

Your PTA and the Interagency Coordinating Board

I am pleased to have this opportunity to share information on the mission of the Interagency Coordinating Board (ICB) for Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF), established in 1978, and the philosophy behind the sharing of space.

The ICB is comprised of 12 members: Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education President, County Chief Administrative Officer, County Council Staff Director, President of Montgomery College, Park and Planning Commissioner, two representatives of principals, and four appointed citizen representatives. The ICB is charged with making policy decisions related to the community's use of public facilities and CUPF is responsible for implementing the decisions. In addition to providing access to schools, CUPF books space in closed schools, libraries, regional service centers and other government buildings. CUPF operates as an Enterprise Fund and is supported totally by fees from community users. **No** tax dollars are used to support the community use program.

Since Centralized Scheduling has now been implemented in all elementary, middle, and high schools, all community use activities (including PTA activities and the school's own programs that include additional staff costs) are scheduled by CUPF. Much of the impetus for Centralized Scheduling came from the need to coordinate all after-hours use in schools and concerns that the rules for using county facilities were not being applied equally to all users. It is important that that perception be corrected because schools are valuable resources paid for by all county residents through their taxes and, therefore, must be accessible to them when not being used by schools for their instructional programs. This is especially important when considering that 75% of county residents do not have children in MCPS, yet their tax proceeds provide for building, operating and maintaining these facilities. The benefits of Centralized Scheduling are obvious in terms of conflict resolution and energy management. We are able to work with schools to limit energy costs to particular zones of the school being used by the community.

The general rules for community use have been in place for over 30 years. What has changed over the years are aspects of implementation. Through the use of technology and streamlining processes, we have improved accountability as well as addressed safety and security concerns.

PTAs are nonprofit organizations but perhaps what is not apparent is that more than 97% of our users are also nonprofit, less than 3% of our users are commercial groups. All nonprofits are concerned with costs but the ICB believes all users must contribute to the "wear and tear" on school facilities and must cover utility costs, supplies and MCPS staff coverage. Keeping facilities affordable and accessible is an ongoing challenge.

We understand the closeness of the relationship between a PTA and their school and the feeling of "partnership" this evokes. However, we also have a responsibility to ensure the rights of all county residents to use the schools, knowing that these same PTA members are often members of other user groups as well.

PTA representatives who schedule use of space for non-PTA groups and activities must be cautious not to commingle accounts. Bookings for PTA activities ONLY should be booked under the PTA account. A separate account (or accounts) should be established for other activities a PTA representative is booking.

There are certain PTA activities that are so closely related to the educational function of the K-12 academic program of the school that they are viewed as school functions. These activities are administratively booked, based on information you provide both to your CUPF Scheduler and to the school, and are held without cost to the PTA, e.g., monthly PTA meetings. Other activities, however, are much more similar to community activities such as PTA fairs, carnivals, socials and are expected to contribute to ICB's reimbursements to MCPS for staff coverage, supplies, utility costs, and wear and tear on schools. These activities are scheduled by CUPF.

PTA-sponsored activities are given priority consideration (and the lowest facility rates) and are scheduled in advance of other public or community functions. For example, if the PTA wanted to use multiple rooms in the school for a weekend fee activity, you would be charged only up to a maximum of three units (rooms), exclusive of the gym, plus any clean-up at the Building Worker rate of \$29.50 per hour and the start-up fee of a flat \$15. Thus, if the PTA were using 10 classrooms and the all-purpose room, you would only be charged for three rooms. If you were using 10 rooms and the gym, you would be charged for the gym and 3 rooms. This represents a significant savings over what other groups are charged, which is per hour, per room.

To take full advantage of this benefit earlier planning is necessary. We understand that PTAs are volunteer organizations and it is sometimes difficult to coordinate complex planning far in advance. However, many of the organizers of other activities that take place in schools face similar obstacles. We need to give them as much planning time and notice as possible so that their events can also be successful. This is why we have the "special PTA priority window."

The major window for community users to submit their requests is from July 15 - August 1. During that time, almost 5,000 indoor use forms are submitted to this office for consideration of programs that begin September 1 through March 31. **PTAs have until August 15 to submit their use requests.** For the most part whatever PTAs need, PTAs will get if submitted by August 15. The PTA programs are entered into the computer and no other users are scheduled in those rooms on those days. Please keep in mind that users are contacting us regularly asking for the status of their requests, but we wait until after the **August 15** deadline before issuing permits to community groups. Plus, outdoor users are cancelled accordingly when PTAs inform us by August 15.

Booking PTA functions in advance allows us to give these other groups an accurate and timely picture of facility availability so that they can begin to develop their programs. Of course, we will still serve PTAs that do not submit within this special window, but we **cannot move or cancel other users** that followed proper procedures to secure facility space and have already planned for their events. These events also serve county residents and, in fact, many serve Montgomery County children that may attend the school itself or live in the neighborhood.

We are confident that Centralized Scheduling provides a win-win solution for all parties involved. We hope PTA representatives will focus on scheduling their events early, eliminating last-minute scheduling conflicts. An open invitation is extended to all incoming PTA presidents to attend one of our weekly Wednesday morning training sessions.

In response to increased concern regarding security of schools as well as the safety and security of our users, all groups requesting space for indoor activities in MCPS are required to attend User Education Training (UET) at CUPF's office. Attendance at this comprehensive user education program is mandatory for anyone requesting use of county facilities, regardless of whether they are a historic or new user. The UET trained representative must be a current PTA Executive Board member or PTA member. One PTA designee must submit all use forms, no matter what the event. The training is offered every Wednesday from 9:00-10:45 a.m. There is an evening class on September 14 at 5:30 p.m. To register call 240-777-2706.

With better planning on everyone's part, we hope that all users of public facilities will experience success with their worthwhile endeavors to serve county residents. My staff and I are always willing to work with the PTA to discuss ways to improve the process. Please feel free to contact me.

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