

Wm. H. Farquhar Middle School PTA

16915 Batchellors Forest Road Olney, Maryland 20832

June 1, 2007

Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Dr. Weast:

The students, staff and parents of Farquhar Middle School wish to express their gratitude to MCPS for the much needed improvements to our school. The new hall, improved gymnasium lockers, renovated bathrooms and reconfigured loading dock area have increased productivity in the learning environment. The morale and school spirit has risen as the result of MCPS showing an awareness and commitment to Farquhar Middle School. Middle school reform is now upon us and this first step by MCPS is appreciated but much more needs to be done.

While the school community has benefited from the above-mentioned improvements, **Farquhar's need for an accelerated modernization date is paramount.** The growing burden of an old, outdated building with many unsafe, unhealthy and antiquated areas is compounded by the immediate and increased development on Batchellors Forest Road and the greater community. This includes the construction of two new high schools, Good Counsel and Washington Christian Academy. Our school is in dire need of major renovations, including the removal of asbestos tiling throughout the school, the replacement of the aged and defunct lighting system throughout the building, and the improvement of the bus, vehicular, and pedestrian access to the school. Only modernization can alleviate these conditions.

We continue to urge MCPS to address the age of Farquhar's facility and the immediate impact of growth and traffic in this area. Farquhar cannot keep up with all the technological advances in the classroom in a building that existed before they were invented. Acceleration of the modernization date must be underscored as a priority for our almost 40- year-old school that has never been modernized. Thank you for all your efforts on behalf of our school and students.

Respectfully yours,

Jennifer Mazur
Farquhar PTA President-Elect

Fran Simons
Farquhar PTA President

Request for Accelerated Modernization:

As of the 2005-06 CIP year, Farquhar Middle School has been placed on the modernization schedule for 2015. **Farquhar remains the oldest middle school in Montgomery County waiting to be modernized, and we respectfully request that this date be accelerated for the following reasons:**

AGING FACILITY

The design of Farquhar's facility does not support or benefit the educational expectations of today's students. Significant portions of the building's design represent safety hazards for our students. Outdated staircases, ramps, elevators, and hallways prove non-conducive to our staff and students. In addition, the existing layout of the building does not facilitate use of technology throughout the curriculum. With the addition of computers, imaging equipment, laboratory equipment, and other technological tools, we are hampered by cement walls, asbestos floor and ceiling tiles, and isolated areas of the building that have become classroom spaces. Most of our new technology needs to be networked, and the layout prohibits our ability to infuse the new technologies in every subject area.

While every new facility improvement project is gratefully accepted, the infrastructure is simply not there to support our current enrollment. The lighting throughout Farquhar is original to the building and is so old that replacement parts cannot be found. New parts must be rigged to the old fixtures. Hallways and classrooms are very dimly lit causing an unsafe and unhealthy learning environment for our students and staff. **At a minimum, it is imperative for the safety of the students to update the lighting in the dark hallways and corridors.**

Arts and Electives classes such Photography, Music, and Computer labs are held in old utility closets, storage areas, and old tech rooms. **These important programs are in desperate need of real classrooms to provide students with a healthy, well-lit, and well ventilated learning environment.**

POOR INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Inherent with the age of a building built in the 1960's that has never been modernized is the presence of mold and poor ventilation. **Farquhar is currently scheduled for this coming fiscal year 2007 to have a unit ventilator replacement to address its poor indoor air quality. We urge MCPS to keep this capital improvement on schedule for this upcoming year.**

INCREASED GROWTH & TRAFFIC ALONG BACHELLORS FOREST ROAD

The Greater Olney and Sandy Spring/Ashton area is experiencing a surge of new housing developments, including many new housing communities on Batchellors Forest Road. According to the Olney Master Plan, the extension of Old Vic Boulevard directly onto Batchellors Forest Road will occur with the development of 40 new homes on the Casey Property. This development is currently in the preliminary planning process with Park & Planning. Good Counsel opened in January, increasing traffic on Batchellors Forest Rd. The new football stadium at Good Counsel will open in the fall of 2007 with even more increased traffic expected. **The extension of Old Vic Boulevard, which will provide access to Good Counsel and the Casey Housing Development, will open directly in front of the school's main bus entrance causing a great deal of chaos with the current bus and vehicular access to the school.**

UNSAFE ACCESS TO FARQUHAR

A complete reconfiguration of Farquhar's bus circle and parking lot will be required with the extension of Old Vic Boulevard on to Batchellors Forest to ensure the safety of bus, vehicular, and pedestrian traffic.

Batchellors Forest road is designated a "Rustic Rural" road and will remain as such. To that end, there are no sidewalks, no crosswalks, no street lighting. The road is only 18 feet across making it nearly impossible for a car and a school bus to fit on the road together. The paradox is that Batchellors Forest will forever be deemed "rustic rural", yet the area is neither rustic nor rural due to the growth in housing developments and the building of two new high schools on Batchellors Forest Road, Good Counsel High School and Washington Christian Academy. **Consequently, the increased traffic from the high schools and the new homes on this rustic road will make an already precarious journey to Farquhar an even more unsafe and stressful occurrence.**

Farquhar is a non-walking school. There are no sidewalks leading into the school property at any point. The only sidewalk exists immediately around the school building leading to the buses and the parking lot. The lower portion of the school is comprised of a parking lot and a bus line-up. Entrance is to the cafeteria. The upper portion of the school is strictly a bus circle with a guardrail at the road. Entrance is to the main hallway. Any person crossing the street to the school at either point would be required to walk through the bus circle to enter. **There is currently no safe pedestrian access to Farquhar. We urge MCPS to be as proactive as possible with Park & Planning in following the developments of Old Vic Boulevard through to Batchellors Forest. This very imminent growth in traffic at the crossroads of the school entrance will be a major safety issue.**

The outstanding projects such as asbestos abatement, updating the existing lighting throughout the building, and reconfiguring and improving safe access to the building are all integrally interrelated and require complete modernization to correct these unsafe conditions.

To ensure the continued safety of the community and the student body, MCPS must accelerate the modernization date of Farquhar.

Memo

To: Dr. Jerry Weast, Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

From: Amy Cohen, BCMS PTSA President

CC: Kimberly Johnson, Principal

Date: 11/28/07

Re: CIP Request

CIP Request Item for Briggs Chaney Middle School

A. Request for Individual Projects

1. Facility Improvement

a. Add air conditioning to the gymnasium and kitchen. This improvement will increase the overall usability of the space for both academic and community purposes.