

**Montgomery County Council  
FY 2010 Capital Budget and the  
Amendments to the FY 2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program**

**Whitman Cluster  
February 10, 2009**

Good evening, President Andrews, Vice President Berliner and distinguished members of the County Council. I am Keith Parsky and with Deborah Goldman, we represent the Whitman Cluster. The Whitman Cluster appreciates this opportunity to testify on the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2010 Capital Budget and the Amendments to the FY 2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program.

The Whitman Cluster supports the Superintendent's Recommended CIP. Ever mindful of the budgetary constraints facing you, we remain most grateful to the Council for its leadership in addressing our schools' most pressing construction needs. We are mindful of all the careful planning and resources that preceded the current financial crisis. Safeguarding previous investments and projects already under way must continue. We can't afford to fall behind.

We first want to thank you for keeping school construction on track so that our children continue learning in excellent facilities. Our cluster is thrilled that Pyle Middle School's long awaited addition was completed this year. We are equally pleased that Carderock Springs Elementary School began its first modernization in the 44 years since it opened in 1966. With its move to the

Radnor Holding facility behind them, the entire Carderock Springs community eagerly awaits its new building and gym. Bradley Hills Elementary School now enjoys a slightly expanded kitchen that can finally refrigerate enough lunches for all the students who purchase lunch.

However, Bradley Hills remains extremely overcrowded. The school originally built over 60 years ago and renovated in 1984, is the seventh smallest, and one of the oldest elementary schools in the County. It is challenged by significant over-utilization, with capacity at 143%. Bradley Hills outgrew its core and classroom space long ago. With 456 students enrolled this year, it is well over its program capacity of only 319 students. Six portables are already in use at the elementary school this year. At this rate, enrollment is expected to exceed capacity by six to eight classrooms throughout the six year CIP period. In addition, there is a proposal in Supplement A to the Recommended CIP to consider moving an additional 100 students now districted to Bethesda Elementary School to Bradley Hills. If this proposed move is to be successful, Bradley Hills' core space must be expanded. Bradley Hills' All Purpose Room simply cannot accommodate an extra 100 students and stay within the fire code.<sup>1</sup> We urge that there be no delay in fixing the untenable situation which exists at Bradley Hills.

Bradley Hills is not the only aging school in our Cluster requiring attention. For instance, Bannockburn Elementary School was supposedly modernized in

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<sup>1</sup> We note that MCPS has indicated in discussions that this expansion of the core space is necessary for an implementation of Supplement A; nonetheless, we feel compelled to emphasize this need due to the safety and liability issues that already exist at Bradley Hills.

1988, but that “modernization” shows little similarity to the modernizations taking place today. Indeed, Bannockburn did not have its restrooms updated in that modernization, and the plumbing is still circa 1950s. It currently does not have a FACT score nor is it on the restroom modernization list. In this year’s CIP, however, there is some indication that when MCPS creates new modernization and restroom renovation lists, only schools that were renovated before 1987 will be considered, yielding unfair results. We strongly believe this cut-off date does not accurately reflect how old school facilities are across the County. We urge, therefore, that when the time comes for MCPS to create new lists, it also considers a school like Bannockburn that was supposedly “modernized” in the late 80s/early 90s. Schools should be placed in the queue based on the actual age and condition of their facilities.

Finally, as we have in past years, we urge that routine building maintenance be addressed. Although we recognize that this is also an operating budget issue, we urge that maintenance be a priority. Bathrooms, heating and air conditioning, playground blacktops, and lead in pipes, are all problems requiring maintenance in our cluster, and throughout the County. To optimize the learning process, every child needs to attend school in a safe, secure and modern facility. We can’t afford to fall behind.

We heard your request at the Operating Budget Forum that we should focus on Annapolis, so that Montgomery County receives a fair share of the State’s Budget.

With your inspiration, the Whitman Cluster's letter and e-mail campaign continues, lobbying our Governor about Montgomery County's concerns.<sup>2</sup> We are also scheduled to meet with legislators in Annapolis this March to remind them that our County has been hard hit by this economic downturn and cannot be taken for granted or neglected. We hope to continue to work with you and our State legislators to find a way to ensure that every child attends school in a safe, secure and modern facility.

Thank you and good evening.

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<sup>2</sup> See Attachment A, Example of letter sent to Governor O'Malley.