

Heinz Weverink, Apr 25, 2023, 5:53 PM

Damned if I do and damned if I don't

And either way, it won't hurt me at all, I won't be affected one bit. But my children and my grandchildren and my great grandchildren will bear the brunt of the impact. They will take the hit on the first round and then they will get hit again and again. And then, it will be their turn to face it, to sit there and say "damned if I do and damned if I don't" but what I really fear is that they will say "damn, why didn't he do?"

I have been repeatedly asked to testify before the County Council with regards to the MCPS operating budget as well as the Capital Improvement budget. In a previous role, where I was supposed to advocate for the needs of various schools, in fact what the real intent of that position was to serve as a shill for MCPS. An organization that is currently trying to minimize parental involvement in the functions of the schools, the MCPS and the Board of Education itself. But, they say we need you to blindly go forth and tell our tale of woe so that we can get more money. Parents as friends of this school system are only welcome as long as they follow the instructions they are given, and are of use to the system by being the beggars, the clueless beggars, serving silently, like drones. As a fan of Star Trek, it would seem that the MCPS and the Board would prefer that we join the collective and be assimilated.

You see, my dilemma is that I truly do understand that it takes massive amounts of money to operate a system of this size. And frankly, honestly I have to admit that this system is one of the best in the country. I know that opposing these funds will likely go nowhere. I know that if the funds are cut, then the children will be punished, not the folks in Rockville with their six digit incomes. The children will suffer, they will be the whipping boys and girls, and the Board will sit there and say "well we tried, but we couldn't get your support", which really is tantamount to political blackmail. Do it our way, or pay the price, and keep paying, yield and you will still pay the price, but we'll make you feel good about it.

Like any parent/grandparent/custodian/guardian, we want the absolute best for our children. That fact is why we are all talking, writing, testifying, reading and listening. That's why we spend endless hours in meetings, serving on committees, manning the booths and passing the flyers. But, no matter what, there are limits. There are limits to how much we can afford, there are limits to the sustainability of an ever growing budget, there are limits to our threshold of pain.

Do we have needs, we damn sure do. Do we have controls over the excessive spending and manipulation of the finances, we damned sure don't. What I would like to see is improvement in our maintenance of the existing facilities, in order to preserve our capital. This requires change in structure, it requires that we have personnel at each large school (generally the high schools) and supportive to the other schools in the cluster. Eliminate the discussion of whether or not it is maintenance or construction, keep failed maintenance from becoming a Capital Improvement. Hire the personnel and elevate their status to be able to take care of maintenance issues and minor construction and repair issues, on site.

Require that all Capital Improvement projects include in their cost proposals include the long term maintenance costs of those new or improved facilities, not just the construction cost, but the overall cost.

Require that new construction can not proceed until all of the existing facilities are up to code and meet the newest standards proposed for the new construction. In other words, let no building be left behind in favor of a new building.

Task the Inspector General to review all of the processes and procedures, both large and small to eliminate waste. While we are grateful for the IG's efforts in the Transportation Department issues, there are many other areas that are not newsworthy, but need to be addressed to protect the people's money, the same money that we are now asking you for. I ask that you do all you can for our children while keeping in mind the impact on their future.

Respectfully submitted,

Heinz Weverink, a private citizen