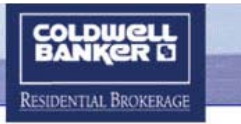




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OCEAN CITY – A fresh spark may come to the 4th of July fireworks show downtown this summer as the new Caroline Street Comfort Station opens an opportunity to test out a “pyromusical” display. The Recreation and Parks Department’s Special Events division has been working to bring new and exciting events to Ocean City as well as modernizing current events, ...

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Eighteen students in Worcester Technical High School’s Biomedical Science and Pre-Engineering

School Leader Explains To Tourism Officials Why He Opposes Change To Post-Labor Day Start

Posted on **02/06/2014** by **DispatchAdmin**



Students at Berlin Intermediate School seek out their buses after their first day of school on Aug. 23, 2013.
[File Photo](#)

OCEAN CITY – The leader of Worcester County’s public schools system was met with dismay this week as Ocean City’s Economic Development Committee expressed frustration with his opposition in having public schools start after Labor Day.

Wednesday morning’s Ocean City Economic Development Committee (EDC) special speaker was Superintendent of Worcester County Public Schools Dr. Jerry B. Wilson, who immediately acknowledged the hot topic of proposed legislation to have

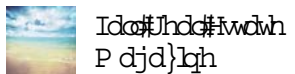
Maryland public schools return to starting the school year after Labor Day.

“I was one of 24 superintendents across the state that signed a letter saying we do not support the Labor Day change,” Wilson said.

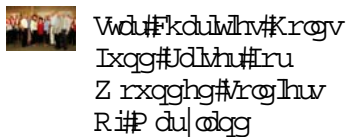
Wilson began the superintendent’s reasoning of opposition by pointing out there is a number of school-related activities that begin prior to Labor Day, such as football practice.

“Those kids practice outdoors, and we have rules developing in our state that require us to have practices beginning prior to Aug. 15

programs recently conducted a community partnership project involving redesigning a new emergency department waiting room for AGH. Some of the students are pictured above presenting the concept to AGH officials earlier this month.



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Anna Foultz's Star Charities held its latest fund raiser at the Ocean Pines Community Center Sept. 20 to raise funds to benefit Wounded Soldiers of Maryland. Pictured, from left, are Charles and Sharon Sorrentino, Worcester County Commissioner Judy Boggs, Anna Foultz, candidate for Maryland House of Delegates for District 38C Mary Beth Carozza, Senator Jim Mathias, Co-host Gilly Foultz and Emcee Larry Walton. ...
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because of heat conditions and the amount of time they are able to practice," Wilson said.

Wilson continued it is parent tendencies to prefer holiday breaks during the school year, such as a two-week break given during Christmas.

"We have had an academic calendar in Worcester County several years ago that started after Labor Day, and we survey our parents every year, and mostly our parents are more satisfied currently than they were in the past," he said.

Wilson furthered inclement weather has to be taken into account in designing the school calendar. The current school year was scheduled to end June 12 and due to the number of canceled school days as of right now the calendar has been extended to June 18. He pointed out if school were to start past Labor Day, plus snow days, the end of school would be pushed back later in summer.

"That also impacts the economic development in Ocean City, so there are tradeoffs on either side," Wilson said. "This is going to be in the hands of the legislature, and looking at it as the local superintendent, the legislature is going to act on it, take the position they are going to take, and we are going to have to adapt to it. I just wanted to let you know why I signed onto the letter of opposition. I know where I live. I know the importance of tourism to our county's success and to your success."

The committee had a hard time understanding how the superintendent was under the impression parents preferred a two-week winter break over an extended summer vacation.

"We have not done a survey to that degree," Wilson said.

Worcester County Public Schools conducts three surveys a year — a parent survey, a calendar survey and a communications survey, which all provide the opportunity for parents to submit comments.

"Our largest response comes from the parent survey because we solicit comments ... if the calendar is on their minds we will hear about it," Worcester County Department of Education Coordinator of Public Relations and Special Programs Barbara Witherow said.

In 2013, 4,014 parent survey forms were processed, which represents a 60-percent return rate. The third highest topic of comments submitted with 33 responses was parents who wanted school to start after Labor Day. Two responses came from Buckingham Elementary, 27 were from Ocean City Elementary and four were from Berlin Intermediate.

"We had about 5 percent of our parents comment on it, and about 55 percent of those comments came from one school ... so it was

not county wide,” Witherow said.

Worcester County Board of Education President Bob Rothermel furthered the calendar survey provides a selection and the option of having a longer Christmas holiday is selected most often.

“In working together, we should see how the school year benefits our students, our community and our state,” Mayor Rick Meehan said. “It is about having a can do attitude, not about how we can’t do it, but how can we do it.”

Meehan recalled when the academic calendar changed in 2008 by having school start prior to Labor Day.

“It is not only about an economic impact ... it is also about family and allowing extra time,” the mayor said. “Many of our students and teachers work during the summer, and that revenue is important to them. I actually think if you put it on the ballot in Worcester County and ask voters which way they want to go most of them would say after Labor Day.”

Meehan asked the room to raise their hands if they went to school before Labor Day and only one hand was raised.

“If you look around, these are some of our business leaders and an educated group ...,” the mayor said.

Meehan concluded by expressing his disappointment that Worcester County’s superintendent would be opposed to the legislation pushing the start of schools to after Labor Day.

“I ask you to have an open mind,” he said to Wilson. “I think our legislators and our citizens are listening to the superintendents, but I think the superintendents also need to listen to what we are trying to say. It is a great economic benefit ... Ocean City is 58 percent of the assessable base in Worcester County. Basically 58 percent of your budget is derived from Ocean City ...”

This article was written by [DispatchAdmin](#), [Joanne Shriner](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).

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One comment on “School Leader Explains To Tourism Officials Why He Opposes Change To Post-Labor Day Start”



Joan Wood on [02/07/2014 at 10:04 am](#) said: