

DINNER

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by the government relations committee prior to the event.

Discussing violence in schools, McFadden asked state legislators if they would support legislation that would place violence against teachers in the same category as violence against firefighters and police, such as the bill proposed last year by Del. C.T. Wilson (D-Charles).

"We have had members of our educational community hospitalized because of attacks by students," McFadden said.

Both Sen. Thomas "Mac" Middleton (D-Charles) and Del. Edith Patterson (D-Charles), the two state legislators in attendance, said they would support such legislation.

"The same protection that we give to other public service people ought to be extended to teachers," Middleton said. "You can't disguise it, you can't deny it, it is happening in our school system."

Patterson said she opposed any effort by Gov. Larry Hogan (R) to expand the BOOST (Broadening Options and Opportunities for Students Today) program or other legislation for state-funded vouchers for students from low-income families to attend private schools.

"I oppose it, because I'm a former Charles County school board member,

and I feel that every dollar in education should go to public schools; if you decide to send your child to a private school, that is your decision," Patterson said. "I stand firmly in opposition to it."

Middleton said he would only support such legislation if public education is fully funded.

"I will only support the BOOST program only if we have made a full commitment to public education," Middleton said.

Middleton warned that the upcoming fiscal year may be a difficult one for education.

"Things look very, very dismal," Middleton said. "There's about a \$400 million structural deficit. We suggested to the governor that he reduce it by about 50 percent."

Middleton said that uncertainty at the federal level was worrisome as well. Repeal of the Affordable Care Act could result in an additional \$1.3 billion in Medicaid costs being added to the state budget.

"We're going to continue to fight for education, but there are going to be other programs — mental health, drug addiction — and where we find the money for those programs is going to be hard," Middleton said.

McFadden asked what the county proposed to do regarding the rising costs of educating the increasing numbers of special education students and English as a second language learners in Charles

County Public Schools.

"We recognize that's a new, expanding area in Charles County, and an important area," said Commissioner Ken Robinson (D). "We'll do the best we can."

Commissioners' President Peter Murphy (D) said the county budget seemed to be in a good position for the next fiscal year.

"It would really help us a lot if you could go back and prioritize for us, where the greatest need is within each of those groups. What do they really need, right now, so we can look at that," Murphy said. "We really rely on you to come back and say to us, 'Within our special populations, what we need is more personnel, more technology, or whatever it is, we really rely on you to give us that information.'"

McFadden also asked about teacher pay raises, which are currently two steps behind. Teachers did not receive pay increases in fiscal years 2011 and 2015 due to budget shortfalls, but Murphy indicated that was a non-starter.

"It's not possible to go back and deal with the back steps, because we have no way of generating that revenue back. We can go forward, and we've been looking to do that all along," Murphy said. "It's not that we don't want to, but we only get so much revenue, and we have to make decisions as to how that is spent."



STAFF PHOTO BY JAMIE ANFENSON-COMEAU

In foreground, Maryland Sen. Thomas "Mac" Middleton and Del. Edith Patterson take questions from, in background, moderator Veronica McFadden during a legislative dinner hosted by the Education Association of Charles County at Milton M. Somers Middle School Thursday evening.

Murphy said the county is also looking to slow the pace of development and keep class sizes low.

"We're changing the way that you build in Charles County; you're not going to be able to build in this county if there isn't capacity at the elementary, middle and high schools," Murphy said.

Debra Haan, a physical education teacher at Arthur Middleton Elementary School, asked what she and her colleagues could do to assist county government in making decisions affecting schools.

"It does make a difference when you show up, don't think for a minute that it doesn't. It makes a difference when you email, when you attend

public hearings. What I think might be helpful is don't only attend those public hearings that have to do with the budget and education specific issues," Robinson said. "We need to hear from you, not less but more."

McFadden asked school board members what they would like to do to improve retention, which is below the national average.

"I think it's important to look at the salary scale and to make it attractive across the continuum for teachers," said board of education Chairwoman Virginia McGraw.

Board of education member Victoria Kelly asked teachers to make suggestions to improve retention.

"We're not in the trenches like you guys are," Kelly said. "Anything you could do to help us understand what your position is, that would be helpful to us."

McFadden asked Berry what he would do to decrease cyberbullying and abuse of social media by students.

Berry said he would like to bring in specialists to speak with teachers and parents about proper technology use.

"We know that sexting is happening in our schools, and it's even happening in the elementary level, unfortunately," Berry said. "We also have to educate the parents, so they can monitor what's going on."

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VERDICT

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forensic examiner with the Maryland Office of Forensic Services, testified that she did not agree with Brand's findings. "I diagnosed her with acute stress disorder," Grant said. "... I had no medical documentation to support a brief psychotic disorder."

People suffering from psychotic disorders "don't go to lengths to cover up what they're doing," Grant said, adding that Caroline Conway used "evasive tactics" and displayed "goal-directed behavior."

Granados began closing arguments Friday by referring to a statement Caroline Conway had made in late 2013 to her former boss at a local movie theater, according to his testimony.

"If she ever tries to take my grand babies, I'll kill her," Granados said. "On May 20, 2015, the defendant made good on a threat that had been standing" for years before any allegations were ever made to DSS.

Robert Mange stayed by Krystal's side through it all, Granados said, and was at her side "when that woman opened fire."

Around 5:45 p.m. on May 20, 2015, as the Manges waited at McDonald's on Mall Circle for Richard Conway to drop off Krystal and Richard's two shared children, Caroline Conway entered the Manges car and held them at gunpoint, proceedings indicated.

Granados said she wore a hooded sweatshirt and gloves to conceal her identity, "making sure people can't tell who she is, or what she's up to." After Krystal was forced to call Richard and change their meet up location to the La Plata courthouse parking lot at 7:30 p.m., Robert Mange went for the gun, but Caroline Conway began shooting.

"She kept chasing and shooting until she had accomplished her goal," Granados said, who pointed out that afterward she walked away through a wooded area and was seen on surveillance video without the sweatshirt on after crossing U.S. 301.

"She leaves right away to

make sure she's not going to get caught," Granados said. "... If they're looking for someone in a dark hoodie, it ain't going to be Caroline Conway because she took it off."

Granados said she then called Richard Conway from a pre-paid cell phone at 5:50 p.m. and 5:52 p.m. "She planned ahead," he said. "She had an escape route. She had a getaway driver, and he picked her up."

The Conways, with the two children in the backseat, then went to an acquaintance's house in Waldorf, where Caroline changed her shirt and the alleged conspirators were seen on home surveillance video handling a white trash bag, according to proceedings. "You can obviously see there's something in that bag," Granados said. "There's weight in that bag holding it down."

Then the Conways went to the courthouse parking lot, and Richard proceeded to text and call Krystal's

phone. "They're living out their alibi," Granados said. "They're living out their lie ... They don't know at this point that Krystal isn't dead."

It's only after Richard received a phone call from

his supervisor with the Prince George's County Police Department, Granados said, that he went to their house on Guilford Drive to identify himself since they were looking for him.

By this time, a police perimeter had formed around the home after Krystal Mange identified Caroline Conway as the

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CRASH

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passenger side, sending the vehicle into a tractor trailer which had been waiting at a traffic light on Orland Park Drive.

No one else was reported to be injured in the crash, and alcohol is not believed to have been a factor, police said.

Anyone who may have witnessed this crash is asked to contact the Maryland State Police La Plata Barrack Duty Officer at 301-392-1200. The investigation is being continued by Cpl. D.T. Ellington.

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