

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 2009 Capital Budget and the
FY 2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program
February 10, 2009

Good evening President Andrews and members of the Montgomery County Council. I am Craig Brown, co-cluster coordinator, with Jack Hayes and Joy White, of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase (B-CC) cluster. We thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of full funding for the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Capital Improvement Budget and its Amendments.

With the current fiscal crisis in mind, we appreciate your difficult task this year to adequately fund the MCPS Capital Budget. We are here tonight to only focus on our cluster's most critical needs. Our testimony is focused on our Elementary Schools. Focused on the fact that we are fundamentally out of space in most of them, and we have one, Rock Creek Forest, which is in dire need of modernization and expansion.

Our youngest students are those who are at a greatest disadvantage in terms of facility needs, specifically, 5 of our 7 elementary schools are significantly over-capacity. They range from 138% to 155% over capacity. 1732 spaces for 2384 students. We request that facility planning be addressed as quickly as possible, our cluster is short on learning space, and the sooner we can program facilities funding, the sooner the learning environments will fit our enrollment needs.

We are seeing many new families choose our B-CC Cluster schools. For example, Westbrook Elementary enrollment projections show by 2013-14, we will have 522 students in a building whose capacity is currently only 269.

Now, I would like to specifically call out our cluster's three major CIP projects in greater detail: Rock Creek Forest ES Modernization; Capacity Studies at Four of our Elementary Schools,; and Gymnasiums at two Elementary Schools.

Rock Creek Forest Elementary School Modernization

Built in 1950, and not 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, which is apparent within the facility and in its six portable classrooms. Deficit capacity is projected to continue to increase every out-year. With deteriorating facility conditions and cramped spaces, leave our children with a sub-par learning environment. While Rock Creek Forest ES retained its place in the queue, the modernization is not expected to be completed for 6 years. We graciously urge the Council to press the Board to make certain modernization planning begins on schedule in 2011, and the modernization begin in 2013.

Capacity Studies at Bethesda ES, Chevy Chase ES, North Chevy Chase ES and

Rosemary Hills PS

These four paired schools are currently a combined 426 students over capacity. The schools currently have thirteen relocatable classrooms. The proposal outlined in Supplement A for FY 2010 capacity studies to determine the feasibility, scope, and cost for classroom additions is essential as projections indicate enrollment will continue to exceed capacity by the end of the six-year period. Adding more relocatable classrooms is not an adequate long term solution, especially for Rosemary Hills, which houses our youngest children (pre-K through 2nd grade). Accelerating the future plan of action to review student assignments and actually remediate the shortfalls at these schools is critical to alleviate the space needs of our Cluster.

North Chevy Chase and Westbrook Elementary School Gymnasiums

We still have two elementary schools, North Chevy Chase and Westbrook, without gymnasiums. The projects have been delayed and we need to get them back on track. The need is particularly compelling since both North Chevy Chase and Westbrook Elementary Schools are over-enrolled. In addition, North Chevy Chase ES houses sixth-graders and is the only school in the county with sixth-graders that lacks a gym. These gyms will help alleviate the shortage of gyms in the down county area as they will also be used by adult and youth recreation leagues and for other community activities.

Finally, I would also like to briefly note that B-CC High school is 115% over capacity, and the over-used athletic facility continues to require upgrades

Thank you for affording us this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster. We appreciate your past support for B-CC Cluster Capital needs and for your attention to the concerns we have raised this evening.

Attachment:
B-CC Cluster Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Needs
MCPS FY2009 Capital Budget, February 10, 2009

B-CC Cluster Comments to the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2010 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2009–2014 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 Amendment A in the CIP. Moreover, we would like to call out the following, pertaining to B-CC and Somerset Elementary.

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

Funds need to be provided for interior alterations at B-CC High School. B-CC's program capacity is 1,552 and expected enrollment for 2008-2009 is 1,730. This means enrollment is expected to be 178 over capacity. Due to the limited school property and parking, there is insufficient room for a relocatable classroom at the school. The need for the current health room to be converted into a science lab still exists.

b) **Somerset Elementary School Addition:**

Somerset is expected to be over capacity by 74 during the 2009-2010 school year. We are advocating for an amendment to the CIP 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 kindergarten 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 2011, and the modernization begin in 2013.

Rationale: Modernization of Rock Creek Forest ES will support countywide efforts to get modernization schedules back on time. 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:

Westbrook ES is accessible, but the community believes a ramp at the front entrance of the school would be welcoming to disabled individuals.

Rationale: While Westbrook ES is ADA compliant, it is difficult for individuals with physical disabilities (or in strollers or with carts) to enter using the stairs at the front and sides of the school; such individuals enter the school through a rear, basement entrance, or via the all-purpose room. A ramp along part of the front steps or the school office would allow disabled individuals to enter and exit the school with dignity through our front door.

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: When reviewing the recently published and distributed Superintendent's Recommended FY 2010 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program, we were very pleased to see acknowledgement of our school's continuous trend of increased student enrollment as well as requested plans to address this growth. Specifically, "Projections indicate enrollment at Westbrook Elementary School will exceed capacity by four classrooms or more. . . An FY 2010 appropriation is recommended for facility funds for a feasibility study to determine the feasibility, scope and cost for classroom addition." Also, we appreciate your efforts to move our need for a gymnasium back to this year's recommendations. Specifically, "FY 2011 expenditures are programmed for planning to design the gymnasium. So...we are thankful for your recommendations but strongly urge you to adhere to the timeline required to bring these requests fruition, as our student enrollment is projected to continue to increase. Although no new housing is being built, many homes are being sold or rented to families with young children, many of whom are choosing Westbrook ES over private schools resulting in this continuous trend of increased student enrollment. Our building capacity is 269 students. This year we have 379 students enrolled at Westbrook. Our MCPS student enrollment projections demonstrate increases over the next five years from 415 in 09-10 to 456 in 10-11 to 482 in 11-12 to 509 in 12-13 and to 522 in 13-14 – again in our building whose capacity is currently 269 students.

Three relocatable classrooms currently sit in the back parking lot of Westbrook ES, which somewhat addresses our growth and capacity needs. However, it has created a serious parking challenge for our school staff, parents and greater community. We expect the strong possibility of two additional relocatable classrooms being added for

FY10.

Westbrook ES and our greater community are anxiously awaiting the recently delayed gymnasium addition; we feel a building renovation/modernization along with the addition of a gymnasium is critical to address the continuous on-going trend of increased student enrollment at Westbrook ES. A feasibility study for such renovation and addition is requested.

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.

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 on 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: Two thirds of the field at Somerset ES is dirt, the grass having been worn away in less than two years. When it 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, there are small rocks and pebbles coming to the surface 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 are concerned that 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 artificial turf, we feel that Somerset is the perfect candidate. Once installed, the life cycle is 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.

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 1971.¹ 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.

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 2008-2009, the B-CC Cluster required 25 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.

¹ Interim improvements to the core facility at Rock Creek Forest ES include additions in 1989 and 1992 and installation of sprinklers, central air conditioning, ceilings, and lighting more than a decade ago.

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.

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; this deficiency became particularly apparent during the codes blue of the fall of 2002 and the harsh winters of 2003 and 2004.

The need is particularly acute at Westbrook ES, due to overcrowding – the school is 86 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. We ask that because of the unique situation at North Chevy Chase ES and the overcrowding at Westbrook, that both schools be moved to the top of the list and that the County's first elementary school gymnasiums addition be built at North Chevy Chase and Westbrook ES. At Westbrook ES, the school’s capacity is 293. However, for the past four years it has been overenrolled (FY09-379, FY08-354, FY07-343, FY06-320). Westbrook ES is currently projected to have 379 students enrolled for FY09, 86 students over capacity. There are currently three relocatable classrooms on site, and the school may be receiving a fourth and a fifth for FY10. The need for a gym is also becoming increasingly acute as other facilities are being over-used. Both gym projects have already been approved. Additionally, capacity challenges are impacting Westbrook as there is no one site in its building for an all school assembly. The capacity limits of Westbrook’s all purpose room do not allow for such all school gatherings.

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

2008-2009 actual enrollment: 1782, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 1800
(2008-2009 capacity: 1544)

Westland Middle School

2008-2009 actual enrollment: 1031, 2009-2010 anticipated enrollment: 948
(2008-2009 capacity: 1037)

Bethesda Elementary School

2008-2009 actual enrollment: 506, 2009-2010 anticipated enrollment: 509
(2008-2009 capacity: 367 with 4 relocatable classrooms) 138%

Chevy Chase Elementary School

2008-2009 actual enrollment: 448, 2009-2010 anticipated enrollment: 438
(2008-2009 capacity: 429)

North Chevy Chase Elementary School

2008-2009 actual enrollment 357, 2009-2010 anticipated enrollment: 374
(2008-2009 capacity: 230 with 4 relocatable classrooms, no Gymnasium)
155%

Rock Creek Forest Elementary School

2008-2009 actual enrollment: 509, 2009-2010 anticipated enrollment: 521
(2008-2009 capacity: 372 with 6 relocatable classrooms) 138%

Rosemary Hills Primary School

2008-2009 actual enrollment: 635, 2009-2010 anticipated enrollment: 630
(2008-2009 capacity: 494 with 5 relocatable classrooms) 129%

Somerset Elementary School

2008-2009 actual enrollment: 399 , 2009-2010 anticipated enrollment: 444
(2008-2009 capacity: 456)

Westbrook Elementary School :

2008-2009 actual enrollment: 381 , 2009-2010 anticipated enrollment: 415
(2008-2009 capacity: 269) 142%

3 Relocatable Classrooms, No Gymnasium.