

**Montgomery County Board of Education  
FY 2010 Capital Budget and the  
Amendments to the FY 2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program**

**Whitman Cluster  
November 12, 2008**

Good evening, President Navarro, Vice President Brandman, Members of the School Board and Dr. Weast. I am Deborah Goldman, representing the Whitman Cluster. We appreciate this opportunity to testify on the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2010 Capital Budget and the 2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program.

The Whitman Cluster supports the Superintendent's Recommended CIP. We continue to be grateful to the Board and the Superintendent for the leadership you have shown in addressing the most pressing construction needs in schools across the County. We recognize the very tight budgetary constraints you will face in the upcoming year, and know that you will do whatever you can to keep school construction on track so that our children continue to learn in excellent facilities. We are mindful of all the careful planning and resources that preceded the current financial crisis. Projects already under way must continue. We can't afford to fall behind.

We first want to thank you and the Superintendent for some recent construction that has occurred since we testified last year. In particular, our cluster

is thrilled that Pyle Middle School's long awaited addition was completed this year. We are also pleased that Carderock Springs Elementary School began its first modernization in the 44 years since it opened in 1966. Its move to the Radnor Holding facility went smoothly, and the entire Carderock Springs community is eagerly looking forward to its new building and gym. Bradley Hills Elementary School is also extremely pleased that its kitchen was expanded enough so that it has space for a much needed extra refrigerator. The kitchen can now actually refrigerate enough lunches for all the students who purchase lunch.

Bradley Hills, however, remains extremely overcrowded. The school was originally built over 60 years ago and was renovated in 1984. Bradley Hills is the seventh smallest, and one of the oldest, elementary schools in the County. It is challenged by significant over-utilization, with capacity at 143%. They have outgrown their core and classroom space. Indeed, they have 456 students enrolled this year when they have a program capacity of only 319. As such, they already have six portables at the elementary school this year and are expected to exceed capacity by six to eight classrooms throughout the six year CIP period.

In last year's CIP, MCPS proposed a feasibility study to build additional classes at Bradley Hills because of its significant over-enrollment. We expected to testify before you tonight in support of that study, emphasizing only that the core space at Bradley Hills needed to be expanded as well. In particular, their All Purpose Room is already over-capacity and can barely accommodate the currently enrolled children at lunch.

However, when the Superintendent's Recommended Budget was published two weeks ago, we were surprised by Supplement A to the Budget entitled "Planning for Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster Elementary Schools." If not implemented carefully, Supplement A could trigger increased over-capacity and resultant issues at Bradley Hills.

It seems that enrollment in all Bethesda area elementary schools, not just Bradley Hills, has increased significantly. The Superintendent, therefore, recommended expanding the scope of the current feasibility study under way at Bradley Hills to include options to accommodate possible future reassignment of students who currently attend Bethesda Elementary School for Grades K-5 and then attend secondary schools in the Whitman Cluster. These students, numbering about 100 across the six grade levels, reside in the western portion of the Bethesda Elementary School service area that is adjacent to the Bradley Hills Elementary School service area. They are already part of our Cluster, although they attend Bethesda Elementary school in the B-CC Cluster.

Due to the short notice we had about this proposal, we have not had enough of an opportunity to gauge the sentiments of the Bradley Hills community or of the portion of the Bethesda Elementary community who might now be re-assigned to Bradley Hills. Indeed, although there is an inadvertent implication in the CIP that this proposal came from the Whitman Cluster community,<sup>1</sup> in fact, we were not involved in the proposal at all. I do not, therefore, feel able to offer a rousing

endorsement for the proposal tonight.

Although it is certainly possible that the two affected communities will ultimately support the proposal, what is already clear is that any support will be dependent on the following two assurances. First, the feasibility study must include an expansion of the core space at Bradley Hills. Bradley Hills' All Purpose Room simply cannot accommodate an extra 100 students and stay within the fire code. Current fire code capacity of the APR is 141 and Bradley Hills is at capacity during some lunch periods. We note that MCPS apparently agrees that this expansion of the core space is necessary for an implementation of Supplement A, but nonetheless we feel compelled to emphasize this need due to the safety and liability issues that already exist at Bradley Hills.

Second, the current feasibility study must not be delayed due to its change in scope. Bradley Hills is extremely over-extended and stretched to the limits of its space. We urge that there is no delay in fixing the untenable situation which exists at Bradley Hills in order to expand the feasibility study.

Of course, Bradley Hills is not the only school in our Cluster which is aging. For instance, Bannockburn was supposedly modernized in 1988, but that "modernization" shows little similarity to the modernizations taking place today. Indeed, Bannockburn did not have its restrooms updated in that modernization, and the plumbing is still circa 1950s. It currently does not have a FACT score nor is it on the restroom modernization list. In this year's CIP, however, there is some

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<sup>1</sup> See Page 4-117, Bradley Hills Elementary School Planning Issue.

indication that when MCPS creates new modernization and restroom renovation lists, only schools that were renovated before 1987 will be considered. We strongly believe this cut-off date does not accurately reflect how old the school facilities are across the County. We urge, therefore, that when the time comes for MCPS to create new lists, it also considers schools that were supposedly “modernized” in the late 80s/early 90s. Schools should be placed in the queue based on the actual age and condition of their facilities.

Finally, as we have in past years, we urge that routine building maintenance continues to be addressed. Although we recognize that this is also an operating budget issue, we urge that maintenance be a priority. Bathrooms, heating and air conditioning, playground blacktops, and lead in the pipes, all of these problems need to be addressed, not just in our cluster, but in the entire County. To optimize the learning process, every child needs to attend school in a safe, secure and modern facility. We can’t afford to fall behind.

We recognize your support of our schools’ construction needs, and we, in turn, pledge to work with you to ensure that our County and State legislators appropriate the funds necessary to make this CIP a reality.

Thank you and good evening.