



December 26, 2006

Ms Nancy Navarro, President
Board of Education
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear President Navarro:

As you know the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2008 Operating Budget and the Citizen's Budget were recently released and there are public hearings scheduled for January 10 and 11, 2007.

The Board took action at its December 12, 2006, meeting to allocate 8 minutes of time at these hearings for each MCCPTA cluster and also to encourage participants to identify the impact of their budget recommendations on the effective implementation of the strategic plan. MCCPTA greatly appreciates the Board's action which established pre-designated time slots for our clusters.

I'm sure our clusters welcome the opportunity to comment on how their budget recommendations will affect the effective implementation of the strategic plan. **MCCPTA asks that you direct MCPS staff to provide the same information to the public in advance of the hearings.** The FY 2008 operating budget documents released by MCPS have no information on how the budget initiatives relate to the MCPS strategic plan. In the past this information has been included in the Citizen's Budget (e.g. last year pages 12-17 of the Citizen's Budget).

This year, a number of topics previously included in the Citizen's Budget have been provided as reports on the MCPS web site instead. Some of these, especially the report on the PEAR reductions, are not as detailed as in previous years, which makes it more difficult for our members to fully appreciate all the proposed changes in the budget.

During the discussion at the Board table on the PTA testimony resolution, comments were made regarding the lack of cluster participation in the strategic planning process this fall. Please note that clusters were not invited to participate in the forum, nor was

MCCPTA provided with accurate information regarding the Board's intent or vision for the forum or public hearing.

Prior to the September 21, 2006, forum MCCPTA was advised that the format of the evening would be to break up into four small groups, one for each strategic planning goal. Consequently, the MCCPTA Executive Committee spent considerable time discussing which officer would participate in each small group and preparing a list of MCCPTA priorities within each strategic planning goal. As you know, the evening did not follow that format. The MCCPTA Executive Committee was quite surprised to hear that evening that the forum's intent was to train us to conduct our own forums in lieu of MCPS conducting forums open to the general public.

MCCPTA did advertise the October 12, 2006, public hearing at MCPS's request and encouraged our clusters and PTAs to participate. However, we were not advised that the Board expected cluster testimony. In fact, one current Board member attempted to discourage a cluster from testifying and implied that the evening was intended for other community groups to testify, not clusters.

We hope that these kinds of miscommunications can be avoided in the future and that MCPS staff is able to provide further details of how the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2008 Operating Budget relates to the MCPS Strategic Plan so that our clusters will be able to address that relationship in their testimony.

Sincerely,

Jane de Winter
President