

WHEATON HIGH SCHOOL

12601 Dalewood Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20906

PARENT • TEACHER • STUDENT • ASSOCIATION

BOE HEARING ON THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDED CAPITAL BUDGET AND CIP

November 11, 2009

Good evening. I'm Mary Anne Gadbois, President of the Wheaton High School PTSA and, for tonight, the acting cluster coordinator. We want you to know that we whole-heartedly support the Superintendent's recommended capital program for our cluster. His recommendations keep planned additions and modernizations on track and allow us to join the new millennium (better late than never!).

For us, this means that the Harmony Hills elementary school community will benefit from construction of a 16-room classroom addition to begin in January 2010. When the project is complete, all portable classrooms will be removed and all students will be housed within the footprint of the current building and addition.

At Brookhaven Elementary, an addition is scheduled to be completed in August 2011. In order to expand the scope of this initial project, Brookhaven agreed to a one-year delay in the completion. It is important that they experience no further delays and that the project stays on track.

Viers Mill Elementary is experiencing growing enrollment amid long-standing safety concerns and maintenance issues related to the use of 13 portable classrooms. We request funding to begin a classroom addition which would be completed for the 2013 school year.

Both Brookhaven and Viers Mill ask for your support of the recommended restroom renovations at their respective schools.

Our cluster wants to finally get on with our equally important modernizations especially at a time of lower construction costs. Weller Road Elementary is approved for modernization with completion in August 2013. Wheaton Woods Elementary has a modernization programmed for completion in August 2016. At Wheaton High we share with Weller Road and Wheaton Woods the health, safety, and environmental issues that aging brings—such as leaks, seepage, blown circuits, cracks, mold, and loosening asbestos. After all, we were born in the early 1950's and most of us have our original pipes.

Wheaton High School is scheduled for modernization with facility completion in August 2015 and site completion the following year. This schedule reflects a two-year delay in our original completion date. As part of the Downcounty Consortium, we believe our academies are second to none. Tonight, our Principal, Kevin Lowndes, is in Texas with several teachers and students from our Engineering Academy and our Biomedical Academy at the 2009 Project Lead the Way National Symposium. They were invited to share our school's and their individual successes for a nation of educators to model.

On a daily basis, our faculty, staff, and administration do whatever it takes to help our students bridge the achievement gap and be college and career ready—but—our building is dragging us down. Simply put, it has lost its ability to support the demands of today's technology and how we educate our children. The IT Academy can't work if the computers are down because

the power system is on overload. The Biomed Academy is successful to the point of needing another lab. Where do we put it; how do we “plug it in”?

We are deeply troubled by the trend in under-enrollment because it has resulted in lowering the number of the course offerings available to some students while demand for choices remains high. We believe our modernization is essential to keep us competitive within the consortium, particularly as we are the last high school of the five to be updated. It will help us attract students and position us to be successful into the future. We believe it is so crucial to our success within the consortium that we ask for our modernization schedule to be moved to its original completion date of 2014.

As an addition to the capital budget, Loiederman Middle School for the Creative and Performing Arts is requesting installation of exterior security cameras and the addition of a black box dance studio.

The parents of our cluster strongly support the improved learning environment for our children that all the above projects bring. No child should be asked to shoulder the rigor we ask of them without a supportive, safe, and positive environment.

The Wheaton cluster is excited at the prospect of having relief so close at hand. This capital budget represents more than buildings to us; it is an investment in a robust Wheaton community, which benefits us all. Thank you for your support for our community and its challenges, and we ask that you continue to give us the tools to “make it work” for all our children.