

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

Volume 46, Number 8

Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County, An MSEA/NEA Affiliate

April 2014

The Money Months of April and May

It is during the month of April that the County Executive must put the finishing touches on the Fiscal Year 2015 Budget she will present to the members of the County Council as well as the general public. The schools were not treated too well in FY14, and there is hope that schools will be treated a bit better in FY15. We will see soon enough.

For TAR readers that wonder how this budget is put together and why salaries have been so stagnant, there is a brief outline of the budget process below. For the purpose of this article the referenced "budget" will be the operating budget.

1. The School Superintendent presents a proposed budget to the Board of Education at its December meeting. (The BOE meets only once in December.) The Board holds two public hearings in January and subsequently adopts its budget request at its second February meeting. The Board has the authority to modify the Superintendent's proposed budget as it sees fit before forwarding it to the County Executive. Like any Board action, the adoption of the recommended budget requires a majority vote, at least 5 of the 9 members of the Board. Abstentions and absences have the same effect as *Nay* votes.
2. The budget then goes to the County Executive, who has the remainder of February and all of March and April to consider and modify the budget. The County Executive also holds the greatest unilateral authority over the budget and may approve the budget as it stands, reduce it, or shift funds from one budget item to another. Ironically, the County Executive does not hold a public hearing as do the Board and the Council. That is one of the contributing factors that caused us to ask members to contact the County Executive. (We hope that members are doing so.) The County Executive must present the proposed budget to the Council by May 1.
3. The Council has 45 days to consider the budget during which it holds two public hearings. The Council is not completely unfettered in its action. It may approve the budget as it stands, reduce it or restore funds cut by the County Executive. Like the Board, adoption of the County budget requires a majority vote. On the Council, that means 4 of the 9 Council members.
4. The adopted budget returns to the Board in June. It is typically less than was recommended back in February – over recent years, much less. The Board must reconcile it by reducing projected expenditures to accommodate the reduction in revenue provided.

Outside of the budget process, negotiations between TAAAC and the Board occur. This year, they began in early October and they are still ongoing at the time of this writing. Another year of Maintenance of Effort will only serve to put even farther behind our colleagues in surrounding districts, virtually all of whom have been catching up from the impact of FY10 and FY11. Seven months of negotiations will be undone. And IF it happens, the cuts will likely be done in the office of the County Executive. We will need 4 votes from the Council to make restorations. We will be asking our members to attend the Public Hearing on May 12th and to make contact with their Councilman.



Bill Jones

Political Involvement, a Necessity

An election year is upon us, and staff and government relations volunteers have spent quite a few evenings reviewing questionnaires and interviewing candidates for public office who value TAAAC's recommendation and want a spot on the well-recognized *Apple Ballot*. Occasionally, those of us who are heavily involved in the process face questions from members (once-in-a-while, in terms inappropriate for polite company) why our organization should involve itself in elections. The answer is a simple one, and the past four years have made it very evident.

Every decision made that has impact on students, teachers, and other education professionals is made by an elected official or an appointee of an elected official. Not only should we be involved in elections, we would be badly recalcitrant if we were not. What is taught, how it's taught, how teachers are evaluated, how much is spent on education, how many students are put into a classroom, what teachers are paid, who will be the healthcare provider, what the healthcare plan will cover and how much each employee must contribute; these matters and many

COMMENTARY

more are ultimately decided by elected officials or their appointees. Since the 2010 election, we have been stuck with at least two friends less than we've needed to secure adequate funding from the folks elected to office in the Arundel Center. We need a County Executive and a majority of the County Council (4 of 7) who have sufficient regard for public education to fund it adequately. Maintenance of Effort alone is not adequate, not even close. Nevertheless, that's what we have been told to expect.

“So, IF it is professional interests that drive your choice, then in most races the best candidate has already been identified, and the recommendation was defended before TAAAC’s Government Relations Committee, Board of Directors, and Association Representative Council.”

As stated, TAAAC leadership is and should be involved in elections, and to be effective its members need to be as well. By most recent count, TAAAC has 5,776 members. Including family and friends, TAAAC should be able to influence 7,000 votes in a county wide general. That's quite a large block of votes to deliver to a potential friend of public educators, but it's not happening.

Too few of our members who vote regularly are habitual voters. Too many who do, vote for the opponents of TAAAC recommended

candidates. Minimally, those candidates have been vetted by questionnaire responses and interviews before a panel comprised mostly of teacher volunteers and have showed themselves to be friendly to public education and public educators. Incumbents have voting records that are also reviewed and scored. Often, when members choose to vote for opponents of TAAAC recommended candidates, they vote in their own professional disinterest.

Obviously, TAAAC doesn't dictate who members must vote for. Just as obviously, members may have interests beyond their profession that inform their selections. But TAAAC has a fairly elaborate process to distinguish those candidates who are most likely to serve the interests of public educators and the students they serve. So, IF it is professional interests that drive your choice, then in most races the best candidate has already been identified, and the recommendation was defended before TAAAC's Government Relations Committee, Board of Directors, and Association Representative Council.



TAAAC Action Report

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From Contentia this month . . . *Part-time Unit I Members and Snow Days — Make it up now or later*

The school system now uses software that accounts for the total hours employees work. This year full-time Unit I members were scheduled to work 190 days at 7.5 hours per day, or 1,425 hours. A half-time (0.5) employee would be expected to work exactly half of that, or 712.5 hours for the year. However, snow days, delayed openings and early closings, and other circumstances have impacted the calendar.

As I write this article a new snowstorm is predicted, so no one knows for sure at this time the final number of work hours for this full school year. Part-timers should attempt to budget their work time so that by the end of the year they are close to their contractual hours. Part-time employees who have already made up the time for each snow day this year will find they have worked too many hours and should work out a schedule to reduce the hours worked during the next few months.

Premium Holiday Grievance / *Withdrawn*

In the fall of 2013, the Board closed out its fiscal year 2013 budget. In the exhibit used for the closeout, the Healthcare Fund balance showed an amount that constituted 185% of average monthly claims expenses. Collective bargaining agreements of all four represented Units (1, 2, 3, and 4; represented by TAAAC, AEL, AFSCME 1693, and SAAAAC, respectively) require that employees are reimbursed their share of any fund balance over 150% of average monthly claims. The reimbursement would be in the form of a premium holiday in the month of December. On its face, closing out at 185% seemed to indicate that the premium holiday should have occurred, but none did.

TAAAC raised the question and asserted that the premium holiday was due, but failed to receive a satisfactory response. So, TAAAC's President along with its other Officers and Directors, initiated the appropriate grievance and submitted it to the Superintendent. On March 10th, the requisite informal conference was held and budget data was reviewed in detail. Some unanticipated information was revealed.

The Board's accounting for healthcare contributions and claims costs separates active employees from retirees. The total fund balance did in fact exceed 150% of average monthly claims. In fact, the fund balance grew by approximately \$5.8 million during fiscal year 2013. But, the entirety of that growth was due to retirees' claims expenses coming in at almost \$6.5 million under projections. On the other hand, claims costs for active employees actually exceeded projections and reduced the total fund balance to about \$700K less than it would have otherwise been.

In that the language clearly states that employees will be reimbursed the employees' share of the overage, and the employees' share was less than zero; there was little choice but to withdraw the grievance. Following consultation with TAAAC's attorney, TAAAC's Officers and Directors chose to do so at its March 12th meeting.

Social Security Numbers on Leave Slips

With the buzz around access to social security numbers being too accessible, the issue of their use on leave slips became a topic of discussion at the March Association Representative Council. As it turned out, even though there is a line on the leave slips for the social security number to be placed, it is apparently unnecessary. Some of the AR's in the room have been routinely leaving it blank. So, TAR readers concerned about how many people might handle a document bearing their social security number may choose to do likewise.

Common Sense Prevails

The House and Senate have voted to support local autonomy in the development of teacher and principal evaluations, as well as to provide peace of mind to educators that state tests will not be used for personnel decisions until at least the 2016-17 school year.

Don't Do It!

Social Media in the Workplace

The following warning is located within the Board Policy on "Student Use of Social Media":

"AACPS prohibits communication between students and staff through social media except in cases where the communications are approved, monitored and regulated by AACPS administration and parent(s)/guardian(s) written authorization."

Besides this direct warning, Board Policy (GAOO-RA) goes on for four pages on "Employee Use of Social Media." It is a **must read** for any employee who uses Social Media in their personal life and in the classroom in the form of email, web-sites, blogs, etc...

For any specific questions, call TAAAC or go to the AACPS website and type "GAOO-RA." Here is a brief summary:

Use in School

- The employee needs permission to develop/use any site and must give access to Administration. They will monitor regularly.
- Any site shall have parent access.
- Must notify parents about site's existence/use beforehand.

Communication with Students

- You may only communicate electronically (text, email etc...) with students if you have **prior written permission** from the parent/guardian.

Personal Use of Social Media

- Never communicate inappropriate messages or pictures about yourself to fellow employees or students. This includes your "personal" Facebook-type sites.
- You must receive written permission from the parent/guardian to post pictures of any student (or employee of AACPS), even for an approved school activity or sport.

Cell Phones

- Texting or calling students is almost ALWAYS a bad idea, even if the parent/guardian is aware of the communication. Don't do it.

Although you have heard these things before, TAAAC members are continually getting themselves into hot water for violating these policies. Even employees having innocent communications with students have lost their jobs violating these policies. Please use extreme caution in all use of Social Media both personal and private.

AACPS Email Addresses

Please, PLEASE, send TAAAC a non-work email address if you haven't already done so. There is some organizing to be done over the next couple months on bargaining (if no settlement is reached), the FY15 budget, and the upcoming election. All will involve communications to members that may not be appropriate to send over the employer's network. Send to BJones@mseanea.org or fax to 410-841-5117.



Take heart—and make it healthy

Work schedule: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. How would you like to have that in your job description? For the human heart, 24/7 is the standard. Subpar performance may not seem like an option when talking about the heart's work habits, but for roughly six million Americans living with heart failure, it's a round-the-clock reality.

There are certain risk factors for heart disease that can't be avoided, such as being over age 65, male or African American or having a family history of heart disease. But, according to the American Heart Association, there are three lifestyle changes to help you defend against heart disease.

- **Avoid tobacco.** Smoking doubles your risk of developing heart disease.
- **Exercise regularly.** Any exercise is better than none, and just 30 minutes a day on most days of the week will help lower your risk.
- **Eat healthfully.** Build your diet around vegetables, fruits and whole grains, and cut back on salt.

If you'd like to learn more about heart disease and how to manage or reduce your risk factors, join us for an informational seminar on April 29, at 6pm in the Doordan Institute at Anne Arundel Medical Center.

For information or to register for the seminar, visit askAAMC.org/TAAAC

NOTE: Jennifer Brady, M.D., is one of four heart doctors in the Anne Arundel Medical Group Cardiology Specialists. She is board-certified in cardiovascular disease and electrophysiology. Learn more at www.AAMGCardiologySpecialists.org or call 410-897-0822.

March ARC Attendance

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The following schools, departments, and affiliates were not represented at the March 5, 2014 Association Representative Council Meeting.

Affiliates – Coaches Association, Counselors, EMAAAC, SLAAAC, Social Workers; **Departments** – Riva Road; **Elementary** – Annapolis, Arnold, Bodkin, Brock Bridge, Brooklyn Park, C & I Res. Ctr., Comm. Based Servs. at Point Pleasant, Crofton, Crofton Meadows, Davidsonville, Deale, Eastport, Edgewater, Folger McKinsey, Fort Smallwood, Four Seasons, Freetown, Germantown, Glendale/Glendale Level V, Hillsmere, Jessup, Jones, Lake Shore, Linthicum, Lothian, Manor View, Mayo, Millersville, Nantucket, North Glen, Oakwood, Overlook, Pershing Hill, Piney Orchard, Rolling Knolls, Seven Oaks, Severn, Severna Park, Shady Side, South Shore, Van Bokkelen, West Meade, Woodside; **Secondary** – Annapolis Middle, Arundel Middle, Brooklyn Park Middle, Corkran Middle, Glen Burnie High, Northeast High, Old Mill Middle N., South River High, Southern Middle, Southern High; **Specials** – Arlington Echo, Center of Applied Tech. N, Center of Applied Tech. S., Chesapeake Science Point, Infants & Toddlers Program, J. Albert Adams Academy, Mary E. Moss Academy, Phoenix Academy, Staff Development - Carver.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Bethany Alexander
 Ashley Amodio
 Jennifer Batta
 Matthew Bem
 Beth Bogard
 Timothy Boston
 Katherine Bouchat
 Christina Cantrell
 James Cave
 Casey Cuneo
 Christopher Demanss
 Kristin Dempsey
 Ada Downing
 Thomisha Duru
 Elena Hall
 June Holland
 Tracy Jackson
 Kripa Kelly
 Ashli McClure
 Katharine McGlaughlin
 Amanda Newell
 Janelle Panizari
 Kristin Prosper
 Tabatha Schaffer
 Chelsea Shaub
 Emily Slear
 Linda Swann
 Kathryn Walker
 Avril Warren
 Lanetta Wilson
 Lauren Wood
 Carol Young
 Jonathan Zeigler

Hershey Park Springtime in the Park

Regular (ages 9-54):
\$27.80*
 (\$4.00 savings)

Jr/Sr (ages 3-8; 55-69):
\$18.80*
 (\$3.00 savings)

*admission rates listed above include \$0.85 amusement tax added at checkout

**tickets are subject to a \$0.75 per ticket convenience fee at checkout

TAAAC members can purchase tickets online at:

<http://tinyurl.com/anne2014>
 Enter promo code: 14895

Dates Valid
April 12-13, 18-20

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Nominating Committee is currently accepting nominations for the **Sick Leave Bank Approval Committee** and the **AACPS Calendar Committee (Elem.)**.

Nominations will be accepted until the May 7 Association Representative Meeting.

Name _____

Address _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

I would like to place my name in nomination for the following position(s):

Sick Leave Bank Approval Committee

AACPS Calendar Committee (Elem.)

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Nominating Committee is currently accepting nominations for a one-year vacancy on the **Board of Directors** beginning August 1, 2014.

Nominations will be accepted until the May 7 Association Representative Meeting.

Name _____

Address _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

I would like to place my name in nomination for the following position:

Board of Directors (1 year term)