helplessness. She said when she went to Aurora she was surprised that the principal knew her name. She said every member is important and has a voice. She asked the Board to look beyond the numbers and look at people who will be affected. She said many others will need this place as much as she did and asked 'please leave it open.'
- Chris Harmon, Youth Outreach (YO) teacher, said he is teaching for his 9<sup>th</sup> year; he hoped to be

an elementary teacher and decided to be a permanent substitute. He said Joyce Blackburn (first director of the YO program), told him about this program. He said after one semester he did not look back. He said these are supposed to be the toughest kids in the school system and he fears they will run the streets if not in this program. He said students should be our number one priority.

- Laurel Bobbitt, Aurora graduate who will graduate from Indiana University this year, said Aurora students feel they belong; they feel pride and a feeling of community. She believes they will feel abandoned and less valued if they are moved to another school. She said taking away their building will be taking away their home.
- \* - A citizen said Aurora represents new ways of thinking about students and teachers and learning. She said there is a sense of community and an authentic learning community based on principles of inquiry and respect – they learn how to learn and how to contribute, dedicated to dialogue characterized by responsibility. She said the students learn to own their mistakes as well as their successes. She said teachers feel a strong sense of accountability to their students. She believes that Aurora should be held up as an example of what is working in education.
- Bill Cook said he attended BHS North for two years but felt he was just a number and a face in the crowd. He said at Aurora he is a person and their building means something to them – it is a family. He said it is a school of choice and students have to want to be there. He mentioned the interview process and said the students are working hard to raise money to go to New Orleans with Habitat for Humanity. He asked that the Board please keep our school.
- Pam Boswell, parent and volunteer at Templeton Elementary, said her mother was a school librarian at Fairview and University and she was and still is a ‘book shelve’. She said with the high percentage of kids in poverty is there some way to keep librarians in schools.
- Jenna McWilliams, doctoral student at Indiana University, said she is proud to do work at Aurora. She said the students carry themselves with pride and maturity. She said she has worked in several different school districts and she has never had the experience of living in a community where programs support students at all levels and that is what Aurora does. She said she did not know how firm the decision is but she hopes the Board will reconsider closing Aurora.
- \* - A parent of a BHS South student said he applauded Aurora students for coming to this meeting. He said the Board spent \$400,000 to an energy education consultant but has no money for programs. He said common sense is to turn things off and that is what we are buying. He said to know how society works you have to know history; you want education to be better you cut back on money spent in all areas—not just one program. He urged the Board to keep our teachers.
- Cindy Baker, Aurora parent, said at Aurora they have a family. She encouraged people to take a couple of hours off work to walk through the halls at Aurora and see what it is about – what these kids have and what they have built. She said this is a great thing for many children; it makes a big difference for them and our household.
- Myra Farmer, teacher/parent and MCEA vice president, said she is dismayed with the lack of transparency. She said the proposal includes disproportionate cuts for the disenfranchised students. She asked how is the rationale determined and how will it be explained to public stakeholders. She said if this is going to be a yearly event, how these numbers are transparent when they were received tonight. She said parents, public and teachers must be included in the

debate. She said other school systems have been working on this for a month and although we know we can write on the website, this is the extent of our information. She said we understand this is a painful process, but if everything is on the table then it should be on the table: cost, projected savings, everything.

- Elizabeth Weiss Jeffries, MCEA secretary, said she also serves on the Discussion Council and none of these cuts were presented before Friday. She said she has never seen Dr. Coopman at Discussion Council and many were astounded by the cuts. She said if teachers were given input it was not through the proper channels of the bargaining unit. She said she feels that their unit is willing to work with the Board and try to come to responsible solutions.
- Dara Parker said she grew up with the string programs because she could get a rental instrument. She said she tested out of music classes at Indiana University because of her early experiences in the strings program. She said she hears amazing Aurora students talk about family and community and the strings program was the same for her – a family.
- Lisa Riggins, Tri-North teacher, said when she heard about the budget problem she envisioned a task force of all stakeholders. She said the MCEA was not given a copy of the proposed cuts. She said the MCEA met with teacher representatives and these were given a copy and were told to pass along information to teachers. She said she began reading the information after school on Friday and she wanted to cover the page in red ink. She asked what MCCSC priorities are; what the rationale for the cuts is; why some line items are specific while others are vague; where are the numbers that go with the cuts. She said she thought it was a rough draft. She asked the Board to give the teachers a valid and complete rough draft and to clarify some of the line items listed.
- Rick Schmelz said he has been an MCCSC computer technician for 11 years. He said being a separate school when you have a separate idea of curriculum is very important. He said he did not pretend to know how to find cuts and what will happen, but a lot of people are coming up with ideas. He suggested that if the Board did not have to vote on it now could they make this a monolithic proposal. He said he hopes we can find other ways to fund programs. He said he thinks the strings program and Aurora are very important and if anything can be done to give them more time to look at other options, he hopes that will happen.
- Chris McGlaun said she is concerned who will take care of students and teachers if she is not there.
- A parent voiced concern with cutting ECA stipends; she knows the extra hours that many teachers put into activities and suggested the \$2,000 stipend is not close to minimum wage. She said if the FTE (full time equivalency) is cut even more, those teachers will not have time to do those extra things.
- Paul Farmer said given all the discussion at this meeting and people wanting to keep programs, we still have to cut \$4.5 million. He said nearly \$750,000 is associated with the utilization rate. He encouraged the Board to look at utilization rates.

Concluding the public comment session of the meeting, Dr. Butler said Board members heard the comments and took notes. She invited any final comments from the Board.

Mr. Klein thanked the public for commenting and for staying for the duration of the meeting. He said ultimately this is about local control of schools and the state is taking that away by the way it is funded. He said the state is trying to connect teachers to tests and remove licenses if they do not pass and then

link it back to the schools where they received degrees.

Ms. Merriam offered corrections to comments made: (1) the interim superintendent did not have any 'payoffs'; (2) nothing will be paid to the energy contractor unless the school system realizes profits; (3) we do not want to demonize any school but we do have to make statements of fact and it would be the same thing if any new school started, i.e. it would take away money from public schools.

Dr. Butler said as Ms. Chambers mentioned, the Board does have deadlines to meet. She said we found out in January and we have tried to be open and she knows the teachers' union does not agree with that. She said they are talking about a referendum but she is not sure that will be done by May. She thanked Board members, Superintendent Coopman, Mr. Thrasher and Ms. Chambers for all their work and time spent on this matter. She said she thinks we need to talk to Legislators. She suggested that one thing to help would be to have two counts during the year, as special education does. She noted that if we add students after the official count day they would likely be counted the second time and the school system would receive a little more money. She expressed appreciation for comments shared at the meeting and noted that this is not easy for anyone.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Dr. Butler declared the meeting to be adjourned at 12:10 a.m. on Wednesday, February 17, 2010.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeannine Butler, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Valerie Merriam, Vice President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vicki Streiff, Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keith Klein, Assistant Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Muehling, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lois Sabo-Skelton, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan P. Wanzer, Member