

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster
Bethesda-Chevy Chase HS * Westland MS * Bethesda ES
Chevy Chase ES * North Chevy Chase ES * Rock Creek Forest ES
Rosemary Hills PS * Somerset ES * Westbrook ES

Testimony Before the Montgomery County Council
FY 2009 Capital Budget and the
FY 2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program
February 06, 2008

Good evening President Knapp, Vice-President Andrews, and members of the Montgomery County Council. I am Jack Hayes, co-coordinator, with Deborah Missal and Joy White, of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase (B-CC) cluster. We thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of full funding for the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) FY 2009 Capital Budget.

We appreciate your difficult task this year to adequately fund the MCPS Capital Budget. We urge you to continue your efforts to hold Gov. O'Malley to his promise to provide \$55 million in construction funding, and to reject County Executive Leggett's proposal to trim \$75 million from the FY2009-2014 Capital Budget. These proposals would result in an unacceptable delay on already delayed capital projects. The Council has always been supportive of our educational needs and has been a driving force in ensuring that our County has one of the best school systems in the nation. The B-CC Cluster will continue to work with you and state officials to get full funding of our MCPS budgets.

This CIP helps support our cluster needs as our 2007-2008 actual utilization in the B-CC Cluster is 112% for High School, 114% for Middle School and 111% for Elementary School. In my oral testimony tonight, I will highlight our capital needs. I have attached a detailed list of our cluster's capital requests to my written testimony.

North Chevy Chase and Westbrook Elementary School
Gymnasiums

We still have two elementary schools, North Chevy Chase and Westbrook, without gymnasiums. The proposed Capital Budget includes FY 2009 planning funds and FY 2010 completion funds for both gymnasiums. The need is particularly compelling since both North Chevy Chase and Westbrook Elementary Schools are over-enrolled. In addition, North Chevy Chase ES houses sixth-graders and is the only school in the county with sixth-graders that lacks a gym. These gyms will help alleviate the shortage of gyms in the down county area as they will also be used by adult and youth recreation leagues and for other community activities.

Rock Creek Forest Elementary School Modernization: Facility Planning Funds and
PLAR funds to maintain the Facility

The proposed cuts would likely further delay the modernization project for Rock Creek Forest Elementary School currently scheduled for completion in January 2015, which is five years later than in previous CIP plans. The Budget includes FY 2011 expenditures for facility planning to determine the feasibility, scope, and cost of the modernization. The school is currently 94 students over capacity and, projections indicate enrollment will exceed capacity throughout the six-year period. The school currently has six

relocatable classrooms and additional capacity will be added as part of the modernization. This modernization must not be delayed and should be accelerated if possible. Planned Life-Cycle Asset Replacement (PLAR) funds will be necessary to maintain this aged facility until Modernization is completed.

I would also like to request your support for other B-CC Cluster Capital Projects in the Budget:

- B-CC High School Additional Classrooms
- Westland Middle School Six-classroom Addition
- Rosemary Hills Primary School Facility Planning for Addition

I would also like to quickly highlight other B-CC Cluster Needs:

- B-CC High School Playing Field Upgrades
- Westbrook Elementary School and Rosemary Hills Primary School ADA Compliance
- Request for a feasibility study regarding Westbrook ES' three year trend of increased student enrollment
- Air conditioning or better ventilation of school gymnasiums, and
- Rosemary Hills Primary School requests to be added to the bathroom renovation schedule.

Thank you for affording us this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster. We appreciate your past support for B-CC Cluster Capital needs and for your attention to the concerns we have raised this evening..

Attachment:

*B-CC Cluster Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Needs
MCPS FY2009 Capital Budget, November 2007*

A. Request for Individual Projects: FY2009-2014 CIP

Additions

a) Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School Addition:

There is a need for the allocation of funds in this CIP to complete the build-out of five master-planned classrooms on the lower level of "D" Building in Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School (B-CC HS). This is necessary to allow for adequate space for teaching, now that our community has returned, in greatly increased numbers, to the modernized facility.

Rationale: Construction of five additional classrooms at B-CC HS, already "roughed in" the lower level of "D" building, is included in the FY2008 CIP for completion in August 2009. The plans are drawn and we appreciate the support we have had from the office of construction thus far. We would like to reiterate the need for these additional classrooms. Some wiring for electricity, sprinklers, and fire alarm systems are in place.

b) Westland Middle School Addition:

Construction of the proposed six-classroom addition at Westland Middle School (MS), which far exceeds its capacity of 928, is an immediate need. The school currently has six relocatable classrooms and all available flat space for relocatable classrooms has been used, including a much-needed staff parking lot.

Rationale: Enrollment predictions for Westland MS reflect the need for at least a six-classroom addition. Enrollments have been monitored annually to confirm the need for an addition. The addition is part of the Master Plan and therefore, feasibility planning is not required. Planning funds for architectural were programmed in FY2001. Program Capacity after the addition is 1098. Westland had 1010 students in 2002-2003, 988 in 2006-2007, and 1032 in 2007-2008.

Additional classrooms were originally designed into the recent renovation, but were cut at the last minute (despite strong PTA opposition). The cut of those classrooms from the original renovation plan meant that Westland was over capacity almost immediately after reoccupancy.

While Westland enjoys an expansive campus, there is incredible lack of space that is suitable for relocatable classrooms. Westland already has six relocatable classrooms and it is becoming exceedingly difficult to safely position additional relocatable classrooms. Several of the temporary classrooms have taken up much of a needed staff parking lot. The planned addition, to be completed in August 2008, is to be located in the courtyard. While this is a reasonable space for the addition to be built, relocatable classrooms cannot be placed inside the courtyard because the existing building surrounds the courtyard on all four sides.

Modernizations

We applaud MCPS' recent bold efforts to work with the Board of Education (BOE) and County Council to maintain the scope and get school modernizations back on schedule. We feel all students in Montgomery County should have equitable facilities.

a) Rock Creek Forest Elementary School Modernization:

Built in 1950 and renovated in 1971 with classroom wings added in 1989 and 1992, there is a need for facility planning funds to consider the scope and cost of the modernization for Rock Creek Forest ES. Rock Creek Forest far exceeds its enrollment capacity, so students attend classed in six portable classrooms. Due in part to the popular Spanish Immersion program and class size reduction initiatives, deficit capacity is projected to double by the end of the decade. The deteriorating conditions of core facilities, including; electrical, plumbing, fire, safety, and adequate classroom fixtures, have created demoralizing and poor learning conditions for its students. While Rock Creek Forest ES retained its place in the queue, the modernization has now been postponed until January 2015, five years later than in previous CIP plans.

Rationale: Modernization of Rock Creek Forest ES will support countywide efforts to get modernization schedules back on time. The core facility does not meet the fundamental safety needs of its students, does not have adequate sized common areas, hosts a crumbling core infrastructure, an inadequate number of classrooms for its students in regular and special education classes, has unsafe and inadequate front and rear entrances, and a poorly lighted, undersized parking lot for its faculty.

Board CIP funding for Rock Creek Forest Elementary School should be focused towards modernization of the facility, and funds need to be directed to avoid leveraging short-term Planned Life Cycle Asset Replacement (PLAR) and relocatable funds. Therefore, Rock Creek Forest ES should receive proper Board focus and be modernized as expeditiously as possible.

3. New Schools

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

4. Core/Signature Improvements

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

B. Request for County-wide Projects: FY2009-2014 CIP

1. ADA Compliance

a) Westbrook Elementary School ADA Compliance:

Westbrook ES is accessible, but the community believes a ramp at the front entrance of the school would be welcoming to disabled individuals.

Rationale: While Westbrook ES is ADA compliant, it is difficult for individuals with physical disabilities (or in strollers or with carts) to enter using the stairs at the front and sides of the school; such individuals enter the school through a rear, basement entrance, via the all-purpose room. A ramp along part of the front steps or the school office would allow disabled individuals to enter the school with dignity through a front door.

b) Rosemary Hills PS ADA Compliance:

Rationale: The RHPS facility is not fully equipped for students with disabilities. We serve autistic students, and feel we are lacking in our readiness for them and for students who use wheelchairs. Our facility does not have ramps to our 2nd Grade corridor that leads to classrooms and our portable quad; and many of our bathrooms are not equipped to handle wheelchairs. We currently have one first grade student who uses a wheelchair who will be moving on to 2nd grade next year.

2. Asbestos Abatement

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

3. Building Modifications and Program Improvements

a) Westbrook ES:

Rationale: Request a feasibility study regarding Westbrook's three year trend of increased student enrollment. Although no new housing is being built, many homes are being bought by families with young children who are choosing Westbrook ES over private schools resulting in this continuous trend of increased student enrollment.

Two relocatable classrooms currently sit in the back parking lot of Westbrook ES which does somewhat address our growth and capacity needs while also displacing staff and visitor parking from our school grounds into our community.

Although Westbrook ES and our greater community are thrilled that our students and community members are scheduled to receive a gymnasium addition, we feel a building renovation/modernization along with the addition of a gymnasium is critical to address to continuous on going trend of increased student enrollment at Westbrook ES. A feasibility study for such renovation and addition is requested.

4. Fire Safety Code Upgrades

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

5. Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Replacement

This project provides for the orderly replacement of heating, ventilating, air conditioning, control, and plumbing systems in facilities that are not on the modernization schedule.

a) Air conditioning or better ventilation of school gymnasiums:

Rationale: Conditions at school gymnasiums, which are heavily used year-round by both the school and the surrounding community, render the facilities unhealthy and unsafe during many of the warmer months. While we are aware that the exorbitant capital and operating costs do not now allow for air conditioning of school gyms, we believe they should be better ventilated with effective, working ceiling fans so that they can be used for PE classes, daycare programs, and community groups for the entire 10-month school year. In addition, a down-county shortage of community centers (and a lack of gyms at two B-CC Cluster elementary schools) makes it crucial that the gyms be used to their fullest capacity.

At RHPS, due to our large student body and our smaller All-Purpose room, we often have to use our gym for our larger functions. Our gym is extremely uncomfortable at the beginning and end months of the school year. The temperature is many degrees higher than the rest of the building, even in the morning, of warm days. This makes it hard for kids to exercise as much as they might, and makes them sleepier for the rest of the day. Additionally, it warms up the nearby classrooms just from heat escaping through the closed doors. Also, in our capacity as a community school, we are unable to serve our community well in the warmer months. We recommend installing air conditioning at RHPS at the earliest possibility. At a minimum, we request that large capacity fans be installed in the Gym. They should be mounted high on the walls to provide proper ventilation and some cooling.

6. Improved (Safe) Access for Schools

a) Improvement of the playing fields at B-CC High School:

Rationale: B-CC HS would like to reiterate our request for field turf. The lack of green space and playing fields in the congested, down-county area is a major problem and is particularly acute at B-CC HS, the smallest high school site in MCPS, which is situated on 16 acres (14 acres fewer than the county standard of 30 acres per high school). With a full panoply of field sports, and with most teams having varsity and junior varsity boys and girls teams, B-CC HS fields 8 teams in the fall which require daily outdoor practices and play all home games on the single stadium field. In the spring, there is a single baseball diamond that can't support four teams for practices and games. As a result the majority of practices and all softball games are held off site.

To preserve the playability of the stadium field, neither of the two other outdoor teams or any of the other spring teams can use it for practice. Because buses are not available for practices, students must drive to a variety of practice sites, which adds to the congestion in the area and places far too many inexperienced teen drivers on our roads. The single field cannot be used for required physical education classes, so instructional delivery is negatively impacted as many classes are held indoors in oversized classes of 40 or more students.

B-CC HS would like to offer a solution to this problem: though the optimal solution would be to add 14 acres to bring B-CC HS up to the county standard for fields, because we do not see how this could be accomplished in the near term, we propose replacing the single stadium field's fragile, natural grass with artificial turf that could be used repeatedly for practices, as well as for games. Replacement of the field surface would reduce the amount of student travel to practices and more physical education classes could be held outside. The new field might permit B-CC HS to host area and regional high school tournaments. We understand that MCPS is considering turf fields at other schools. In the event that MCPS cannot immediately provide turf for this field,

we request that MCPS allocate enough funds to maintain the field properly to provide a safe and less fragile playing surface.

b) Improvements for playing fields at Somerset ES:

Rationale: Thank you for our newly modernized building. We are completing our second year in it and it has exceeded our expectations. The small size of our field poses some challenges but we are trying to address them in a creative, yet systematic manner.

c) Reconditioning of the playing fields and playground areas at Rock Creek Forest ES:

The playing field and playground area at Rock Creek Forest ES, pose serious safety and health concerns, must be reconditioned and tested.

Rationale: The condition of these fields needs to be improved and the fields should be evaluated for the need for code corrections. The soccer field has large potholes and the goal areas are completely dirt and need reseeding. Also, water from the roof drains into the area near the playground, creating mud puddles that breed mosquitoes and create messy shoes (that are worn back into the school). For the past couple of years, the mud puddles had to be cordoned off by cones. Recreational and school fields continue to be in short supply in the down-county area, so it is essential that the fields that do exist be kept in reasonable, safe condition. Moreover, the soil surrounding the playground that is imbedded with a significant amount of glass should be tested for other hazardous materials to ensure that the soil is safe for a school environment.

d) Replacement of playground equipment at Westbrook ES:

Rationale: MCPS installed a new playground at Westbrook ES (thank you!). However, in the process, a piece of existing wooden equipment was removed (because it housed a hornet nest) without the school's permission. Westbrook ES requests that MCPS replace the removed piece of playground equipment.

e) Water Fountains at Rosemary Hills PS:

Rationale: Rosemary Hills PS requests two water fountains. Our playground has no shade and gets quite hot. Students get very thirsty. There are almost 200 students outside during each recess period, and paraeducators must expend limited resources monitoring students who re-enter the locked building to get water. This problem could be alleviated by installing two water fountains which could be connected to the building (near the classrooms that look out on the blacktop).

7. Planned Life-Cycle Asset Replacement (PLAR)

This project includes repair or replacement of building systems, exterior resurfacing, interior partitions, doors, lighting, windows, security gates, bleachers, communication systems, and flooring.

a) Rock Creek Forest ES Funds need to be included for Rock Creek Forest ES to maintain an

adequate environment for our children, particularly if there is a decrease in the pace of modernization schedule.

Rationale: Rock Creek Forest ES is not scheduled for modernization until January 2015 (when it will be 65 years old) and it will have been more than three decades since the school's last renovation in 1971. Thirty to sixty year-old systems are bound to need maintenance or replacement. In addition, due to fiscal constraints, the modernization of Rock Creek Forest may be delayed and MCPS will then need to maintain the building for a longer period before a capital project will upgrade all systems.

b) Rosemary Hills funds need to be included for Parking.

Rationale: The parking situation at RHPS is already over capacity. This situation is only exacerbated with the larger portable in our parking lot. County assistance with a solution is needed.

8. Relocatable Classrooms

a) There is a need for funding for heavier, short-term reliance on relocatable classrooms (previously referred to as "temporary classrooms"). As units age, and with the possible slippage of the modernization schedule due to fiscal constraints, units are being used longer and being installed more frequently necessitating acquisition, refurbishing, and replacement of relocatable classrooms.

Rationale: During 2007-2008, the B-CC Cluster required 25 relocatable classrooms at Westland MS (6), Bethesda ES (3), North Chevy Chase ES (3), Rock Creek Forest ES (6), Rosemary Hills PS (5), and Westbrook ES (2). In addition, B-CC HS far exceeds capacity and requires relocatable classrooms or teaching carts unless additional classrooms are provided. Delays in modernizations and additions, expansion of all-day kindergarten, and reduced class size initiatives will require MCPS to maintain a larger "fleet" of relocatable classrooms.

9. Restroom Renovations

a) **Rosemary Hills PS requests to be added to the bathroom renovation schedule.**

Rationale: Rosemary Hill PS understands that the cluster is renovating bathrooms that have not been updated since 1985, however, RHPS (renovated in 1988) is in need of better bathrooms and ones that are ADA compliant. Our bathrooms receive heavy (and inexperienced!) use. We request that RHPS be added to the list of elementary schools in need of bathroom renovations, especially to ensure that we in compliance with ADA regulations.

10. Roof Replacement

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

11. School Gymnasiums

a) **Construction of gyms at North Chevy Chase ES and Westbrook ES is required.**

Rationale: The BOE and the Superintendent continue to believe that elementary gymnasiums are essential for the physical education program and well being of students and that these facilities should be included in all Montgomery County Public Schools. Because recreational and school fields continue to be in short supply throughout the entire down-county area, these gyms should be given high priority. The all-purpose room continues to be the only place for EVERYTHING in these schools and, on rainy days, indoor recess wrecks havoc on the building, the children, the staff and the faculty, food services, and the teaching day! All elementary schools should have gyms; this deficiency became particularly apparent during the codes blue of the fall of 2002 and the harsh winters of 2003 and 2004.

The need is particularly acute at North Chevy Chase ES, which houses the only sixth-graders, countywide, who lack access to a school gym. Because this factor was not considered, North Chevy Chase ES was ranked #20, of 25, schools and is not scheduled to get a gymnasium, until August 2010. We ask that because of the unique situation at North Chevy Chase ES, that it be moved to the top of the list and that the County's first elementary school gymnasium addition be built at North Chevy Chase ES. At Westbrook ES, which is about to exceed its enrollment capacity and asphalt play area will likely be covered by portable classrooms, the need for a gym is also becoming increasingly acute as other facilities are being over-used. Both gym projects have already been approved.

12. School Security Systems

a) **Additional security system and lighting is needed at Rock Creek Forest ES.**

Rationale: Currently, one door, accessing the 6 portable classrooms is in place. Additionally, exits are dark, especially during the winter months (e.g., Colston steps and 4th /5th grade corridors), and additional lighting, perhaps with motion detectors, should be installed.

b) **Security Gates and Phones are requested at Rosemary Hills PS.**

Rationale: Funds are needed to install two security gates and telephones in classrooms. RHPS houses our youngest and most vulnerable children. The school was measured for security gates, but these were never installed. Though all classrooms have intercoms, the school administration believes that emergency telephones are needed in every classroom and office, especially now that relocatable classrooms are being used.

13. Technology Modernization

The B-CC Cluster does not wish to offer any comments in this category at this time.

14. (Water and) Indoor Air Quality

Improvement of water quality/lead remediation is a concern for several of the B-CC Cluster schools. On June 6, 2005, we received notice from the MCPS Environmental Safety Coordinator (Lynne Zarate) advising that testing has been completed and remediation is not needed at Chevy Chase ES, North Chevy Chase ES, Westbrook ES, and Westland MS (though earlier testing

indicated elevated lead content at Westland MS). However, B-CC HS, Bethesda ES, and Rock Creek Forest ES had not yet been cleared.

Poor air circulation persists at Westland MS, especially on the second floor of the building where air pockets continue to need regulation.

C. Other: FY2009-2014 CIP

1. Current and Projected Enrollment Figures

Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 1724, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 1719
(2007-2008 capacity: 1544)

Westland Middle School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 1032, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 1000
(2007-2008 capacity: 910 with 6 relocatable classrooms)

Bethesda Elementary School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 449, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 462
(2007-2008 capacity: 384 with 3 relocatable classrooms)

Chevy Chase Elementary School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 442, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 446
(2007-2008 capacity: 429)

North Chevy Chase Elementary School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 316, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 336
(2007-2008 capacity: 276 with 3 relocatable classrooms)

Rock Creek Forest Elementary School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 498, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 508
(2007-2008 capacity: 404 with 6 relocatable classrooms)

Rosemary Hills Primary School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 604, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 618
(2007-2008 capacity: 494 with 5 relocatable classrooms)

Somerset Elementary School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 381, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 374
(2007-2008 capacity: 457)

Westbrook Elementary School

2007-2008 actual enrollment: 366, 2008-2009 anticipated enrollment: 366
(2007-2008 capacity: 293 with 2 relocatable classrooms)

Cluster 2007-2008 Actual:

HS Utilization 112%

MS Utilization 114%

ES Utilization 111%