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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

Worcester OKs Post-Labor Day Start To School; County Will Be Only One In Md.

Posted on **02/20/2014** by **DispatchAdmin**



SNOW HILL — For the first time in five years, Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) will be the only school system in Maryland to start classes after Labor Day for the 2014-2015 school year.

WCPS broke ranks with the rest of the state this week when the Board of Education voted to return to a post-Labor Day start of Sept. 2.

“I didn’t mind being the last school district in the state to go before Labor Day,” said Board of Education President Bob Rothermel, “and I don’t mind being the first school district to go after Labor Day. Maybe it will send a message.”

The debate over when the school year should begin has raged in Worcester since it became the last school system to begin classes before Labor Day back in the 2009-2010 school year. Opponents have argued that the early start hurts resort businesses since they lose their student workers before the end of the busy summer season as well as the fact families cut short their vacation seasons. Proponents have countered that the extra time is needed to prepare for exams and that an earlier last day is better for students and parents.

Rothermel’s stance is in opposition to that of Superintendent of

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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Schools Dr. Jerry Wilson, who favors WCPS continuing with the rest of the state in beginning classes prior to Labor Day. Wilson defended his stance earlier this month in a meeting with the Ocean City Economic Development Committee (EDC), noting that parent surveys have shown support for longer holiday breaks and an earlier last day of school, both of which necessitate a pre-Labor Day start.

“I find myself on the opposite side of the debate with our superintendent,” said Rothermel Tuesday, “and I struggle with that because I believe in what he does and what he does for our school system.”

But Rothermel was adamant in his belief that Worcester should break with the rest of the state. He acknowledged that parental surveys don't display an overwhelming demand for a later starting school year but felt not everyone was voicing their opinion.

“I understand the survey results and I understand that some people aren't even answering the question,” he said, “because they don't believe it's a possibility of ever happening.”

The most recent school calendar survey received 73 parental comments supporting classes beginning post-Labor Day. Those 73 comments represent about 5-percent of the 1,448 survey returns for 2014. Of the calendars proposed for parents to review, none of those created by the school system included a post-Labor Day school start. However, there was space left for comments so parents could write about any topic they wanted.

Long-time Board of Education member Sara Thompson felt that most parents, at least in her district, don't favor a return to an after Labor Day start.

“The parents I've talked to want us to stay like we are,” she said. “They said their kids need to get out earlier in June than they would if we started earlier in September.”

But the rest of the Board of Educaion sided with Rothermel.

“We should also recognize that Worcester County is different than all other counties,” said Board member Doug Dryden, “and because all other counties start before Labor Day doesn't necessarily mean that we have to also.”

As for the argument that an earlier start to the school year is needed to prepare students for exams, Board of Education member Bob Hulburd asserted that WCPS shouldn't be beholden to the idea that a start date needs to hinge on testing.

“I've always felt a little bit uneasy that the reason we've been given sometimes is that testing was driving that start date, and I think testing should not be our motivation necessarily for when we start

school or when we end school,” Hulburd said.

Rothermel felt the same and added that he had full faith in educators in Worcester to prepare students for assessments even if the school year starts a few days later than usual.

The Board of Education voted 5-1 with Thompson opposed and Donnie Shockley absent to change the WCPS school year start date for next year, 2014-2015, to Sept. 2, the day after Labor Day. The change means that the school year would now most likely end on June 16 instead of June 10, as it would with a pre-Labor Day start.

What will happen regarding the statewide task force will be decided over the summer most likely, as the group will submit a report endorsing legislation for all school systems to start after the Labor Day holiday. A bill likely be introduced in the 2015 session.

At that EDC meeting earlier this month, Superintendent Dr. Jerry Wilson expressed his concerns with the change, though it was a couple weeks before his board would vote to do exactly what he didn't want.

“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 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.

In neighboring Wicomico, students will report on Aug. 26.

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

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One comment on “Worcester OKs Post-Labor Day Start To School; County Will Be Only One In Md.”



bushman on 02/21/2014 at 6:40 am said:

Being “different” than the rest of the state is actually OK!! The state looks at us funny anyway ~ but when it comes to being their summertime revenue generator, its hugs, kisses and handshakes! Someone needs to realize without Worchester Co (without OC) there is no other place to VAC at the MD shore. MD should wise up knowing our children will be very well educated regardless if they go to school before or after Labor Day. Football or surveys should not make the decision ~ common sense should. Plus, somewhere a “whats best for business” attitude is still prevalent. Yes, there are folks in Annapolis who worry more about the dollar rather than education. Sad, but very true.

If a survey is the driving train – maybe a question like “Whats more important: 2 weeks off at Xmas time and 1 week for Spring break – or ending the school year early?” could/should be asked. I would lean for lesser time “off” during the school year and more time during the summer but I no longer have a “horse” in this “race”!

~BUSHMAN!~

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