



METROPOLITAN
Nashville
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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March 17, 2010

The Honorable Diane Neighbors
One Public Square
Nashville, TN 37219-6300

Dear Vice Mayor Neighbors:

I understand that the Metro Council passed a late resolution last night requesting the Metro Nashville Board of Education to conduct a second public hearing regarding the proposed 2010-2011 Metro Nashville Public Schools budget. I appreciate your members' interest in and concern about the funding of our public schools.

As you know, the school board conducted a public hearing on Thursday, March 11. That event was announced weeks in advance and was publicly posted; then, to better accommodate employees affected by the temporary 30-minutes-later school closing time, we moved back the meeting's start time 30 minutes and repeatedly made public notice of that. As a result, in the days leading up to the event dozens of people followed the stated procedure by contacting the school board administrator's office by phone or email to register to speak. Clarifying one apparent misunderstanding about the process, there was no limit either to the number of speakers or to the length of the hearing itself. My personal expectation had been that since there were hundreds of union members rallying at the Bransford Avenue MNPS offices during the exact time of the posted 3:30-4:45 p.m. walk-in registration period that scores more would have signed up. Of those hundreds, only a handful of people chose to sign up in person to speak at the hearing starting minutes later even with walk-in registration extended to 5:05 p.m.

The public hearing succeeded in allowing the school board to learn employees' and community members' thoughts and concerns about the budget proposed to the school board by Director of Schools Jesse Register. School board members listened attentively, and I am sure awareness of comments made at the public hearing will inform our thinking

as the full board considers and deliberates on the 2010-2011 budget.

The public hearing was not deliberative – board members simply received comments from concerned community members. At future budget committee meetings and the next board meeting, the school board will deliberate on the budget proposal and is expected to vote on it at the March 23 board meeting. That schedule will allow us to submit a board-approved budget recommendation to Mayor Dean's office before he begins budget hearings the next week.

Communication yesterday from Metro Council Education Committee Chair Kristine LaLonde makes it clear that the Metro Council is eager to gain additional public feedback on the proposed MNPS budget. I applaud the committee's seriousness in performing its due diligence. Holding public hearings on the proposed budget of MNPS or any other local governmental agency is clearly the prerogative of Nashville's funding body. While the school board itself will not be conducting another public hearing, I am pleased that the Education Committee has offered to do so and wish it well in holding a productive hearing. If the budget process results in funding above the proposed \$633.3 million, this would necessitate the board's giving additional thought to spending priorities, and the school board likely would schedule another public hearing for that purpose.

Thank you again for your interest and involvement in the public school system's budget process. The school board intends to use its funding to ensure that every student is offered effective instruction in every classroom everyday. The collaboration of the Board of Education, Metro Council and Mayor augurs well for achieving that goal.

Sincerely,



David A. Fox
Chairman, Metro Nashville Board of Education

cc: Members of the Metropolitan Council
The Honorable Karl Dean
Dr. Jesse B. Register
Dr. Danielle Mezera