

- > At the November 6 Board of Directors Meeting, I will be proposing that
- > we establish an ad hoc committee to work on ICB concerns/fees/issues,
- > etc. This ad hoc committee will help us gather information and will give
- > recommendations related to any future resolution we may put forth
- > related to ICB.
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- > Our ongoing concerns have been discussed within MCCPTA at our Board of
- > Directors meetings and informally with local PTAs. We need high school,
- > middle school, and elementary school representatives to make sure all
- > school levels are represented in the committee's work.
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- > George Fountain, PTSA president at John F. Kennedy High School, Dawn
- > Trahern, MCCPTA Middle School Chair and Sharon Agranov, PTA President at
- > Brooke Grove Elementary! School have agreed to participate. I will
- > propose they be co-chairs.
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- > Anyone else interested in serving on this ad hoc committee as a member?
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- > Below, I have compiled the complaints and the concerns that I have
- > received from local PTAs about ICB.
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- > Information about Community Use of Public Facilities
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- > <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cuptmpl.asp?url=/content/cupf/index.asp>
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- > Excerpt:
- > Welcome to Community Use of Public Facilities and to a wide array of
- > opportunities for places to hold your next event. For more than three
- > decades, the Interagency Coordinating Board for Community Use of Public
- > Facilities (ICB) has helped to make public facilities accessible and
- > affordable year round for community activities. Before and after school
- > and throughout! the weekends, these activities continue in public
- > schools, libraries, regional service centers and other county
- > facilities. Private and public organizations, businesses, and
- > individuals are all welcome to use these facilities for their meetings
- > and activities (but no private celebrations, please). Let us help plan
- > your next event.
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- > Kay Romero
- > MCCPTA
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- > Complaints/Concerns- ICB:
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- > The ICB is not prompt in responding to requests for space reservations
- > and often cites insurance rules without specificity."
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- > Cluster is finding that renting space in our respective schools is
- > getting cost prohibitive. Many parents are surprised that PTA/School
- > sponsored events are charged a standard rate for space, especially those
- > parents that are from other school districts
- >
- > My parents are confused and unhappy that we have to pay such a large
- > amount of money to use our own
- > school for our own students.
- >
- > Mandatory training offered by ICB for those booking building use is at a
- > time of day that lots of parents may not be able to attend. There
- > should be day training and an evening training at least.
- >
- > The first is a specific policy change -- it is now impossible to
- > schedule a rain date for an event
- > without incurring the cost of the rain date, because you need to cancel
- > more than 2 weeks in advance (FYI, this means we're going to incur some
- > costs related to the canceled after school activities, too).
- >
- > My more general complaint is that it is surprising to me that the PTA is

> charged for the use of the school facilities at all, above the cost of  
> the maintenance staff. These are public schools, being used by the  
> PTA for programs to benefit our! kids -- why should we have to pay to  
> use  
> our own facilities?  
>  
> On a related point, we have had great difficulty this year booking a  
> space at for Bingo Night, because the cafeterias there are used by  
> county rec programs for weekly classes. I have had similar problems  
> booking field space because we are in competition with MSI for use of  
> our own fields (this has happened twice, when I have organized  
> kindergarten soccer programs). It seems to me that school-related  
> groups should have free (or at least significantly cheaper) access to  
> our own facilities than outside organizations, and that we should have  
> the right of first refusal.  
>  
> I then set about the business of filling out the forms for our other  
> events. The forms are surreal. I understand why we need to book space,  
> but I would also think the PTAs should have a simpler tool/process  
> that's distinct from the general public process. For instance, why  
> not a  
> PTA-only portal? I also think that we should be able to sign up online  
> and then pay the county after via PTA check. We don't have a credit  
> card, and frankly I didn't want my personal account getting mucked up  
> with PTA information, so that meant I could not use the online system.  
>  
> My 3 children and I have used the Montgomery County Public Schools'  
> indoor and outdoor facilities and libraries for 14 years. The use, care  
> and maintenance of these facilities was handled far better and in a much  
> more logical and expedited fashion for after-school kids' teams and  
> school-related functions and fundraisers before former County Executive  
> Doug Duncan's ICB ever came on the scene, back when said functions were  
> scheduled through the individual schools' front offices. It has been my  
> experience that ICB plays favorites, allows adult mens' basketb! all  
> teams  
> (and other assorted adult pickup games and tea ms) to come in, use our  
> school facilities, cause additional wear and tear on our gymnasiums,  
> restrooms, hallways and carpets, all the while denying access to  
> legitimate organizations with school-related functions. To top it off,  
> when asked specifically where the profits go from booking outside groups  
> as well as school-related activities, ICB officials have offered no  
> clear answers, and still don't to this day. That is how I feel about the  
> ICB system.  
>  
> I just completed filling out the paperwork for reserving school space  
> for a Northeast Consortium meeting in February and once again my ire at  
> having to pay for use of our own school for a school community event has  
> come to the surface. I am very pleased with the way our principal and  
> building staff work with the PTA on events, its the fact that ICB wants  
> to be paid for use of the room but does not contribute! to clean up or  
> service. It seems every time we turn around and want to do an event for  
> the school community - ICB has to stick their hand in our pockets. I  
> never see ICB out patrolling the athletic fields to make sure the soccer  
> teams are paying their fair share, nor does ICB come out and clean up  
> the trash left behind.  
>  
> To whom do we direct ICB issues within MCCPTA? The issue my kids'  
> school is having is a wide-spread one, I'm sure; outside groups are  
> getting preference over in-house groups for securing spaces (for  
> example, at my kids' school, SKRES, the drama club cannot reserve the  
> multi-purpose room w/ stage for drama rehearsals because Optimal  
> Learning Ctr has first dibs on the space). This must be a financially  
> beneficial decision on the part of ICB, but it is wrong, and I, and many  
> others, think we need to change this! . Could you give me some guidance  
> for filing a com plaint?  
>  
> If the county feels the need to charge user fees, they should at least  
> streamline the process and have cohesion within the system. I wrote my  
> check based upon my interpretation of the fee schedule. A day later, I

> was advised that my categories weren't correct, and we had a credit.  
> Now, I don't know how they issue this credit, because I was told (by  
> last year's coordinator) that the same thing happened last year and we  
> never received a check. What was changed? Who knows, I am in the don't  
> ask, don't tell phase. What is ridiculous, is the ICB fee charged for  
> our elementary school carnival. The carnival is NOT run to be a  
> fundraiser, but does partner with local business to sell food, and we  
> sell "baskets" made from donated items and tickets for the moon-bounce,  
> games and such to self support the event. Our ICB fee for the carniva  
al,  
> which is on a Saturday, using the whole school and fields - \$633.  
Really.

>  
> After all the volunteer hours we put into programs to benefit our  
> schools, teachers and children, the least the County could do is allow  
> us to do these things rent free! Beyond that, I've had a terrible year  
> of incompetence with ICB. There wasn't a single request we submitted  
> that was processed correctly. Wrong dates, wrong times, wrong rooms,  
> refused rooms because it took ICB 4 months to process a room reservation  
> request. I was personally shocked to see an organization as inefficient  
> as this one -- and one we are captive audiences to, and utterly without  
> recourse! Over billing was a substantial problem as well. We were  
> charged more than \$300 for a bookfair when the only out of school time  
> we were open was a Saturday, for which we gladly paid about \$75. I was  
> billed for 2 room! s for an entire day for Science Fair, a joint  
> PTA/School activity. And I can't begin to delineate how many hours it  
> took talking with ICB MANAGEMENT over 2 months to get these billing  
> problems resolved. Why should it take 4 ICB people 2 months to correct  
> the problems their office created? We are happy to pay for rooms and  
> building services staff, but this was way beyond the pale!

>  
> I am from an elementary school and I just paid almost \$1000 dollars for  
> ICB room rentals. Some of that money was for regular meetings with no  
> food or clean up, because we can only have one free meeting per month.  
> Thus an extra meeting for training our committee chairs or the Special  
> Needs Committee would like to organize a speaker, the PTA has to pay  
> extra for that space.

>  
> As a small elementary school, we find that ICB fees -- particularly for  
> a full-school activity, like our spring fling or back to school picnic  
> r! eprents a significant piece of our budget. This past year, ICB  
> apparently changed its policy for cancellations, and will no longer  
> refund money if the cancellation is less than 2 weeks before the date.  
> As a result, we were forced to make a decision whether to book our  
> school's fields for a rain date and incur the effectively non-refundable  
> additional \$160 ICB fee, or risk the weather and go without a rain date  
> for our annual back to school picnic next week. For a small school, the  
> additional \$160 for the rain date is meaningful -- we will need to sell  
> an additional 160 slices of pizza, or 32 more t-shirts, or 320 more  
> bottles of water just to recoup that cost (on top of the fund raising  
> required to pay for the booking cost of the originally scheduled date).I  
> surely understand the rationale for requiring outside organizations to  
> pay for the use of the public! schools' facilities and fields, but why  
> the PTAs?

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> Testimonies at Quarterly Board meeting- Interagency Coordinating Board  
> (ICB)-September 10, 2008

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>  
> September 9, 2008

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> Members of the Interagency Coordinating Board:

>  
> Good morning. My name is George Fountain I've been a PTA President for  
> a middle school and now at John F. Kennedy High School in Silver Spring.  
> I am very active in the Community having chaired a County Commission,

> and am presently a member of the County Executives African-American  
> Advisory Group.  
>  
> I am here this morning seeking a common sense approach to charging use  
> fees to the PTA's in the County. The primary mission of the PTA is to  
> support the parents, teachers and students of our schools. We receive  
> no funding from MCPS or the County, and 100% of every dollar raised  
> goes  
> to the school. However, for us to use our own schools for fundraising  
> we are charged in advance as category B, D or F. Heaven forbid we have  
> a cancellation and have to go through the refund process, a process that  
> only seems to work in favor of CUPF.  
>  
> If we want to provide tutoring, SAT prep, college financing workshops,  
> driver's education or any event by a professional organization we have  
> to give a cut to the ICB as you are known in the community. The  
> perception of the ICB in the community is not very favorable. To  
> illustrate, yesterday I posted a message on the PTA list serve for  
> comments about "ICB". I received over 38 responses some are attached,  
> but not one response was positive.  
>  
> The incident that precipitated my being here involves my school, Kennedy  
> High School being charged over \$1,500 to use one of our classrooms for  
> driver's education training, a category F activity. Driver's education  
> is not a part of the curriculum as it was years ago. As a result,  
> parents can as much as \$600 for some driving schools. We negotiated a  
> 50% cost reduction with an MVA certified school, and they agreed to  
> donate a portion for the senior class after prom. A donation  
> desperately needed just to be able to pay the CUPF space rental for the  
> after prom - the single biggest expense in our PTA budget.  
>  
> In closing, recently there has been much press about the additional fees  
> being charged by the schools for things that use to be included in a  
> public education. Things like paper, pencils, copies, arts and  
> athletics. I would venture that most parents or citizens are not aware  
> of the fees charged by ICB for the PTA to use space within their own  
> schools. I honestly believe the next investigative report needs to be  
> about the fees and processes of CUPF.  
>  
> Sincerely and thank you for the opportunity to speak.  
>  
> George L. Fountain Jr. MBA  
> PTSA President  
> John F. Kennedy High School  
> Cell (240) 876-1617  
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> \*\*\*\*\*  
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> Comments before the CUPF Board  
> September 10, 2008  
>  
> Good morning. My name is Patti Twigg.  
>  
> I am here this morning to express my frustration and share my recent  
> experiences with working with the ICB to rent school facilities on  
> behalf of MCCPTA. I am an officer of MCCPTA, one of two secretaries, and  
> was asked by the president to assist in the rental of school facilities  
> this past summer to hold a training. MCCPTA has a part time office  
> manager, our only employee, whose hours in the summer are extremely  
> limited. Add to that the fact that we had a change in office managers  
> during this summer, and I think you might see the reason for some of my  
> frustration with the following experiences.  
>  
> While trying to assist with the rental, I was told by members of the ICB  
> staff that:  
>  
> 1) I could not be the primary contact for MCCPTA because I was not an  
> employee. I am only permitted to contact them if our office manager is  
> out of the office. We are unique among county PTAs in that we actually

> have an employee - most county PTAs do not. Is this really a rule?  
> What are all-volunteer organizations such as our 200 local school PTAs  
> supposed to do, since they have no employees? ICB staff had no answer  
> for this. I was asked by ICB staff, "If you only have one employee, who  
> is providing the training?" I found this insulting, as it implied that  
> only salaried employees are capable of training people, and it also  
> displays a complete and utter ignorance of what PTAs do and how they  
> function. Again, with the singular exception of our part-time office  
> manager, we are an all-volunteer organization. Clearly there is a  
> disconnect between ICB staff and an understanding of their customer  
> organizations.  
>  
> 2) I was asked to provide the date of my training, because they could  
> not find me on their list. I am not sure how they expected me to  
> remember this, especially since it was several years ago. I did provide  
> them with the location, and the person leading the training, so they  
> could search the sign-in sheets. I can say with 100% certainty that I  
> did sign in that night.  
>  
> 3) I was also told that PTA officers are permitted to schedule use for  
> individual schools only. Why is this? Is there a different form for each  
> school? Once I do the training, why am I not permitted to schedule  
> events at other schools? For instance, the elementary school my  
children  
> attended frequently booked the local high school auditorium for their  
> annual talent show. Based on what I was told, the PTA president would  
> not be able to do that anymore.  
>  
> As a committed volunteer that also has a day job, your training schedule  
> is extremely volunteer unfriendly. PTA members are no longer just  
> stay-at-home moms like back in the 1950s. You hold mandatory trainings  
> once a week, at 9 am. The frequency is nice, but the time is a problem.  
> Even offering the training in the evening just once a month or two would  
> go a long way towards helping volunteer organizations.  
>  
> Some PTAs have had a problem with only being permitted one contact  
> person - what happens if that person is ill, out of town, or graduates  
> out of the school? With volunteer organizations, duplication in order to  
> provide complete coverage is essential!  
>  
> Just this past Saturday, MCCPTA held another training. We had the school  
> reserved starting at 8:30 am, in order to set up for our 9 am start.  
> When we got there, the building was locked. Thanks to the kindness of  
> the school security staff, one of us was able to get in and start making  
> phone calls to find out why we were locked out. In the chaos that  
> ensued, we discovered the following:  
>  
> 1) Despite the fact that we had reserved the rooms and sent the money  
> back at the beginning of August, and our Training Chair had called both  
> ICB and the school the day before and was told everything was on track,  
> the building services staff were not informed that we were coming. The  
> form he had listed only ETS as coming, and to different classrooms than  
> we were assigned, and with a different start time. If they had not been  
> there because of another event in the building, no building services  
> staff would have been there at all, and we might well have had to cancel  
> our training.  
>  
> I wish I could say this is an isolated incident, but the same thing  
> happened last year, and at many other meetings I have attended. That is  
> why we now make it a regular practice to call the school the day before,  
> and even that does not help many times. With the ever-increasing fees,  
> it is not unreasonable to expect a minimum level of service.  
>  
> As Paint Branch Cluster Coordinator and Area Vice President for the  
> Northeast Consortium, I serve an area that has some of the most highly  
> impacted schools in the county. The PTAs in these schools struggle to  
> exist, and work hard to raise funds to help provide programs for the  
> families and children they serve. But, I heard from one of those PTAs  
> just today, which had to cancel an event due to the high ICB fees

> because it became ! clear they would lose money after expenses, and then  
> they got hit with a cancellation fee! It is very hard to see how these  
> fees are benefiting the people of Montgomery County by limiting the  
> ability of PTAs to help their communities.  
>  
> Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.  
>  
> Respectfully submitted,  
>  
> Patti Twigg  
> 301-384-3847  
>