The Lay Advisory Committee (LAC)

To The Henrico County School Board

To Bring about better communication between the School Board and the patrons of Henrico County Public Schools

Meeting Minutes October 7, 2013 7:00pm Moody Middle School

Attendance: John Ballsrod (Tucker HS); Cathleen Jacobson (Springfield Park ES); Donald "Spec" Campen (Three Chopt); Steve Witmen; Ginny Crenshaw (Pinchbeck ES); Mary Nardo (Freeman HS); Elizabeth Breskin (Freeman HS); Amanda Barth (Echo Lake ES); Janet Sullivan (Shady Grove ES); Nancy Godfrey; Hilary Martin (Godwin HS); Peggy Berkeley (Pocahontas MS); Sandy Gharib (Glen Allen ES); Hank CHambers (Pemberton ES)

There were 14 people in attendance. 9 schools were represented, 5 ES, 1 MS, 3 HS.

**Call to Order:** Chairman-elect, Hank Chambers, called the meeting to order at 7:05pm at Moody Middle School. (IB Open House at Moody delayed the start of the meeting by a few moments)

**Welcome and Introduction:** Hank welcomed everyone. Since there were a couple of new faces, we went around the room and introduces ourselves.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes from the last meeting (September 9, 2013) were passed out for those who had not seen the emailed minutes. There was a motion and second to approve the minutes. Minutes stood as written.

**Committee Reports/Discussion:** Paula Beran of the Nominating Committee was not able to attend, so Spec Campen held the vote for the positions of chair, vice chair, and secretary. Hank Chambers was the nominee for chairman, John Ballsrod was the nominee for vice-chairman, Mary Schlanger and Cathleen Jacobson were the nominees for co-secretary. It was moved and seconded to close nominees. It was moved and seconded to accept the nominees for these positions. All were in favor. The vote passed to accept Hank Chambers, John Ballsrod, Mary Schlanger, and Cathleen Jacobson in these positions.

**Old Business/New Business/Open Discussion:**

Hank mentioned an article that had been written about Donald "Spec" Campen that discussed his World War II service flying B-17 aircraft. Hank extended a big "Thank you" to Spec for his service. This "thank you" was also seconded by all attendees.

**Meals Tax Referendum:** Christine Hagen with "Yes for Henrico's Kids" was at the meeting to remind the committee of the upcoming vote and to state that their group is in favor of the referendum. The money cut from schools could be made up with real estate taxes or this one. They feel the meals tax is the best option on the table. "Spec" mentioned that the bond referedum of 1953 was not passed and that was the main reason the LAC came into being.

Hank asked what had they heard from those that did not support the referendum. 3-4 years ago, a meals tax was attempted for money for roads. It failed. The board tried to go around the voting process, and this failed. It appears that it is being tried again, but is being relabeled for schools. There is no guarantee that the money generated will go to schools, or that the money going to schools now will not be reallocated to something else. Hank mentioned that there will be a number of forums before the vote, so he suggested that everyone get out there and attend. It will be interesting to see what will happen.

The question was asked: What will happen is the referendum fails? There are no plans. If it does pass, what are the plans going forward? What is still on the "chopping block?" No one has seen a list of cuts.

Nancy suggested that even though the LAC will not be taking a position that we should push out the meeting times and push out information, so that everyone can make an informed decision.

It seems that those against the referendum are going to the meetings, but those for it are not.

**SOLs/Common Core/testing:** Common Core s a nationwide issue. VA currently does not participate. Nancy opened the discussion.

Common Core is a restructure of education. It will be monitored at the Federal level and not the states/teacher level. It is to be a change in philosophy that is being led, in large part, by the Gates Foundation. It is important to VA as 45 states have already signed on to the program. It is important to educate the teachers and parents.

VA is not officially adopting this system, but the SOLs have been aligned to it and the textbooks used in the schools are being updated to Common Core standards. Longitudinal Data System is part of the overall system. It tracks progress and is being expanded to over 400 data points. Some people see issues with the system. For example, in literature, there is less emphasis on reading the classics and more with reading technical writing. In math, there is an attempt to implement a geometry program that was unsuccessful in another country. Nancy mentioned the website, www.stopcommoncore.com as a place to look up more information.

Hank asked if this would be an issue where we should bring in someone to discuss the issue. Nancy and John will be working together to research this issue more fully.

SOLs: The VA Dept of Education website has some very interesting material listed. There were a lot of students who failed Algebra II and had to take it over in the summer. It was noted that a lot of the questions were aligned with Common Core. The VA take is that students should at least meet, if not exceed, Common Core standards. Looking at a release 3rd grade history test, it is interesting to see what they believe the students should know. From the website, any SOLs can be pulled up.

There is some concern about the amount of testing going on in the schools.

**Math Readiness:** Ann Slough is not here as she is on HCCPTA and they meet at the same time as LAC. Nancy, on Ann's behalf, spoke a little on a principals coffee that Ann attended. At this coffee, it was asked if any of the parents would be interested in having a math meeting. The answer was a resounding "yes." Then they were asked how many had math tutors; over 75% said they did.

There is a thought that the teachers are not teaching that math anymore. It is expected that the parents will teach it, but they cannot help their students. Haven't used it in a long time, or different way of doing it now then when the parents were in school. The majority of students and parents think they are on their own. Freeman HS is willing to host a math meeting.

Hank suggested we talk to the administration and teachers. They will be more open and honest with the LAC. Parents need to step up and advocate for this kids. Principals hope kids(middle and high school) will advocate for themselves

Here are 2 pieced of the puzzle: 1) the math SOL was changed around causing lower grades and 2) the issue of the 10 point grading scale, if it passes, it will change enough to mask the lower scores

**Split into groups to discuss issues:**

* There was overcrowding at Pinchbeck. The parents discussed this issue with the principal and a 5th kindergarten class was added.
* IB program: several parents/students discovered that the reality of the program was not what is was promoted as. The feeling is that they will say anything to promote themselves
* MAPS testing has still not happened. The schools are having issues with the vendors.
* What is the update on the superintendent? Russo is still superintendant and lawyers are in talks. no search for a new superintendant when he is still holding the position
* Laptops: no filters when they were issued to students and the parents were not told. Students are being asked now to bring in their laptops to IT for the security for filter installation.

Students are using proxy sites to get around filters and visiting websites. Parents need to be informed o this ASAP. Nancy has agreed to

**Adjourn:** Hank adjourned the meeting at 8:25pm

Information:

**October 10** - Henrico County School Board Work Session

**October 24** - Henrico County School Board Work Session and Monthly Meeting (6:30pm)

**November 7** - Henrico County School Board Work Session and Monthly Meeting (6:30pm)

LAC Meetings :

November 11, 2013 December 9, 2013 January 13, 2013

February 10, 2014 March 10, 2014 April 7, 2014

May 12, 2014

All meetings will take place at 7:00pm at the Moody Middle School library.

LAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARGE:

There shall be a Lay Advisory Committee composed of parents and/or community members who represent the various schools within the County. This committee shall be organized in accordance with its own constitution and bylaws and shall advise the School Board on educational matters of general interest or concern to the community.

Respectfully submitted, Cathleen Jacobson, co-secretary