

## **Wootton Cluster CIP Testimony for BOE - Nov. 13, 2008**

Good evening. My name is Carol Van Dam Falk. I'm one of the proud cluster coordinators of Thomas S. Wootton High School in Rockville.

We have a terrific cluster brimming with bright, wonderful, compassionate students but we also face many challenges meeting the needs of our schools in this current economic climate.

Due to the lower tax revenues flowing into County and State coffers, we have been very mindful of addressing only the most glaring needs of our schools.

Typically I begin with a description of the needs of our high school, but this year, I would like to put Cabin John's modernization project up front. This project is scheduled for completion in August, 2011 and we feel keeping this project on track is a top priority in our cluster. One could argue that in an economic downturn, it is more important than ever to update aging facilities in order to provide optimal learning environments. The cost of upgrading building systems such as heating and air conditioning will only increase exponentially with every year it is delayed. As you know, a detailed objective assessment process ranks schools in order of priority for modernization. Schools are evaluated on physical condition as well as educational program capability. This school was built in 1967 and remodeled once in 1989. Cabin John's parents and students have patiently waited their turn. We urge you to keep this project on track.

Wootton High School is thankful for its Building Modifications and Program Improvements for FY 2009, including the conversion of four classrooms into two science laboratories. However, with that conversion, Wootton now faces a shortage of at least six classrooms. This is a high school that is 460 students over capacity and still houses ten classrooms in portables.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: No other school in the county is as overcrowded as Wootton. Dr. Doran does an incredible job of utilizing every available resource to make it feel less crowded, but the fact is Wootton is more over-capacity than any other school in Montgomery County, and therefore continues to rely on your support to alleviate this problem.

Under building modifications, Wootton desperately needs upgrades to its auditorium. The backstage is severely deficient of space, and the sound system is extremely outdated, making every performance difficult to hear for the audience. New office space and a new sound system are required to accommodate the larger crowds that regularly attend Wootton's critically acclaimed performances.

We also ask that Wootton's restroom renovations slated for fiscal year 2009-2010 be kept on track.

As I've mentioned before, Wootton is still in dire need of an updated weight training room. The current conditions are deplorable. Boys and girls routinely use the same, small, aging weight room, especially on rainy days. If our athletes are to compete on a level playing field with the County's star athletes that level playing field includes the weight room, and Wootton's weight room is nowhere near on par with those of other Montgomery County High schools. We invite you to have a look around and compare our training room to other high schools. We think you'll see what we mean.

In addition to the need for a new weight room, the Wootton cluster would still like to get a commitment from the BOE to support a Wootton/Robert Frost initiative for improving the playing and practice facilities shared by the two adjoining schools. I have had athletes at Frost and Wootton for several years and I can personally attest to the fact that the field surfaces are torn up, barren in many areas, and peppered with holes. The principals of both schools would like to see a new practice field created as well as the current fields improved.

As for Robert Frost Middle School, Dr. Jones would very much like to install a window in the security office. There is no clear view of the front entrance from either the front office or the security office. Dr. Jones estimates the cost would be about \$6,000.

Frost would like to stay on track for replacement of its HVAC system. As far as we know, every improvement to the current HVAC system has been made and it still leaks, requiring buckets to be placed in various, strategic spots when the air conditioning is running.

The folks at Travilah Elementary are extremely thankful for their addition and want you to know they are able to house an entire grade in the new classrooms.

At Dufief Elementary School, an old problem has reared its ugly head again. The roof that was patched three years ago and caused extensive mold, resulting in the outlay of tens of thousands of dollars in cleanup costs and repeated OSHA inspections, is leaking again.

In order to keep our schools safe environments for our kids, a commitment that is outlined in the Superintendent's FY 2010 Capitol Budget, this roof problem needs to be addressed immediately. The school principal has informed me the water is leaking into room five and the ceiling tile has been replaced several times already. There is also a new leak in the health room. We all know the cost of roof replacement is exorbitant, but this is the kind of problem that needs to be addressed quickly and rationally, not in a piecemeal fashion. If it is not, it will only cost more to fix down the road. Dufief is also experiencing problems with its HVAC system, but says if introducing that issue forestalls any improvements to the roof, they'd rather not mention it at all.

Finally, turning to Cold Spring Elementary School, which was built in 1972, a gymnasium project was slated to begin and be completed by August 2010 but due to budget constraints, its construction will be delayed by two years. We hope the BOE continues to support this project with plans to design the gym in August, 2011.

Thank you for your time tonight. We appreciate the chance to be heard, and I look forward to answering any questions you might have.