

Public Comment
2/3/10
Humberto Valencia

Good Evening

I am here to talk about how the district can save money. If money is an issue then we need to work together. Let me share a few examples.

Not long ago, AAPS hired a company to go from building to building and to go from classroom to classroom to count light bulbs, switches and outlets. Why were the custodians not asked to do this job if money is an issue? How much did this service cost?

At Slauson, a light bulb in a cafeteria food warmer burned out. As head custodian I called my crew chief to report this. Five hours later Johnson Controls came and installed a new light bulb in the food warmer. I ask, how much does such a service call cost the district?

Take a look at this flyer. If money is an issue do these flyers really need to be made? Just last week, these flyers were placed in every school for the the staff. How much did the district spend on these cards? Could the same thing have been accomplished by putting the information on the web site? Was this really the right time to print such cards given the proposed budget cuts that are on the table?

In the fall a company was hired to do the collection of data regarding employees insurance policies. Can not our own employees compile that information?

How does the district explain the new school messenger phone system? As of this week, the middle and high schools now have a phone messenger system that contacts the student's home for any absence. Technology is important. But, are we beginning to put in place a system that will next replace another group of employees? What is the cost of this newly added phone system?

Do you realize the district has also slowly chipped away at the custodial and maintenance department over the years? AA use to have plumbers. They re-piped almost every elementary and middle school's plumbing. But now, the district pays private companies to do the work our own personnel use to do. **IF THE Ann Arbor Public Schools has slowly eliminated custodial and maintenance workers then why is there still an issue regarding the costs for these departments?** Could the private companies be charging the district too much money for the services we still need to have done?

With four minutes to speak I can only share a few examples for how the district could lower costs.

BUT, I'm sure if you come and talk to us, **WE** the custodians and maintenance workers will **find a way** to cut costs. **We**, the employees who believe in **our** district, will **find a way** to meet this challenge, for our community and for our students.

TALK WITH US about what we can do. **If** we truly believe we need to all work together **then** let's all work together for the common interest of **our** district.

Humberto Valencia

Carol Mohrlock 2/3/10
Public Comments

Good Evening

I am a resident of the city of Ann Arbor, an employee of the district and a product of the AAPS system.

Privatization of any department is the concern I bring to you. Among other things, The Ann Arbor Public School District, stresses the importance of building relationships with students, parents, staff. Yet, parts of the proposed budget cuts move us further from this statement.

Ann Arbor's mission statement talks about nurturing the human spirit and building alliances with families and communities. Having worked at several of the district's schools I have observed on numerous occasions employees from the Custodial, Maintenance and Transportation Departments fostering the human spirit of our children. Employees who have gone beyond their job to connect with a student who is struggling. Employees who have been awarded the Celebration of Excellence Award for Customer Service. Employees who have translated the English language for parents. Employees who have volunteered to be a reading tutor. Yet, these are the very people whose positions are up for privatization.

In these challenging economic times, I recognize the importance of examining all budget options. I am thankful the district held community forums. I appreciate the school visits made by Dr. Roberts and Mr. Allen. But I ask the board to look at the current structure in the very departments where privatization is being considered.

As stated in the RFP, Ann Arbor Public Schools currently provides a high level of service to staff, students and community users of all district facilities." ..."The vision of our current in--house services systems is "Excellence and Customer Service".

This is an amazing statement. The words show the quality of the District. Does the district hope to accomplish the vision of Excellence and Customer Service by hiring individuals who are not invested in the district?

The RFP also states the "current employees will transition to and become employees of the contractor." Does this statement not say to the employees who have built their careers with AAPS -- keep working for the district but we don't value your service enough to pay you.?

AAPS has always been a leader. It has a reputation for being progressive and thinking outside the box. Privatization leads to distance and less accountability. One more level is added to the structure. To whom will an AAPS parent or employee report a concern? The worker from the privatized company? The supervisor from the privatized company? The building administrator? The district's crew chief? The supervisor of building and safety? The executive director? or the CSIP administrator of physical properties?

As a district we have already begun doing more with less. It seems only natural to look at the current structure of the very departments the district has established. It is

important for the district to analyze how the custodial, maintenance and transportation departments can work smarter and more efficiently before eliminating them. AND before establishing yet another layer.

The Board of Education has a difficult job. Thank you for doing what the public has voted you to do. TO uphold the mission statement of the district.

In closing, again I encourage you to look at the structure in the very departments where privatization is being considered. Our district currently employs many individuals who provide a high level of service.

The answer lies within us and with our district employees. Thank you for your time and for your work with this complex issue.

Carol Mohrlock
February 3, 2010

Public Comment
2/3/10

Dr. Roberts, Mr. Allen, Trustees of the School Board and the Voting Public,

I am Harry G. Bentz, a school bus driver in my 29th year of employment at AAPS. Through your presentations I am aware of the serious economic challenges we face as a school district and I appreciate your efforts to realistically face the issue and ask the public for input for solutions. But for more than 20 years I have seen every new administration and school-board trustee with a plan to reduce spending look at privatization as a solution. It was never adopted because it wasn't viable and the parents of AAPS would never stand for a reduction in quality of services.

My first glance at the budget issue is that a total of all salaries paid to District employees is \$190 million and you need to cut \$20 million from the budget. A quick, simple solution would be to cut 11% from everybody's earnings. I'm willing to take that cut if every other employee in the District is willing to do so. I realize salaries go up with every increment of education and I truly appreciate the value of our teachers across the District. The quality of our teaching staff is unsurpassed by any other district and that fact combined with all of our award-winning programs of music, sports, theatre and a host of other extra-curricular activities make AAPS an outstanding educational opportunity. However the support services are also essential to overall success.

Let me point out that a prevailing attitude seems to be that Transportation is not an essential service. As with Custodial, although it is not as glamorous as some of the advanced teaching positions, it is an essential service. Just in terms of having parents having to all converge on any given school within a 20 minute period and dealing with the ensuing traffic jam, it is essential. A close examination of bus driver salaries will show you are already getting a tremendous value from our bus drivers you will never achieve from a private company. When looking at the bus drivers' earnings, you should remember that 90% of our drivers are part-time employees making between 25 and 35 hours a week. But let us focus on safety.

Every time I hear anyone address the issue of Transportation I always hear the keyword "safety" being cited, as if it is some hot-button trump-card to persuade the audience. But I seriously wonder if any of them have a clue what that word means and all of the implications that are attached to it... Safety in Transportation is a culture of training, support, supervisory,

planning, methods, environment and ultimately, performance. It always comes down to the last three seconds of action before a potentially life-threatening situation occurs: What do you want the bus driver of your child to be thinking about? Will he be thinking if he can meet a mortgage payment next week, or a car loan, or insurance co-pay? Do you want that driver to be exhausted because she had to work the night before for some fast-food restaurant making minimum wages plus tips to be able to survive, or worried about a sick child for whom she can't afford health insurance?

In Transportation, the ultimate measure of safety is life or death: At which point does a reduction cause the deterioration of the safety culture to the point where it allows the death of a child? Dexter had such an event several years ago and the stench will never go away. All of the stepping-stone administrators and school-board members who were at the helm of that district have probably all moved on to new positions, most likely out of state. But the legacy of their culture of safety lingers like a toxic waste dump.

Public Comment
2/3/10

Good Evening Trustees,

I'm Chai Montgomery, I live in Ann Arbor and I drive a school bus for the district. I've made public comments in the past and I've spoken out against privatization [most recently at the 1/20/2008 BOE meeting]. Tonight I want to say again that privatization is bad for education, it's bad for public schools and students, and it's definitely bad for workers.

These are factual statements, true despite the inherent bias of the economic class that suffers most from privatized, "for-profit" education. Recently, others have claimed at this podium that "the Ann Arbor Public Schools does not have a revenue problem, it has serious expenditures problems." [See Harlod Miller and Ted Annis' public commentary notes for the 1/6/2010 BOE meeting¹] These are not factual statements. Their falseness reflects the inherent bias and vested interest of the economic class that gains from our suffering. We need money to run schools well, *period*. Lots of money. *More* than for war, *more* than for banks, *more* than for "corporate-citizens." We're talking about education and jobs, here, priorities of the highest order.

However, the accounting practices of the AAPS, like all institutions must be made more clear for the public. This is another refrain of the anti-millage crowd. But, it's not one of their deceptions, it is true. So, ...

Tonight I want to present some ideas that an esteemed colleague of mine, Mr. Harry Bentz offered in a letter he recently wrote for all of you. Harry is the most senior bus driver in transportation. He is also a college graduate with a Bachelor's degree in accounting information systems.

Privatization itself is an idea that epitomizes the [Paraphrasing Harry Bentz] "lack of long range planning" and thinking that plagues administrators and politicians. To cope with financial changes, we need better probable economic models, and we need to account for the lack of detail in budget line items.

For example, the wages and salaries for the transportation department budget are presented as a single line item. The various and distinct functions of the department are hopelessly blurred. No sense of how complex and essential each function is can be determined in this way. No clear understanding of the true costs and benefits can be obtained.

But functions are distinct. There are three cost categories to a more effective accounting: administrative, maintenance, and drivers and monitors.

When looking at the drivers and monitors earnings, bear in mind that 90% of us are part-time. Because of this; because of the way healthcare coverage is structured in our contract; and because managers over the years have hired more workers to reduce

¹ http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/boc.home/files/1_6_10publiccomment.pdf