



MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR EDUCATION

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY | 20 - 0005 - I

Findings of Inappropriate Background Sound During a Baltimore County Public School System, Board of Education Meeting

The Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education (OIGE) received a complaint regarding the disruption of a virtual Baltimore County Public School (BCPS), Board of Education (BOE) meeting by an inappropriate background sound.

A preliminary review of this complaint and statements made as a result of an investigation indicated that the inappropriate sound which occurred at approximately 01:17 hours on the morning of October 14, 2020 was not the result of a network system breach or commonly referred to as "zoom bombing.". At the time of the detected sound, there were approximately 33 active participants using several different devices to attend or access the virtual meeting.

Our investigation found that BCPS was operating their virtual meeting through Microsoft. The virtual invitations for all attendees were sent using a single authority account. The virtual meeting was in a controlled virtual environment, invitation-only, and hosted using Microsoft Teams Meeting software. Our investigation also determined that BCPS operates each BOE virtual meeting using Microsoft 365 Premium Suite, which provides 24/7 support and immediate problem escalation. Our investigation further indicated that BCPS did not request the service provider to record the BCPS Teams Meeting. The virtual platform does not track when an attendee has their device in the "muted" or "unmuted" option.

Our investigation revealed that there is no original recording of the October 13-14, 2020 BCPS BOE meeting. If the meeting had been recorded using the service provider feature, an indication on the attendees' screen would have notified all participants they were being recorded. In this case, the live meeting feed was not being recorded using the Team Meetings recording feature, but recorded using a secondary, BCPS in-house device.

Furthermore, although each attendee can view an "all attendees" version of the meeting, (what is commonly referred to as a "Brady Bunch view"), the actual view recorded was the view constructed by the Executive Director of the BCPS Information Technology Division. The Executive Director constructed this view to ensure attendees' information is masked and not

displayed on the forward-facing or public display¹. In addition, the Executive Director's constructed view was fed to a secondary recording device which is later reviewed, edited, and published for historical reference. At the time of this incident, the view that was publicly displayed was that of the constructed tile view and based on the individuals listed as part of the agenda item.

After a review of all statements, and in consultation with local and federal law enforcement, the OIGE investigation substantiated the complaint and found that there was not clear and convincing evidence that the source of the background sound was intentional. The background sound was generated from within the controlled environment, each active attendee had been invited, and the intention of the intrusive sound does not seem to be that of a deliberate action. OIGE has determined this to be a BCPS internal matter.

The OIGE provided a briefing of this investigation to the Chair and Co-Chair of the BCPS BOE on October 16, 2020.

Unless otherwise noted, the OIGE applies the preponderance of the evidence standard in determining whether local school system personnel have committed misconduct.

¹ A view can be constructed by "pinning" or selecting an attendee and creating a separate or personal screen view.