

EXHIBIT 5

O'Neal, Jonathan

From: O'Neal, Jonathan
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2015 8:40 PM
To: 'katie@weigh4life.net'
Subject: RE: Hampstead Business Owner Concerned Over NCHS Closure & Suggestions

Ms. Redding,

Thank you for your thoughtful feedback. I'll do my best to answer some of your questions here.

There are many emails being received about the impact on business in Hampstead and Manchester. I have no way to assess the economic impact scientifically. All I can say is that prior to 2009 for decades there was only one high school that served both areas and there is no measurable impact on business before and after. What I can tell you is that if you choose to think of our school system from a business model standpoint, our business is in real, measurable danger now. We do not have the enrollment to justify our capacity and that problem is most prevalent at the high school level. We are declining annually in state funding by about \$2 million based on our enrollment decline. The County has tried to make up that deficit and the impact of annual increases but cannot fill that gap. Our employees have had two increases to base salary since 2008 and our salaries have plummeted to the bottom of our competitive market since 2009. Most importantly, we can no longer deliver full educational offerings and opportunities, and staffing, for all of our students and nowhere is that truer than in our most underutilized high schools such as NCHS and MVHS.

We have cut \$30 million in expenditures where we can over the past seven fiscal years to offset the state deficit and increased operating costs on top of not paying raises to our employees. These reductions have been well-documented and publicly discussed over the past seven years and many were met with similar opposition. Reductions included almost 300 positions which were disproportionately reduced from central office. Last year we negotiated a retirement incentive program with our teachers union that reduced 50 teaching positions in one year alone. Two years ago we cut 29.5 custodians and increased the square footage area for each remaining custodian to take care of by 7,000 square feet. There are many, many more specific examples to detail or you may also review this information which has been posted on the Budget Office section of our website.

Our county is not growing and at best is flat if not contracting. Birth rates have dropped to what appears to be a new standard that is 400/year lower than the prior decade so I see no short-term hope to reverse our enrollment trend. From the staff perspective, I cannot make a case that we should not consider closing a high school. With that starting point, we could not conclude that any other high school in the county is a better situation. I am not dismissive of the community concern, attachment, emotion, and stress associated with this possibility. I understand it very much. Since you approached me with a business framework in mind, I am offering our business decision-making in response. There is danger in email communication but I am not trying to incite you or convince you to agree with me.

The MGT report plan for a K-8 school was rejected last April in a unanimous vote by the Commissioners. It still has some merit in the grand scheme of our capital plan in the longer term. However, the MGT report was based on 2012 enrollment data and projections which have only worsened since then. Also, the K-8 project would do nothing to address our gross under-utilization at the high school level (please see appendix C & D in the report). We did give great consideration to the MGT study in forming our report. We carefully considered their analysis of balancing enrollment and the community feedback they had collected in particular.

We did look at 6-12 (or 7-12) schools during our committee work. We also considered other grade level configurations in other areas too. We ultimately did not believe those models offered better long-term solutions to the challenge we face.

I addressed our large-scale staffing reductions above and offered the budget website for additional information.

We used to have the nurse staffing model you suggest and spent many years transitioning to RNs. The reasons had to do with delivery of service, ever-growing state mandates in the area of student health, and the increasing volume and complexity of student issues in our schools each year. Our Board of Ed has been clear to us that they wish to make reductions that directly impact service to students in school last. That is why we have reduced positions at a much higher rate in central office over the years than in the schools.

In transportation, we rearranged school start times three years ago in order to best utilize the bus fleet. This was met with a great deal of unhappy public feedback at that time. We were able to reduce 40 buses from service and save the system \$1.4 million annually. Of course, those savings came directly from our 65 independent bus contractors; small businesses in Carroll County. We do not transport middle and high school students who live within our established walking radius. At the elementary level we have studied the possibility of reverting to a one-mile non-transport radius but anticipate a small annual savings of less than \$100,000. We have also considered a fourth tier of school times, which would save significantly more, but the trade-off would be elementary students getting home well into the evening.

I hope this addresses some of your business questions. I also hope the tone reads as intended, explanatory and not confrontational. I appreciate your understanding of the severity of our situation. It is my job so there is no need to be apologetic ☺. The report is with the Board now and I do not envy them. This is an extremely challenging situation and a significant situation is needed. There is no doubt that there will be major impact on our communities. Our Board Members are dedicated public servants who care about our schools, students, and communities. They are reading all public comment received on this topic and will consider it all as they decide whether to move our recommendations forward.

There is a Board work session on Monday the 28th so that the Board can ask us more questions and review the plan. We also anticipate questions about additional options. Please continue to be engaged in the process, provide feedback, offer ideas and solutions. The more actively involved our communities are, the better the final solution will be.

Thank you again for your thoughtful feedback. Please feel free to respond and continue to ask questions or offer ideas. I am doing my best to keep up with emails.

Jon O'Neal



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From: katie@weigh4life.net [mailto:katie@weigh4life.net]

Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2015 4:50 PM

To: O'Neal, Jonathan

Subject: Hampstead Business Owner Concerned Over NCHS Closure & Suggestions

Dear Mr. O'Neal,

I would like to take a moment to thank you for your service to our community and I appreciate the time and effort that you taken to consider the options recommended. I have concerns about option 2 as a parent, homeowner and business owner.

As a parent who moved to Hampstead for community. My children have grown up playing sports, attending church and spending the night with the people of this community. We are obviously sad to here that this may not be a possibility in the future. Each year that our children grow is another year of establishing and developing friendships and support systems that will help them in being successful members of society as they grow. If option 2 is approved, this will no longer be a possibility as they will have to switch communities and will always be the outsider at Winters Mill.

As a homeowner I am quite shocked and disappointed. Our family moved from Upperco, MD (just over the line in Baltimore County) to Hampstead on June 16th, 2015 making a huge investment so that they would not just be able to play together but also go to school together. We are quite concerned that this change in school districts could significantly effect our property values. If people want their children to go to school in Westminster, they will purchase homes in Westminster.

As a business owner in the community of Hampstead, the closure of NCHS is of great concern. My business depends on regular weekly visits of my clients and our hours accommodate their busy schedules. We are currently open during hours that our clients are able to drop their children off at practice, games or extra curricular activities, come visit our clinic and then return with enough time to spare. If their children are attending sports and after school activities in Westminster, I'm afraid my business will go with them and to my competitor in Westminster. We are a small business and losing even 25% could be a devastating hit and force us to close. We have been in business for 4 years, choosing to open in Hampstead because it's the community I grew up in and have a special place for in my heart. I even chose the colors of my business (Red, white and black) based on my alma mater.

I graduated from NCHS and CCC&TC in 1999 with my LPN diploma, which has given me the opportunity to open my business in 2011. Not only would losing this high school mean a huge loss of memories to many people in our town but a huge loss in our community. After school jobs would likely need adjustment or lost altogether as kids will need to find something in the Westminster area to get there on time. The kids who have played rec sports all their lives in Hampstead will have to fight for spots in a different community, a community of kids who already know each other and have worked and played together for 9 years.

I understand the difficulty of the task set before you. I know there is no easy answer. I understand no matter how you vote, people will not be happy and I completely understand that teachers need to receive fair pay. But have ALL options really been exhausted before coming to this point? Have you considered the economic impact this may have on small businesses and home values in the community of Hampstead? Hampstead is already in the process of approving or already building 500 new homes in the area. What will happen in 3-5 years when the redistricting needs assessing again because the population increased significantly? Please don't make the same mistakes that have been made in the past. In the late 80's Baltimore County schools closed 5 area schools because population was down. Within 5 years, all but one had to be re opened. Please do not rob Peter to pay Paul. We know something needs to be done quickly but closing down a high school is not the answer, not when there are other options.

Has the committee thought of any out of the box ideas such as:

- Making a Jr/Sr high in the North Carroll area? Would you consider the option of combining Shiloh Middle and North Carroll High as well as combining North Carroll Middle and Manchester Valley? Both high schools are underutilized. That would free up two middle school buildings which could be used for central office purposes and or an expanded Career and Tech Center.
- As suggested by the study completed by MGT of America and Superintendent Guthrie in December of 2012, why hasn't there been further consideration of closing or combining the Charles Carroll, William Winchester and East Middle facilities, all of which are falling apart. This costly study of \$88,000 appears to have been thrown out the window with little to no consideration. The other recommendation was to increase the feeder patterns to NCHS and MVHS from the two middle schools and redistricting some current Winters Mill students to the underutilized high schools. It doesn't make sense that their are children who attend Shiloh Middle school for three years and then have to return to Westminster to attend Winters Mill. If those students were redistricted, North Carroll would be right on par with other schools.
- Has there been a review of support staff and board of education staff positions that could be cut completely or reduced?
- Have you considered putting LPNs in you school nurse rooms and having a floater RN cover a larger number of schools? Until 2001, the Carroll County Career and Technology Center educated and trained the LPN program. Licensed nurses are completely capable of assessing patients, administering first aid, administering medications, communicating with parents and looking after the health and well being of children within their care. There are LPNs all over the state that work in hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, ER's and many other settings. They hang IV's, take vital signs, assess patients, report to physicians and care for their patients young and old, sick and well. Why would this be any different? There are many other school systems who currently employ LPNS or even others with less medical training, diplomas or degrees. This could be a significant cost savings across the county of up to \$500,000.
- Have you considered adjusting transportation services throughout the county? There are many communities in which students could walk to school. Especially within the communities in Hampstead. Buses are picking up students just steps from their front door and transporting them to school. How much time and money could be saved county wide if all children within walking distance were responsible for their own transportation to school.

I thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I do not envy the position you and your colleagues are in. I will be praying for wisdom and discernment as you contemplate the difficult decision that must be made. Please remember the impact a community can have as a whole to bring people together, build people up and support one another. We do not want to lose that.

Respectfully,

Kate Redding, LPN and Clinic Owner and Director

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