

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

November 20, 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Follow-up from November 16, 2006, Public Hearing on the FY 2008 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2007–2012 Capital Improvements Program

11-16-06-01

Mrs. Cox requested information on how decisions are made to replace or repair major systems, such as the HVAC system at Gaithersburg High School, when a school is close to its modernization.

Response:

When a school approaches the timeframe for its modernization, annual assessments of key equipment that is approaching obsolescence are made by Division of Maintenance staff. Whenever possible, the equipment is repaired rather than replaced. This assessment takes into account the recent repair history, projected remaining life, and whether the equipment can be maintained until the modernization without impacting the school program. Equipment that is not capable of being maintained until the modernization is replaced.

With regard to Gaithersburg High School, the Department of Facilities Management is attempting to avoid replacing equipment if possible, since a new building is planned as part of the modernization and any investment in the existing facility will be lost. However, miscellaneous equipment at Gaithersburg High School in the past several years has been replaced because it could not be repaired. We will continue replacements if a building component will not last until the modernization.

11-16-06-02

Mrs. Navarro requested information on what is involved in reopening the entrance to Silver Spring International Middle School that faces Wayne Avenue (the old entrance to Montgomery Blair High School.)

Response:

When the former Montgomery Blair High School facility was reopened to house Sligo Creek Elementary School and Silver Spring International Middle School, it was decided that the Wayne Avenue entrance would not be used for the middle school. This entrance is one level below the main floor of the building and not accessible for individuals with disabilities. It was not reopened because of the difficulty involved in making it accessible, the fact that it was isolated and not easily supervised by the main office, and the fact that spaces in the adjacent classrooms were not needed to meet the educational space requirements. A feasibility study will have to be conducted to accurately identify the cost and work involved in reopening this area of the building.

11-16-06-03

Mrs. Navarro requested a summary of facility needs at Northwood High School.

Response:

Approximately \$35 million has been allocated for the reopening of Northwood High School. This funding has been used to add instructional space, new administrative offices, a new media center, various updates to the existing facility, and the purchase of furniture and equipment. The majority of the work planned for Northwood High School has been completed, with the balance of the project being phased over the 2007 and 2008 summers. The Northwood High School facility, while not new, has the educational spaces and building features needed to support a rigorous high school program.

The community feels that the funds allocated were not sufficient to provide a facility equal to the high schools in the Downcounty Consortium, and elsewhere in the county, that have been modernized in recent years. They have asked that funds be allocated to upgrade the facility to a level similar to what is available at the other recently modernized high school facilities in the Downcounty Consortium and other newer schools. This would involve the following:

1. Various site upgrades
2. Renovation of classroom spaces
3. Renovation of music instruction spaces
4. Renovation of the auditorium support spaces
5. Renovation of physical educational spaces

A feasibility study would have to be conducted to determine the cost and scope of this work.

11-16-06-04

Mrs. Navarro asked for an update on what the school system has done and what will be done in the future, regarding the issue of security for relocatable classrooms.

Response:

Several initiatives have been implemented for relocatable classrooms. As part of the placement of relocatable classrooms, proposed locations for classroom units are reviewed with school administrators to ensure security issues are considered. Additionally, security needs for relocatables are evaluated annually when school crisis plans are developed for individual schools, and electronic locks are provided for the main building doors used by students in relocatables to provide secured access to the facility. Security issues for relocatables will continue to be evaluated annually and new initiatives implemented as needed.

11-16-06-05

Ms. Cox inquired about the safety issue in Glenallan Elementary School's parking lot. Has this issue been reviewed and what was the outcome? If not, will it be reviewed?

Response:

Glenallan Elementary School does not have a separate student drop-off area. This is typical for schools of similar age. Creating a separate drop-off area is not being considered at this time due to the pending modernization that has been funded as part of the FY 2007–2012 CIP. The modernization will require substantial modifications to the site and building location and it is not possible to create a drop-off area for the existing site that can be incorporated in the future modernization plans. The school will have to continue to provide traffic control through administrative measures until the modernization is completed.

11-16-06-06

Ms. Ervin requested a response to testimony from Mrs. Nannette Peele concerning Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School and program enhancements for the school, such as one proposed by one of the schools' parents, Dr. Harold McDougall.

Response:

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) program staff will contact the Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School, and Dr. McDougall, to discuss his ideas for program enhancements. Program staff also will review ideas presented in Mr. William Rabinovich's letter to the Board of Education. This letter was attached to the Northwood cluster testimony.

In addition to these steps, the middle school reform initiative will be exploring ways to add rigor to middle schools throughout the county. The possibility of piloting program improvements at Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School will be considered. It is also possible to consider program improvements through the Enhanced Program Protocol.

11-16-06-07

Ms. Ervin requested information on Northwood High School's concern about accessibility, access to the locker rooms, and the girls' locker room.

Response:

Staff discussed the accessibility issues with the school administration. The bathrooms in certain portions of the building are not handicap accessible. These bathrooms are being renovated this summer and will be modified for handicap accessibility.

The exterior door from the girls' locker room to the athletic fields is not accessible for wheelchairs. This issue will be assessed by facilities staff and included in the FY 2008 capital budget program for accessibility modifications.

11-16-06-08

Dr. Haughey requested information on how recommendations for school additions are made.

Response:

This is based on cost effectiveness considerations, and the high relative cost of additions smaller than four rooms. The County Council requires all additions to be a minimum of four classrooms. Therefore, MCPS constructs a minimum of four classrooms at the elementary school level, a minimum of six classrooms at the middle school level, and eight classrooms at the high school level. The differences at the secondary school levels relate to the way middle and high school facilities are utilized as well as the practicality of building small additions to larger facilities.

A classroom addition for an elementary school is proposed when the sixth year enrollment is projected to exceed the program capacity by at least four classrooms. As part of the long-range planning process, all elementary schools are assessed annually, using the latest enrollment projections, to determine where additions are needed.

Due to program and scheduling differences, there is a greater amount of variation in facility use at secondary schools than at elementary schools. The need for additions to secondary schools are reviewed annually and recommendations made as part of the long-range planning process based on projected enrollments, space deficits, program offerings, and the utilization of relocatables.

If an addition is recommended for an elementary or secondary school, facility planning is requested to determine its scope and cost. If the proposed addition is for a school that has a modernization included in the six-year CIP period, the additional classrooms become part of the modernization project. The date of a proposed feasibility study for a classroom addition may

change if the deficit at a school increases or decreases significantly, based on the latest enrollment projections.

11-16-06-09

Mrs. Navarro requested a written response to four bullet points made in Mr. Darnell Daisey's testimony concerning Hampshire Greens.

Response:

In the first bullet of Mr. Daisey's testimony, he states that there is no benefit to Hampshire Greens current assignments and that the community was not assigned to schools for socioeconomic diversity reasons.

The school assignments for Hampshire Greens were acted on by the Board of Education before the community was occupied. These Board actions occurred on March 24, 1997, for the elementary school assignment (Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School), and on June 23, 1997, for the middle school assignment (Francis Scott Key Middle School), and the base area assignment (Springbrook High School). The assignments were made in the context of numerous other boundary and base area assignment changes to respond to enrollment growth and over-utilization of schools. In acting on all of these school assignments, the Board of Education considered the four factors prescribed in the Long-range Educational Facilities Planning policy (FAA)—facility utilization, student population demographics, geographic proximity, and stability of assignments. By its nature, the drawing of school boundaries involves the combining of numerous communities that, in the aggregate, positively support demographic diversity at the schools of assignment. In this way each community assignment provides a benefit to the service area.

In the second bullet, Mr. Daisey states that there does not have to be a ripple effect to reassignment of Hampshire Greens, and that there is sufficient capacity available at schools in the area to accommodate Hampshire Greens students.

The Board of Education's Long-range Educational Facilities Planning policy (FAA) and implementing regulations (FAA-RA) prescribe a specific process leading up to adoption of boundary changes. In initiating such a study, the Board of Education adopts the geographic scope of the study before the process begins. To conduct a boundary review of Hampshire Greens school assignments, the Board would need to specify what school levels are involved (elementary, middle, and/or high school) and specify what schools should be included in the boundary review. Boundary studies involve a minimum of two schools, since a community that is reassigned leaves one school to attend another. This results in the "ripple" effect that boundary changes incur, even ones with very narrow scopes.

The elementary schools in the vicinity of Hampshire Greens (excluding Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School where Hampshire Greens is currently assigned) include Cloverly, Sherwood, and Stonegate elementary schools. Cloverly and Stonegate elementary schools are projected to remain over capacity for the six-year forecast period. Sherwood Elementary School is projected to remain over capacity until a planned addition is constructed. The opening date of this addition has not been established.

The middle schools in the vicinity of Hampshire Greens include Briggs Chaney and William H. Farquhar middle schools. Both of these schools have space available for the six-year forecast period. The Northeast Consortium high school closest to Hampshire Greens, James H. Blake High School, is currently over capacity and is projected to remain over capacity for the six-year forecast period. The next closest high school, Sherwood High School, is projected to be at or slightly over capacity for the six-year forecast period, even with the 16-room addition opening next year.

In the third bullet, Mr. Daisey indicates that there are not a lot of communities in the same situation as Hampshire Greens in terms of being an “island” assignment at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Island assignments occur when a school’s service area is not comprised of a single contiguous area. There are numerous instances of these service areas across MCPS. Most of these occur at elementary schools, but there also are a number of middle schools and high schools with noncontiguous service areas. Listed below are the schools, by level, with noncontiguous service areas. At the beginning of the school year, Board members were provided with new school boundary map books. So that you may review these instances of “island” assignments the page number of the map book where the island can be found is listed.

Elementary Schools (25)

South Lake ES	Page 10	Fallsmead ES	Page 28
Clopper Mill ES	Page 18	Brookhaven ES	Page 30
Matsunaga ES	Page 18	Harmony Hills ES	Page 30
Thurgood Marshall ES	Page 19	Georgian Forest ES	Page 30
Diamond ES	Page 19	Cannon Road ES	Page 31
Jones Lane ES	Page 19	Fairland ES	Page 31
Flower Hill ES	Page 19	Burnt Mills ES	Page 31
Rosemont ES	Page 19	Galway ES	Page 32
Olney ES	Page 20	Kensington Parkwood ES	Page 35
Dr. Charles R. Drew ES	Page 22	Rosemary Hills/Chevy Chase/N. Chevy Chase/ Bethesda ES	Page 36
Belmont ES	Page 21	Sligo Creek ES	Page 37
Lakewood ES	Page 27	Bannockburn ES	Page 40
Garrett Park ES	Page 29		

Middle Schools (13)

Kingsview MS	Page 18	Cabin John MS	Page 28
Ridgeview MS	Page 18	Sligo MS	Page 30
Lakelands Park MS	Page 18	Banneker MS	Page 31
Neelsville MS	Page 19	Briggs Chaney MS	Page 32
Shady Grove MS	Page 19	North Bethesda MS	Page 35
Frost MS	Page 19	White Oak MS	Page 37
Key MS	Page 23		

Because of the size of high school service areas, only a few high schools have noncontiguous boundaries. These include Northwest High School and Thomas S. Wootton High School. In the Northeast Consortium, James Hubert Blake and Springbrook high schools have noncontiguous base areas. In the Downcounty Consortium, Wheaton High School has a noncontiguous base area.

There are two communities in the county, in addition to Hampshire Greens, that have noncontiguous assignments at all levels (elementary school, middle school, and high school). In the Diamond Elementary School service area, the community of Brighton Village Apartments on West Side Drive is an island assignment to Diamond Elementary School, Lakelands Park Middle School, and Northwest High School. (See boundary map book page 19, Grid D-12.) In the Fallsmead Elementary School service area, the communities surrounding the Washingtonian Center, between Fields Road and Route 270, are an island assignment to Fallsmead Elementary School, Robert Frost Middle School, and Thomas S. Wootton High School. (See boundary map book page 28, Grid F-1.)

In the fourth bullet, Mr. Daisey indicated that there are few communities that travel as far as Hampshire Greens to school, and these are typically in rural areas.

Depending on the community, it is generally the case that students living in rural areas of the county travel the furthest to schools. The current school assignments for Hampshire Greens place it 3.6 miles from Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School (with a travel time of approximately 10 minutes), 7.7 miles from Francis Scott Key Middle School (with a travel time of approximately 21 minutes), and 5.8 miles from Springbrook High School (with a travel time of approximately 15 minutes).

Hampshire Greens' travel distances to their assigned elementary school and their assigned high school are not unusual. However, the only area of the county where students travel further to middle school is in the northern portion of the Gaithersburg Middle School service area.

11-16-06-10

Ms. Ervin requested information on the possibility of reopening the Wayne Avenue entrance to Silver Spring International Middle School (the old entrance to Montgomery Blair High School) and improving the way the grounds look.

Response:

As outlined in question 11-16-06-04, a feasibility study would have to be conducted to identify the measures needed to reopen the Wayne Avenue entrance. Further study would also have to be conducted to explore and identify measures for improving the site in the vicinity of the Wayne Avenue entrance.

11-16-06-11

Mrs. O'Neill requested information on improvements made to date at Northwood High School and ones scheduled in the future.

Response:

Improvements made to date at Northwood High School include a classroom and instructional support space addition, new administrative and main office additions, new media center addition, cafeteria renovation, auditorium upgrades, new running track, asphalt repairs/replacement, tennis court renovations, repainting original building, roof replacement for original building, refinishing gymnasium floors, physical education locker replacement, and new corridor ceilings/lights in original building.

Additional improvements that have been funded and will be completed in FY 2007 and FY 2008 include renovation of the baseball field, new stadium bleachers, installation of stadium irrigation system/field restoration, new stadium concession stand/bathrooms, new doors/hardware in original building, new ceiling/lights/floor tile in various portions of original building, replacement of stair treads in original building, renovation of original building bathrooms, replacement of student lockers, replacement of windows in original building, and asphalt repairs/replacement.

When completed these improvements, including new furniture and equipment purchased for the facility, will total \$35 million.

JDW:sz

Copy to:

Mr. Bowers, Dr. Lacey, Mr. J. Porter, Mr. Kress, Mr. B. Porter, Mr. Crispell, Mr. Hawes