

Northwood Cluster Testimony to County Council
CIP Issues
February 16, 2010
presented by Mary Abe, Northwood Cluster Coordinator

The Northwood Cluster of schools would like to thank the council for their support of capital school improvements and we urge you to support the CIP budget advanced by the Board of Education for FY2011. We are pleased to see our elected officials support taking maximum advantage of the current construction environment which allows our construction dollars to impact more schools than ever.

We are pleased to see an increased emphasis on the evaluation of school facilities needs and of increased funding for capital maintenance projects such as HVAC systems and roof repair. Several of you toured Silver Spring International Middle School with me when I was PTSA president there and saw the impacts of housing our students in aging buildings that have not been fully renovated. I hope that many of you have had the opportunity to drive by the school on Wayne Avenue and admire the renovation to the facade which you made possible. The school went from an embarrassment in the community to a classic landmark.

Our community is devastated that the County Executive's CIP Budget has once again omitted the funding for renovation of the Old Blair Auditorium. We had understood that this project was being considered separately from the school CIP budget so we did not advocate for the project to the Board of Education. However, this renovation is critical to the health and safety of students housed in the two schools that are physically connected to the condemned auditorium. The property continues to decay, the roof often leaks, rodents take up residence requiring extermination services and a musty smell emanates from the plywood sheeting which separates the auditorium from Silver Spring International Middle School and Sligo Creek Elementary School.

As you know the architectural study for this space has yielded exciting community use possibilities that include a performing arts space desperately needed by Silver Spring International, which does not even have a stage in the cafeteria, and community and youth service areas within walking distance of downtown Silver Spring. We encourage you to appropriate \$600,000 in the county CIP budget to match the equivalent bond from the state to renovate the Old Blair Auditorium. Senator Raskin and Delegate Hixson have been able to extend the deadline for receiving matching funds for two years, but time is running out and the county needs to match the state to repair and renovate this asset to the community and our schools. Please don't let this bond opportunity pass and further allow the space to deteriorate.

Thank you for your continued support for the capital needs of our schools.