

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster
Bethesda-Chevy Chase HS * Westland MS * Bethesda ES
Chevy Chase ES * North Chevy Chase ES * Rock Creek Forest ES
Rosemary Hills PS * Somerset ES * Westbrook ES

Testimony Before the Montgomery County Council
FY 2011 Capital Budget and the
FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvements Program
February 16, 2010

Good evening Council President Floreen, Vice President Ervin, Council Members, I am Craig Brown, and along with Jack Hayes and Joy White, we represent the parents and children of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster.

First off, I would like to thank the Council for its attention and commitment to our Cluster. It's important to note, our Cluster's student community spreads beyond our Cluster's boundary, our magnet programs draw children who live across 24 county zip codes, representing all Council Districts. We are proud of the fact the B-CC Cluster is truly representative of a significant cross-section of Montgomery County.

I am here to request your commitment to the full 6-year Capital Program recommended by the School Board. I recognize that this year, you can only address a portion of the program funding, however, we are in strong support of establishing a long-term funding framework, either through bonds or other means to allow the County and school system to complete all of the recommended projects in our Cluster. The CIP represents a long-term commitment to address the fundamental problems we face, our elementary schools are out of space and one of those is also in dire need of modernization.

Only a portion of the needed work happens in the first two years of the Capital Program, and we are optimistic that we will move forward with those projects. We must make certain we are not focused just on getting the Cluster below the Moratorium threshold level. We would like to maintain focus on our long-term capacity needs, and support all of the projects represented in the CIP. We ask the Council to help us realize our ultimate goal: To provide adequate learning environments for all of our children.

Although the economic climate is far from sunny, we see this as an opportune moment to establish a long-term capital investment plan that leverages lower interest rates, and takes advantage of construction costs that are 30% lower than seen in prior years.

Let's use this opportunity to focus on school construction, and put Montgomery County citizens back to work, reinvigorating our tax base, and helping to revive our economic engine. Funding long-term capital projects will be a win for our children, our employee base, and our position as a great County for businesses and families.

Today, children are crammed into rooms never intended to be classrooms for their daily learning. Multi-purpose rooms are over-flowing with children during lunch. Our down county, over-used fields at our High school, middle school and many of our elementary schools are worn out. We have 26 portables, 24 of them at 5 Elementary schools.

Our Cluster's enrollment projections will not be decreasing. We are concerned that our Middle and High School may need additional capacity in the near future as well.

Our youngest children are in need, and we should act now, with this CIP. We welcome the opportunity to partner with you and help secure State aid to provide the best possible learning environment for our children.

Thank you.

Attachment:
B-CC Cluster Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Needs
MCPS FY2009 Capital Budget, February 14, 2010

B-CC Cluster Comments to the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2011-2016 Capital
Budget and Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

A. *Request for Individual Projects:*

Additions:

Overall, we are looking forward to actively participate in the actions outlined by the Board in the CIP.

a) **Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School Addition:**

Funds need to be provided for interior alterations at B-CC High School. There is a need for additional lab space for our Science Classes, due to our increased enrollment, we are falling short of specialized space for our standard chemistry/science courses, and the conversions of regular class space to labs is necessary.

b) **Somerset Elementary School Addition:**

We are in support of the CIP's recommendation to complete the build out of the unfinished space as expeditiously as possible. Somerset is one the smallest campuses in the county and the recent modernization leaves little room for on-site portables.

Modernizations

We applaud MCPS' efforts to work with the County Council to maintain the progress of modernizations throughout the system. We have one modernization in the queue, Rock Creek Forest, and continue to advocate for its completion.

a) **Rock Creek Forest Elementary School Modernization:**

Built in 1950 and has not been renovated since 1971, we welcome the Board's recommendation to program funding to complete the plans to fully modernize the facility. Rock Creek Forest has been, and continues to greatly exceed its enrollment capacity, and is apparent within the facility and in its six portable classrooms. Due in part to the popular Spanish Immersion program, class size reduction initiatives, and an increase in first grade enrollment, deficit capacity is projected to double by the end of the decade. The deteriorating conditions of core facilities, including; electrical, plumbing, safety, and classroom fixtures, have created a sub-par learning environment for its students. While Rock Creek Forest ES retained its place in the queue, the modernization will not be completed for another 6 years. We urge the Board to make certain modernization planning begin on schedule in 2010, and the modernization begin in 2013.

Rationale: The core facility does not meet the fundamental safety needs of its students, does not have adequate sized common areas, hosts a crumbling core infrastructure, an inadequate number of classrooms for its students in regular and special education classes, has unsafe and inadequate front and rear entrances, and a poorly lighted, undersized parking lot for its faculty.

Board CIP funding for Rock Creek Forest Elementary School should be focused towards modernization of the facility, and funds need to be directed to avoid leveraging short-term Planned Life Cycle Asset Replacement (PLAR) and relocatable funds. Therefore, Rock Creek Forest ES should receive proper Board focus and be modernized as expeditiously as possible.

3. New Schools

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

4. Core/Signature Improvements

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

B. Request for County-wide Projects:

1. ADA Compliance

a) Westbrook Elementary School ADA Compliance:

All entrances to the school, except the rear entrance, are not ADA compliant. The community believes a ramp at the front entrance of the school is necessary to enable practical access for individuals with limited mobility.

Rationale: It is impossible for individuals with physical disabilities, who cannot climb stairs, to enter using the front or side entrance of the school. Individuals with limited mobility must walk over 100 yards to the rear of the school. A ramp at one of the main entrances would allow disabled individuals to enter and exit the school with dignity.

b) Rosemary Hills PS ADA Compliance:

Rationale: The RHPS facility is not fully equipped for students with disabilities. We serve autistic students and feel that we are lacking in our readiness for them and for students who use wheelchairs. Our facility does not have ramps to our 2nd grade corridor that leads to classrooms and our portable quad; and many of our bathrooms are not equipped to handle wheelchairs. We either need to remove the four steps and create a ramp in the 2nd grade corridor OR add a ramp on the side of the steps.

c) Bethesda ES ADA Compliance:

Bethesda ES playground was renovated in the late 90s and is ADA compliant; however

parents of students with mobility restrictions have raised the concern that since the renovation in 1998, there have been great changes in playground equipment -- making them more accessible and supportive to goals of students with mobility disabilities (boundless playgrounds, rubberized surfaces and transition/ramp access ways.)

Rationale: While Bethesda is ADA compliant, it is difficult for individuals with physical disabilities (or in strollers or with carts) to access the equipment on the main playground and kindergarten playground; such individuals are limited to the blacktop areas during recess and P.E. (when it is outside).

2. Asbestos Abatement

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

Building Modifications and Program Improvements

a) Westbrook ES:

Rationale: The student population at Westbrook has been growing at an unprecedented rate in recent years and this growth is expected to continue through the end of the current six year projects. Westbrook began the 2009-10 school year with 393 students, which is 46% above the existing building's capacity of 269 students. MCPS's demographer has projected continued growth and a student enrollment of 485 (180% over capacity) within the next six (6) years!

Westbrook recently completed a feasibility study. Westbrook already exceeds capacity by five (5) classrooms and is projected to exceed capacity by at least eight (8) classrooms for the duration of the six-year period. An FY 2011 appropriation is recommended for planning funds to begin the architectural design for the classroom addition and gymnasium. The recommended completion date for the addition and gymnasium is August 2013. In order for this project to be completed on schedule, county and state funding must be provided at levels recommended in this CIP.

Five relocatable classrooms currently surround Westbrook ES, which somewhat addresses our current capacity requirement. However, the basic infrastructure of the building, bathrooms and other commonly used areas, can no longer support the size of our student and staff populations. In addition, the placement of portable classrooms in the schools already small parking lot has exacerbated traffic and parking challenges for our school staff, parents and greater community.

Westbrook ES and our greater community are anxiously awaiting the proposed expansion and gymnasium. We have reached a crisis level situation and need your support. We are thankful for past support but strongly urge you to vote in favor of our proposed CIP requests and adhere to the timeline required to bring these requests to fruition.

Fire Safety Code Upgrades

a) **None at this time**

5. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Replacement

This project provides for the orderly replacement of heating, ventilating, air conditioning, control, and plumbing systems in facilities that are not on the modernization schedule.

a) **Air conditioning or better ventilation of school gymnasiums:**

Rationale: Conditions at school gymnasiums, which are heavily used year-round by both the school and the surrounding community, render the facilities unhealthy and unsafe during many of the warmer months. While we are aware that the exorbitant capital and operating costs do not now allow for air conditioning of school gyms, we believe they should be better ventilated with effective, working ceiling fans so that they can be used for PE classes, daycare programs, and community groups for the entire 10-month school year. In addition, a down-county shortage of community centers (and a lack of gyms at two B-CC Cluster elementary schools) makes it crucial that the gyms be used to their fullest capacity.

At RHPS and RCFES, our large student body and our smaller All-Purpose rooms, we often have to use our gyms for our larger functions. Our gym is extremely uncomfortable at the beginning and end months of the school year. The temperature is many degrees higher than the rest of the buildings, even in the morning, of warm days. This makes it hard for kids to exercise as much as they might, and makes them sleepier for the rest of the day. Additionally, it warms up the nearby classrooms just from heat escaping through the closed doors. Also, in our capacity as a community school, we are unable to serve our community well in the warmer months. We recommend installing air conditioning at RHPS at the earliest possibility. At a minimum, we request that large capacity fans be installed in the Gyms. They should be mounted high on the walls to provide proper ventilation and some cooling. The temperature at times is 10-15 degrees higher INSIDE the gym than outside the actual facility.

6. Improved (Safe) Access for Schools

a) **Improvement of the playing fields at B-CC High School:**

Rationale: B-CC HS would like to reiterate our request for field turf. The lack of green space and playing fields in the congested, down-county area is a major problem and is particularly acute at B-CC HS, the smallest high school site in MCPS, which is situated on 16 acres (14 acres fewer than the county standard of 30 acres per high school). With a full panoply of field sports, and with most teams having varsity and junior varsity boys and girls teams, B-CC HS fields 8 teams in the fall which require daily outdoor practices and play all home games on the single stadium field. In the spring, there is a single baseball diamond that can't support four teams for practices and games. As a result the majority of practices and all softball games are held off site. To preserve the playability of the stadium field, neither of the four other outdoor teams or any of the other spring teams can use it for practice. Because buses are not available for practices, students must drive to a variety of practice sites, which adds to the

congestion in the area and places far too many inexperienced teen drivers to our roads. The single field cannot be used for required physical education classes, so instructional delivery is negatively impacted as many classes are held indoors in oversized classes of 40 or more students.

B-CC HS would like to offer a solution to this problem: though the optimal solution would be to add 14 acres to bring B-CC HS up to the county standard for fields, because we do not see how this could be accomplished in the near term, we propose replacing the single stadium field's fragile, natural grass with artificial turf that could be used repeatedly for practices, as well as for games. Replacement of the field surface would reduce the amount of student travel to practices and more physical education classes could be held outside. The new field might permit B-CC HS to host area and regional high school tournaments. We understand that MCPS is considering turf fields at other schools. In the event that MCPS cannot immediately provide turf for this field, we request that MCPS allocate enough funds to maintain the field properly to provide a safe and less fragile playing surface.

b) Improvement of the playing fields at Somerset ES:

Rationale:

Rationale: Despite recent resodding, about half of the field at Somerset ES is dirt, the grass having been worn away in less than two years, even with reseeding and extensive watering this past summer. When the field is dry, there is a tremendous amount of dust swirling around as the students play on the field. In addition, with the top soil now worn away, small rocks and pebbles are coming to the surface again which makes the field slippery and dangerous to run on. Recreational and school fields continue to be in short supply in the down-county area, so it is essential that the fields that do exist be kept in reasonable, safe condition.

We continue to be concerned, since the field at Somerset is one of the smallest in the county, that the wear and tear of students using the field daily during school for PE and recess, along with after school and weekend use, that replacing the sod will be a very temporary solution, lasting less than two years. While we know that it is unusual for an elementary school to be considered for an alternative like artificial turf, we feel that assistance is needed for the school's playing field. An alternative sod could yield a lifespan of 10-15 years, negating the necessity for replacing the sod every eighteen to twenty-four months.

c) Improvement of the playing field at Westbrook ES:

Rationale: As a result of substantial hill side erosion, rain water flows heavily onto our playing field. A pooling effect then occurs on our field preventing the water to drain properly. After any heavy rain in our area, our playing field can not be used by students during recess or physical education due to substantial amounts of pooled water and very poor water drainage. Please remember too that Westbrook ES's gymnasium

addition scheduled for completion in August 2010 was delayed; therefore there is limited indoor space for use when outdoor space can not be used.

d) Improvement of the playing field at Bethesda ES:

Rationale: The grassy area of the Bethesda ES field is a clay like surface covered with a mix of weeds and grass. Our field is heavily used by the community, which has resulted in uneven areas throughout the field; dips in the surface and patches of weeds where grass used to be. Due to the heavy traffic on the field, the top soil is now worn away and small rocks, pebbles, pieces of glass and brick like material come to the surface. Bethesda ES is an inclusion model school and has students with mobility restrictions requiring them to use walkers and/or wheelchairs; this uneven surface makes it difficult to maneuver wheelchairs and walkers across the field.

Although the field was resurfaced (topsoil added and sod) approximately five years ago to address the uneven patches of grass and the surfacing of debris, we are faced with the same issues once again. With the heavy use of the field by the school and the community, replacing the sod with artificial turf will extend the life of the field and help support our need to make the field more accessible for students with mobility challenges.

e) Improvement of the playing field at Westland MS:

The current condition of Westland's fields is simply dangerous. Not only are there random holes but large rocks litter the field. Over one thousand children play on the fields each day during physical education classes and athletic events. The fields are also used outside the school hours by a large number of groups. Their constant use hinders any efforts to improve the safety and overall quality of the fields. Please consider our children's safety and renovate the fields at Westland Middle School.

7. Planned Life-Cycle Asset Replacement (PLAR)

This project includes repair or replacement of building systems, exterior resurfacing, interior partitions, doors, lighting, windows, security gates, bleachers, communication systems, and flooring.

a) Rock Creek Forest ES Funds need to be included for Rock Creek Forest ES to maintain an adequate environment for our children, particularly if there is a decrease in the pace of modernization schedule.

Rationale: Rock Creek Forest ES is not scheduled for modernization until January 2015 (when it will be 65 years old) and it will have been more than three decades since the school's last renovation in 1971. Thirty to sixty year-old systems are bound to need maintenance or replacement.

b) Rosemary Hills funds need to be included for Parking.

Rationale: The parking situation at RHPS is already over capacity. This situation is only exacerbated with the larger portable in our parking lot. County assistance with a solution is needed.

c) **Bethesda ES Parking Needs**

Rationale: Bethesda ES is over enrolled by 135 students, which means increased staffing and increased number of families. These changes in enrollment and the location of the school in downtown Bethesda with no street parking puts a strain on the Bethesda ES parking lot. County assistance is needed to address this issue of limited parking for staff and families.

8. Relocatable Classrooms

a) There is a need for funding for heavier, short-term reliance on relocatable classrooms (previously referred to as “temporary classrooms”). As units age, and with the possible slippage of the modernization schedule due to fiscal constraints, units are being used longer and being installed more frequently necessitating acquisition, refurbishing, and replacement of relocatable classrooms.

Rationale: During 2009-2010, the B-CC Cluster required 23 relocatable classrooms at Westland MS (1), Bethesda ES (4), North Chevy Chase ES (4), Rock Creek Forest ES (6), Rosemary Hills PS (5), and Westbrook ES (3). In addition, B-CC HS far exceeds capacity and requires relocatable classrooms or teaching carts unless additional classrooms are provided. Delays in modernizations and additions, expansion of all-day kindergarten, and reduced class size initiatives will require MCPS to maintain a larger “fleet” of relocatable classrooms.

9. Restroom Renovations

a) Rosemary Hills PS requests to be added to the bathroom renovation schedule.

Rationale: Rosemary Hill PS understands that the cluster is renovating bathrooms that have not been updated since 1985, however, RHPS (renovated in 1988) is in need of better bathrooms and ones that are ADA compliant. Our bathrooms receive heavy (and inexperienced!) use. We request that RHPS be added to the list of elementary schools in need of bathroom renovations, especially to ensure that we in compliance with ADA regulations.

b) **Additions needed to Bethesda ES bathroom renovation scheduled for 2016**

Rationale: Bethesda ES needs to add a ventilation system to move the air in the bathrooms to decrease the unpleasant odor. In addition, the handicap stalls need to be widened to accommodate both an individual in a wheelchair and his/her assistant, who assists with toileting. Moreover, Bethesda ES needs more than one stall with a handrail.

c) **Westbrook Elementary School is on the schedule for bathroom renovations.**

Rationale: We understand that Westbrook Elementary School is on the list of schools to receive updated bathrooms in the 2014-15 school year. With the growth of the school, the existing bathrooms, both adult and children facilities, get much greater

usage resulting in greater breakdowns and necessary repairs. We recommend that MCPS take advantage of the efficiencies of scale by completing these renovations concurrent with the school expansion.

10. Roof Replacement

none

11. School Gymnasiums

a) Construction of gyms at North Chevy Chase ES and Westbrook ES is required.

Rationale: The BOE and the Superintendent continue to believe that elementary gymnasiums are essential for the physical education program and well being of students and that these facilities should be included in all Montgomery County Public Schools. Because recreational and school fields continue to be in short supply throughout the entire down-county area, these gyms should be given high priority. The all-purpose room continues to be the only place for EVERYTHING in these schools and, on rainy days, indoor recess wrecks havoc on the building, the children, the staff and the faculty, food services, and the teaching day! All elementary schools should have gyms, and we strongly agree with the recommendation to move forward with the gymnasiums.

The need is particularly acute at Westbrook ES, due to overcrowding – the school is 46% above capacity or 124 students over the school’s capacity – and at North Chevy Chase ES, which houses the only sixth-graders, countywide, who lack access to a school gym. Because this factor was not considered, North Chevy Chase ES was ranked #20 of 25 schools and is not scheduled to get a gymnasium until August 2012. The need for a gym is also becoming increasingly acute as other facilities are being over-used. Both gym projects have already been approved.

12. School Security Systems

a) **Security Gates and Phones are requested at Rosemary Hills PS.**

Rationale: Funds are needed to install two security gates (or cameras) and telephones in classrooms. RHPS houses our youngest and most vulnerable children. The school was measured for security gates, but these were never installed. We need to be able to monitor all door entrances. Though all classrooms have intercoms, the school administration believes that emergency telephones are needed in every classroom and office, especially now that relocatable classrooms are being used.

13. Technology Modernization

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

14. (Water and) Indoor Air Quality

Improvement of water quality/lead remediation is a concern for several of the B-CC Cluster schools. On June 6, 2005, we received notice from the MCPS Environmental Safety Coordinator (Lynne Zarate) advising that testing has been completed and remediation is not needed at Chevy Chase ES, North Chevy Chase ES, Westbrook ES, Somerset ES, and Westland MS (though earlier testing indicated elevated lead content at Westland MS). However, B-CC HS, Bethesda ES, and Rock Creek Forest ES have not yet been cleared.

Poor air circulation persists at Westland MS, especially on the second floor of the building where air pockets continue to need regulation.

C. Other: FY 2010 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2009–2014 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

1. Current and Projected Enrollment Figures

Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School

2009-2010 actual enrollment: 1825, 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 1786
(2009-2010 capacity: 1656) 110% capacity

Westland Middle School

2009-2010 actual enrollment: 985, 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 965
(2009-2010 capacity: 1037) with 1 relocatable classroom

Bethesda Elementary School

2009-2010 actual enrollment: 506, 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 519
(2009-2010 capacity: 367 with 4 relocatable classrooms) **138% capacity**

Chevy Chase Elementary School

2009-2010 actual enrollment: 456, 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 470
(2009-2010 capacity: 429) **106% capacity**

North Chevy Chase Elementary School

2009-2010 actual enrollment 395, 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 401
(2009-2010 capacity: 230 with 4 relocatable classrooms, no Gymnasium)

171% over capacity

Rock Creek Forest Elementary School

2009-2010 actual enrollment: 510, 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 517
(2009-2010 capacity: 351 with 6 relocatable classrooms) **145% over capacity**

Rosemary Hills Primary School

2009-2010 actual enrollment: 649, 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 639
(2009-2010 capacity: 494 with 5 relocatable classrooms) **131% capacity**

Somerset Elementary School

2009-2010 actual enrollment: 464 , 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 493
(2009-2010 capacity: 433) **107% capacity**

Westbrook Elementary School :

2009-2010 actual enrollment: 385 , 2010-2011 anticipated enrollment: 426
(2009-2010 capacity: 293) **131% capacity**

3 Relocatable Classrooms, No Gymnasium.