

Balinski elected BOE president, Phalen, Cousins sworn in

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Calvert BOE President Dawn Balinski

Prince Frederick, MD - The Calvert County Board of Education (BOE), currently short one member, held their first meeting of 2019 Thursday, Jan. 10. The session began with the formal swearing in of at-large members Pamela Cousins and William Phalen. Although a handful of citizens, in reaction to the previous board's lack of action on a proposal to allow school safety advocates to be armed, had hinted at write-in campaigns to win the two seats, Cousins and Phalen ran unopposed in 2018. Calvert Clerk of the Circuit Court Kathy Smith administered the oath to the returning board members.

Dawn Balinski, who served as BOE vice president in 2018, was elected board president for 2019. "Thank you for your confidence," Balinski told the other board members. Phalen was selected as board vice president.

During his monthly report, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Daniel Curry reported that leaders of the Maryland Legislature have "backburnered" any immediate action in response to funding recommendations by the Kirwan Commission, Maryland's latest education reform initiative. "We're not sure what this General Assembly is going to have for education," said Curry.

Later during the meeting, Phalen reported on a recent discussion about the Kirwan Commission's recommendations that was held by the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE). The association's leaders also indicated they were uncertain what actions state lawmakers will take on the commission's recommendations. Phalen requested that the Calvert BOE conduct a work session to decide with which initiatives of the commission's recommendations they agree and disagree. He recommended the work session take place after the Calvert County Commissioners have appointed a new board member to fill the vacancy in the Third Election District.

"I don't see the major impetus of Kirwan ever passing," said Phalen, adding that some of the recommendations don't appear to be workable.

Phalen also reported that MABE is supportive of pending legislation to give local school systems sole authority to decide when classes for a school year would begin and end. Such a measure would appear to override Governor Larry Hogan's 2016 executive order for Maryland public schools to begin classes after Labor Day.

Northern High project

Director of School Construction Shuchita Warner declared phase one of the Northern High School (NHS) replacement project completed. Students began occupying the new building last week. Warner conceded that school officials were still "working out the bugs" in the new facility, as well as distributing furniture from the old NHS.

Preparations for the demolition of the old building are also being planned. In answer to an inquiry during the meeting, Warner confirmed that "several hundred bricks" from the soon-to-be-demolished building would be set aside for NHS to distribute to souvenir seekers. She explained that a significant portion of the building's remains must be used to meet the contractor's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification recycling mandate for the new building. On the subject of souvenirs, Curry reported that all of the school's major athletic trophies have been salvaged and will be retained. There were some trophies, however, that no one wanted that will be disposed.

The NHS Replacement project contractor is J.A. Scheibel Inc. The project costs an estimated \$65 million.

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