

# **Watkins Mill Cluster**

Watkins Mill High School.  
Montgomery Village Middle School; Neelsville Middle School  
South Lake Elementary School; Stedwick Elementary School;  
Watkins Mill Elementary School; Whetstone Elementary School

## **FY2013 Capital Budget and Amendments to FY2013-2018 Capital Improvements Program**

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The Watkins Mill Cluster thanks you for addressing our clusters major CIP issues, including the completion of the beautiful Whetstone addition. We are also looking forward to the completion of the Wellness Center in 2013 at Watkins Mill High School. We also support the recommended restroom renovations at South Lake Elementary School, Watkins Mill Elementary School and Watkins Mill High School this summer.

While we have been fortunate that many of our clusters major capital needs have been addressed, we do have additional needs not currently in the CIP to be taken into account to ensure that our schools provide the safe and secure environment our children deserve.

Our Cluster Principals have brought to our attention certain needs many of which are not addressed in the CIP. First, I would like to focus on Neelsville Middle School, whose needs are the greatest.

### **Neelsville MS facility concerns:**

- A major concern at Neelsville is that the doors to the bathrooms were taken down years ago and stored. This causes a lack of privacy, and a bad smell in the hallway. When the doors were finally located, they were found to

have asbestos on them and could not be put back up. They are requesting new doors for the bathrooms.

- Approximately 20 of the classroom doors do not have windows on them, making them a safety concern for staff and students. The current MCPS standard is that for every space where staff and students interact, there be a view window in the wall or the door to allow outside supervision. They did put in a request earlier this school year that the doors be replaced, but this has not occurred yet.
- The stairwell that leads to the roof has no gate to prevent students from going to the top of stairwell and 'hiding'. It is standard MCPS policy to provide a security barrier with gate to keep students off the stair above the second floor, while maintaining access for maintenance staff. Neelsville did request a gate, but it has not been resolved, yet.
- There are seven classrooms that have open entrances to the hallways that need to be enclosed. This will provide a secure room at all times especially during lockdown situations. It will also be more conducive to learning and testing environments (no classroom distractions). The old open classroom pods have been demised with walls, except for one classroom per pod that is still open to the corridor. These open classrooms are disturbed by students coming and going from the closed classrooms in the pods. Closing these last rooms up will require new walls, new doors and frames, and most importantly, revised ductwork to properly ventilate, heat, and cool the corridor and the newly enclosed classroom when the air circulation pattern is disrupted by the new closure wall.
- At many locations in the school, class change is problematic due to congestion in the halls. At cross-corridor door locations, many pairs of doors are chocked open with rubber wedges to allow better flow during class changes. Chocking these doors that are on closers is against fire code; these doors need to close in emergency to prevent the spread of smoke. The school can either station someone to manually hold doors open during class change, or install magnetic hold opens that close on emergency activation of the fire alarm. We request the installation of wall magnets, magnetic closers on doors that are tied to new ceiling smoke detectors on each side of the door. Activation of a smoke detector will close the doors automatically and turn on the fire alarm system.
- Doors throughout the building have been re-keyed over the years and now are on so many different locks, they are challenged to find the right keys for each door. They have requested that all doors be re-keyed with a master key, but because of the asbestos on the doors, rekeying is not an option. They also have a new testing room

which they need to have set on a special lock/key for testing material security, but no one is able to rekey because of the asbestos concerns.

- Furniture throughout the building is in very poor condition. They have requested and received over 100 student desks as well as a number of science tables. They are in need of bookcases for a number of classrooms as well as some office furniture.
- Another major concern is the lockers. There are 1,000 lockers at the school and are all located in one area, making before school, after school, and in between classes a challenge to monitor and ensure student safety with all of the students trying to get to their lockers at the same time. In addition, these lockers are in very poor condition and constantly getting 'jammed' causing students to be late to class and creating a lot of frustration for them. In the past, the students were being let out of class 10-12 minutes early so that they would not miss their buses. Now, they are being let out 2-3 minutes early, and some students are still missing their buses. They are scheduled to get new lockers next summer, which will resolve some of the problem, but having that many lockers in one area will continue to be a safety concern.
- Neelsville has narrow hallways and stairwells that are difficult to travel during change of classes. This will only get worse as their student population continues to increase, as projected. Again, this is a safety and security concern for all of their students and staff.
- The 'open' cafeteria is a challenge to monitor during the three lunches, with almost 300 students at each lunch period. Even with four or five adults monitoring each lunch, it is easy for students to walk away making it another safety concern.

Now I would like to address the concerns of the other schools in our cluster:

### **Watkins Mill HS**

Watkins Mill High school is grateful that all of their projects are on track and they look forward to their completion in a timely manner:

- (FY13), restroom renovation
- (FY13), auditorium sound replacement
- (FY12), PA system replacement

- (FY12) at Watkins Mill. Those projects are on track and much appreciated.

Major CIP needs at this point include:

- Their security cameras are an older, outdated system, and they need to be updated. Another issue is that Watkins Mill does not have enough cameras, and this is a safety concern for students and staff.
- Installing wireless access points for wireless network access telephone: dozens of work orders submitted for dropped calls and malfunctioning landlines. Phone calls are being dropped on a weekly basis, and dozens of work orders have been submitted.

### **Watkins Mill ES**

- They need more parking spaces for staff, and when visitors and part-time personnel come to the school, it is difficult to park. In the mornings, there are not enough spaces for staff, parents dropping off students for “before care,” and parents waiting for the magnet school buses. When they have inclement weather, many of the spaces are unusable and it creates a big mess.
- They are also requesting proper drainage of water to the playground so that the mulch doesn’t have to be replaced annually

### **South Lake ES**

- Very old light fixtures need to be replaced, especially in the cafeteria. Many of these fixtures are so old that replacement parts are no longer available; if they break they cannot be fixed.
- The air conditioning and heating system works about 50% of the time. Last spring, they were told that the entire system would be replaced this coming summer, but then they heard only the old system would be replaced. This is a concern because the entire unit needs to be replaced.
- The doors and window frames in the school need to be painted.
- The lines in the parking lot need to be re-painted.

### **Whetstone ES**

Whetstone loves the new addition and looks forward to its final completion. They also appreciate the new coat of paint and the new whiteboards. However, there are some concerns:

- The original building is still in need of modernization.
- Most of the wiring is on the outside of the walls and is not designed to support the new technology they have recently received.
- The building also has aging window air conditioning units in the classrooms.
- The window blinds are need replacement.
- The heating and cooling systems are consistently problematic and require constant repair.

Furthermore, we support the positions of the MCCPTA and would like to highlight that we can not support any CIP that recommends delaying the modernizations of our high schools and our middle schools. We would like to work together to find a viable solution for this years CIP requests that addresses all of our collective concerns, taking into account the variability of the needs throughout Montgomery County schools. We encourage the Board to take maximum advantage of opportunities to improve our schools, and we support the continuation and expansion of county wide projects. In this economic climate it makes sense to take advantage of the current construction market. Let's not close the door on this CIP. Thank you.