

## Safety Committee Report

October 2009

**Chair: Laurie Halverson, [lauriehalverson@verizon.net](mailto:lauriehalverson@verizon.net)**

We held our first committee meeting on September 23. Our speakers were Joe Lavorgna, Sean Yarup and Pam Montgomery. This was a very informative meeting and the 15 members who came commented on how they left the meeting with a better perspective on budgets and facilities issues that affect our schools. Attendees were able to voice their concerns about their own schools and some left the meeting with commitments from Joe that their problems will be resolved. Here are some of the topics we covered:

- *Dr. Weast's response to the MCCPTA Indoor Air Quality Resolution.* If you are in a school with portables that still have carpet, PTAs can ask for it to be removed if the carpet is in poor shape and you suspect it is mite infested or is affecting the students' health. The ability of MCPS to implement the proactive preventive goals of the MCPS' Indoor Air Quality Team has been slowed greatly because of a 300% increase in indoor air quality complaints. Joe is working with the vendor of MAXIMO, the online work order system, to create a preventive system for each school, however, there is still a problem with the excessive cost of implementing this online tool. Portables are inspected annually. Joe says an MCPS policy on Indoor Air Quality is not necessary because the EPA does not have a policy and there are no measurable criteria. There is still an HVAC position open for the second shift—it's hard to find professionals who will work these hours. New hires in building service management will get worker training. Pam Montgomery is implementing an online safety training program and workers will take an assessment upon completion.
- *Enrollment:* There are 2,200 more students than last year and the vast majority comes at the elementary level. Many are coming from private schools. Bethesda is growing even faster than Clarksburg, mostly due to turnover. Unexpected things are happening, such as families "doubling up" in one living unit and families are moving in with grandparents. To react to this increase, some classes are larger this year and there is no more money for relocatable classrooms.
- *Gardens:* Growing gardens on a school property is complicated because of the pest management program. Some plants are approved for growing on school property but others are not. You can't use commercial fertilizer or Roundup on weeds on the property. If a school has a garden, who manages it over the summer when the fruit drops on the ground? Rodents can become a problem. Also, some students are allergic to certain plants.
- *Recess Aides:* There is no policy on the number of recess aides required on the playground because there are different circumstances (such as # of special education students, physical layout of the school grounds, traffic around the school, etc.) There is no national or state policy either. It is important for the recess aides to receive proper

training. Keeping an eye on the children and avoiding social time talking with other adults is key. Pam Montgomery visits the schools when requested to train aides. She is a Director but is the only employee who goes out to the schools for safety audits. One school was still waiting on Pam to approve their new playground equipment which had yellow tape around it.