

Magruder Cluster  
CIP Comments  
November 11, 2009

Good evening, President Brandman, Vice President O'Neill, Dr. Weast, and Members of the Board.

My name is Patrick Dunn, a Magruder Cluster Coordinator.

We want to thank you for the support our cluster received in previous years. Cashell ES opened this year and the students, teachers, and parents very much appreciate their new facilities.

Redland MS is currently undergoing renovations following a concerted advocacy effort by our parents and friends. You responded to the needs of the Redland students to have a safe and adequate learning environment. We strongly recommend that the completion of this project be fully funded per the CIP recommendations. It is worth noting that some Redland teachers have indicated that they prefer the temporary portable classrooms they are in during the renovations over the classrooms they were using in Redland. How much more effective will they be when they return to properly renovated classrooms with real wall and ceilings?

These projects bespeak to the purpose and goal of the Board of Education and the MCCPTA- to ensure the effective education of our children. You have heard and will hear eloquent testimony from the Parent, Teacher, and Student advocates for Montgomery County public education.

The Magruder Cluster supports the testimony and recommendations of MCCPTA President, Kay Romero. As you are keenly aware, Ms. Romero represents the tip of a large and highly motivated phalanx of education advocates. Further, the Magruder cluster enthusiastically endorses full funding of the CIP and appreciates efforts to keep the vast majority of the CIP projects on track

The projects in this CIP are critical to the continued success in educating our students. We must never lose our focus on the children-our first obligation is to give them a safe, secure and modern facility that is conducive to learning.

We heartily endorse the idea of leveraging the current economic conditions to maximum advantage by moving forward with additions and modernization projects. Candlewood ES is programmed for completing modernization in 2015. Flower Hill Elementary is in need of classroom additions and is also seeking expansion of its multipurpose room to reduce the number of lunch periods and avoid students eating so late in the day. We will be monitoring the CIP queue closely to track progress in completion of projects in a timely fashion.

We strongly recommend taking advantage of the construction market's favorable conditions to accelerate the number of projects that are bid next year. This is in no small part an equity issue- projects have frequently been delayed in the past because construction costs were too high to permit on time completion. Now is the time to recover lost ground and get projects in the queue while costs are lower. We strongly support the acceleration of long overdue projects such as the Gaithersburg HS modernization.

As noted earlier for Redland MS, renovation projects are key to maintaining the safe and effective education environment our students require. Magruder High School is one of the county's aging facilities and is not scheduled for modernization. We have a FACT score but we are still in a TBD status. As we all know, the needs of our aging buildings continue to grow and there is a point at which facility-needs begin to snowball. Magruder High School continues to seek consideration and prioritization to requests for the replacement of its science cabinetry and sinks. A request is also brought forward to replace the old student built orchestra pit that has serious safety issues.

The Magruder Cluster and MCCPTA supports the expansion of existing county wide projects and the development of new systemic programs similar to the restroom renovations and HVAC programs outlined in the CIP. The HVAC replacement program is an essential component of ensuring the physical environment of our students is healthy, energy efficient, and cost effective. Funding the HVAC program to the recommended \$15 million mark is a wise investment in the near and long term time horizons. Having funds available for these well defined county-wide budget programs will better maintain our schools and lessen the need for costly repairs and remediation, lessen the need for on-going costly repairs, lower energy usage and improve security in existing schools.

Facilities management is a very important aspect of maintaining an effective education environment. Parents and administrators sometimes find it difficult to follow up on requested projects once they have been referred to facilities for prioritization. The ability of the principals to obtain information varies significantly based upon experience with the MCPS system, among other factors. The lack of transparency sometimes leads to the appearance that some schools or clusters are favored over others. Also the lack of transparency makes it difficult to assess the adequacy of funding for particular countywide projects. We would like the board to take a look at the prioritization parameters and dissemination of that information to the various stakeholders.

We recognize that the economy remains uncertain and that you are anticipating a shortfall in state funding. This might lead some to say, "We can't afford all of this during tough economic condition; however, we say as a cluster, "we can't afford not to do what we have on schedule and further fall behind". If we continue to delay any of the planned high school modernizations to meet funding shortfalls, Magruder High School and other schools will be just that much further down the list for modernization, resulting in safety concerns as well as adequate learning environments for our students. Delays in other modernizations and renovations will have the same effect.

We ALL must continue to heavily advocate state officials for the funding we deserve. Rest assured that we are working with the MCCPTA in relentlessly advocating our Annapolis representatives for an equitable share of the state education funding resources. We must demand that our district legislative elected officials work cohesively to obtain money from the state. Montgomery County residents pay a great deal in state taxes and we have some of the greatest needs! Our constituency should expect a balanced portion of those dollars to come back to our county for school construction. Solutions to funding shortfalls must be creative and may require changing methods we currently use to assess need or obtain funding.

Thank you for your time. The Magruder Cluster looks forward to working with you in the future.

Patrick Dunn, Magruder Cluster Coordinator