

Testimony by Blair Cluster
To the
Montgomery County Council
Regarding
The FY2011-2016 capital improvement budget

February 16, 2010

Testimony from
Blair Cluster Coordinator
Silver Spring International Middle School
Piney Branch Elementary School

Montgomery County Council
MCCPTA Montgomery Blair Cluster
Testimony
February 16, 2010

Good evening/buenas noches President Floreen, Vice-President Ervin, and Councilmembers,

My name is Bladimir Duenas, and Susan Fleck and I are the cluster coordinators representing the 13 schools that comprise the Blair Cluster. Two of those schools – Silver Spring International and Sligo Creek – have students in both the Blair and Northwood Clusters.

The Blair Cluster PTA leadership agrees with County Executive Leggett that now is the time to invest. The 1.5 billion dollars that he has recommended for our county schools are an investment in infrastructure, an economic and job stimulus to the county, and an investment in our children.

There is one thing that is missing, however. That is funding for the ‘**Old Blair**’ **auditorium** that is part of the building where **1,330 students** attend Silver Spring International Middle School and Sligo Creek Elementary School.¹ Architectural plans were prepared last year – and options for funding are ready to choose from.

It is essential that funding for renovating this auditorium be secured this year, in order to take advantage of the \$600,000 state bond that was offered for construction in 2007. State Senator Raskin extended the state bond offer through this year, but it will expire this December.

The decision 11 years ago to close off the auditorium has led to a festering wound in the fabric of the downcounty consortium. Some SSIMS students act tough and say they go to a ‘ghetto’ school – this is not a surprise, when they walk by the closed off and boarded up auditorium every day. To add insult to injury, **SSIMS**

¹ When a new Blair High School was built, the old Blair High School had two schools carved out of it - Silver Spring International Middle School and Sligo Creek Elementary School. At that time, the county closed the auditorium.

East Silver Spring Elementary * Montgomery Knolls Elementary * New Hampshire Estates Elementary *
Oak View Elementary * Piney Branch Elementary * Pine Crest Elementary * Rolling Terrace Elementary *
Sligo Creek Elementary * Takoma Park Elementary
Eastern Middle * Silver Spring International Middle * Takoma Park Middle
Montgomery Blair High School

has been designated as an arts school in MCPS's middle school reform, but it has no stage for any school performance – not even in the cafeteria!

((Hundreds of families whose children have attended SSIMS and Sligo Creek have worked tirelessly for more than a decade to support alternatives to the 'Old Blair' Auditorium and to build the reputation of the schools now there.))

((The auditorium project was not included in the education budget even though it is an essential part of the identity of SSIMS as a viable school. The result of the auditorium being handed over to another county agency has now led it to NOT being included by County Executive Leggett in his capital budget recently presented to the County Council.))

The plans to renovate the auditorium range from 2 to 8 million dollars – **any design is better than no design**. Furthermore, **the proposals for a community arts space would benefit a densely populated area in Silver Spring, exactly where the purple line route is scheduled for construction**. Parents, students, and Silver Spring residents want to create community synergy by renovating this now decrepit space.

Please assure the quality and parity of Downcounty schools with the rest of the county. Many dedicated families have worked for years to forward plans for renovation; this is the year we thought it would come together.

Thank you for your serious consideration to include this renovation project to the county capital plans for the FY2011-2016 capital budget.

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Blair Cluster Testimony on FY2010 Capital Budget and Amendments to FY 2011-2016 CIP



Photos of Old Blair Auditorium 2009.

For more background on the auditorium, see the Jan 10, 2010 Gazette article (Burton edition) -

http://www.gazette.net/stories/01202010/burtnew202845_32553.php

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Montgomery Blair High School



***Silver Spring
International PTSA***
**313 Wayne Avenue
Silver Spring, Md. 20910**

January 31, 2010

Members of the County Council,

In this difficult budget year, Silver Spring International is grateful for the continued support of our Middle Years Programme (MYP) which has been essential to building a strong local school program and increasing achievement for all of our students.

We request Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that recognizes the deficiencies in our historic school building which, as you know, was neither designed as a middle school nor modernized before reopening in 1999. Our request is for basic, core facilities that were not provided when the school opened. Unlike schools in areas of the county that can privately fund enhancements, our community is not able to do so. Please plan for the improvements necessary to make the Silver Spring International facility fully appropriate for middle school students and to help our school become the school of choice in the community.

To start, thank you for the work completed or scheduled this year including: HVAC repairs in the field house and improving access to the gym (located in the field house several hundred feet away from the main building) by replacing the concrete walkway and adding a fence.

The requests below are for core facilities that have been requested through the MCPS CIP process but not scheduled include critical safety and security issues:

ADA Compliance: The Silver Spring International facility is not ADA compliant. We do not believe the following requests are optional and ask that they be included as priorities in this CIP:

- Silver Spring International MS requests a handicap ramp at the front entrance that gives direct access to the building instead of gaining access to the school using a lock door to a condemned part of the building, the auditorium.
- Silver Spring International MS requests handicap access from the main building to the gym. A set of stairs outside lead from the main building to the gym.
- Silver Spring International MS requests handicap access from the main floor of the building to the cafeteria on the lower level.

Building Modifications and Program Improvements (BMPI): Silver Spring International is housed in a former high school building and does not include some basic components of a MCPS middle school. Therefore we ask that you consider the following as priorities:

- Silver Spring International MS requests that a partition be installed in its gym to improve the use of this facility. The SSIMS gym was built for a high school and during inclement weather the gym cannot accommodate as many teaching stations as

required for a middle school program. Note this request is a priority and does not require major construction.

- Silver Spring International MS requests a performing arts space with a stage to accommodate program requirements for students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme.
- Silver Spring International MS requests computer lab space and 32 additional computers to accommodate technology education requirements in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme; this request is also part of Technology Modernization.

Planned Life Cycle Asset Replacement (PLAR)

- Silver Spring International MS requests that the existing concrete walkway and steps leading from the main building to the gym be covered. There is still no protection from weather for students.
- Silver Spring International MS requests that paper towel dispensers be removed in all bathrooms and be replaced with electric hand dryers. Note that while a work order (08-0065296) exists, the work has not been done. In fact, SSIMS, has recently installed 2 dryers at the school's expense (\$2,000).
- Silver Spring International MS continues to request that all stairwell tread be replaced due to worn or torn areas.

Restroom Renovations

- Silver Spring International MS requests that all bathrooms be modernized MCPS Response – included in CIP for 2013-2014.

School Security Systems

- The Silver Spring International MS requests for 12 new cameras be installed in the building to enhance security in the building is currently in the progress.

Purple Line

- The Silver Spring International MS requests consideration of the safety issues inherent in the planned stop for the Purple Line across from the school's main entrance. With upwards of 100 cars dropping off students and nearly 1/3 of our students walking or taking the Ride-On bus, the safety risk of adding a new transit stop to this main intersection in front of the school is very concerning.

Thank you for your support of Silver Spring International students.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Gabriel
Blair cluster representative

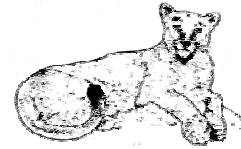
Jean E. Hickey
SSI Northwood cluster representative

Stephanie Helsing
PTSA co-president

Katie Ryan
PTSA co-president

Northwood cluster rep and
co-coordinator

Piney Branch Elementary School Parent Teacher Association



February 7, 2010

RE: MCPS Capital Budget

Dear Montgomery County Council:

We wish to thank the County Council for supporting investment in our schools in the past and, in particular for leadership in helping to reopen the Piney Branch pool. It is a tremendous community asset and our children are excited to once again have the opportunity to swim in physical education.

The PBES PTA urges the County Council to fully fund the proposed CIP budget for Montgomery County Public Schools. The current expansion of Takoma Park Elementary School-- from which our student body matriculates—was essential to eliminate the use of portables for all second grade classrooms and will accommodate growth in the student population related to boundary changes that will be implemented in the coming school year. The CIP also supports simpler measures that are also critical to maintain the quality of MCPS. For example, PBES' current capital needs include interior painting, furniture for seven classrooms, and upgraded flooring. These steps are not particularly expensive, but they are needed to create a safe, comfortable and practical learning environment for our children.

Thank you for considering full funding for the MCPS CIP.

Sincerely,

PBES PTA

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