Sarah Harper

Board of Education Meeting- Hickman Mills

October 17, 2013

I attended the Hickman Mills School Board Meeting on October 17, 2013. Information in regards to the meeting was easily accessible through the Hickman Mills Electronic School Board. It very clearly listed details of when the meeting was to be held, where the meeting was located, and how to contact them with questions. There was a link to a map of directions to the meeting place, a phone number to reach them, and a link to the official website that contained an agenda of the meeting topics. The website was very informative and easily accessible to me and to any person in the community needing to attend this meeting, or any other meeting.

The Meeting was prompt, starting at precisely 7:00pm and ending at 7:56pm. Board Members and Attendees of the meeting were very friendly. As I was obviously, unfamiliar with my surroundings, others were courteous to point me in the right direction of the meeting, as well as lead me to a table filled with information of the meeting’s agenda. It was very accessible to anyone wanting to attend the meeting and be informed of its topics being covered. The room was medium sized, but filled. The board members were seated at the front room, formally dressed in suits and attire. The President, Peter F. Hershend, centered the room. Next to him, was the Vice President, Michael W. Jones, and Board Members Deborah L Demin, Charlie W. Shields, Russell C. Still and O. Victor Lenz. There were also lawyers and other business members present to enter into discussion.

The attendees dress varied from formal to casual, making me feel more at ease. Attendees consisted of several people. There were other students, like myself, as well as parents, bus company associates, teachers, and principals, most of which were involved in aspects of the meeting. The beginning of the meeting dealt more directly with acknowledging individuals with rewards in the schools for their outstanding and overachieving projects. For example an acknowledgement was given to a teacher, Coach Miller, for their involvement in getting the funding needed for gym supplies, such as rock walls and bikes. There were also teachers recognized for charity outreach, such as Ms. Johnson. As a teacher was announced in front of the group, there would be applause and a motion to go forward and shake hands with all the board members. I found there to be a great sense of appreciation and respect for the teachers who go above and beyond in their schools.

Following the recognition of teachers’ hard work was political issues involving the schools. There was an extensive amount of time spent in following up the details of the bus routes with a member of the bus company. They covered bus routes that needed to be revisited due to safe crossings for children as well as the buses for students with disabilities. They covered costs of each issue. Once they ended the discussion of the buses they continued with politics. They covered a legal issue in regards to a teacher, or board member that was present along with the lawyer that defended the case, Attorney Chris Gahagan. All issues at the end of the discussion were voted on by members to be passed with an agreement.

There was a place in the meeting agenda for audience comments. At this time a parent spoke up to inform of an upcoming school event that would be taking place in the near future with an invitation to the community to attend. There were also a comment of appreciation of how hard a principal had worked, and how thankful the staff in the audience was for their hard work. Board members also participated in the open comment session leading to the concern of safety in the schools.

While I had expected topics dealing with school business which I have already mentioned I did not expect to hear that there were issues with students and guns in this school. It is very shocking and saddens me to have heard of an actual experience having taken place so close to home that resulted in the death of a student. To know that these teachers face the hardship of students who threaten them and other students while trying to educate them is awful. It is upsetting and scary. Yet, they held more compassion than almost any person that I have ever encountered in my life. It reignited my reasoning for wanting to become a teacher. They have one of the most purposeful jobs that I have ever known anyone to have. They strive to make things better when issues as horrible as this arise. I got a sense of what urban schools mean, and now more than ever I want to be a part of something that makes our world, our schools a better, safer place. This is what appealed to me. To be a part of something purposeful and passionate.

Some of the vocabulary was over my head. There were a lot of documents read to the audience that were brief. At times I felt lost, and even uneducated. While the meeting at times was hard to follow because of this I am glad that I had the opportunity to be a part of this board meeting. I am glad that I could be in the presence of people who cared so much about the students. The Board Members seem to have a large responsibility in the decisions of which they had to make and I have no doubt that they were the right people to be making those decisions. From the pledge of allegiance to the sorrowful goodnight at the end of the meeting I enjoyed my experience and I believe it helped me pin point and identify my reasons for choosing this career path.