

November 30, 2015

Mr. Larry A. Bowers
Interim Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Interim Superintendent's Recommendations;
FY2017 Capital Budget and FY 2017-2022
Capital Improvements Program

Dear Mr. Bowers:

In light of the capacity challenges Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has faced in recent years, we were encouraged to see that the school system's proposed new capital budget not only requests increased funding but also includes a set of supplemental recommendations to address overcrowding. We applaud your leadership in proposing ideas such as paired schools, the reopening of closed schools, and redistricting as potential solutions to capacity constraints. No solution will be easy, but we believe that some combination of the steps you have identified is likely to be necessary to address the County's anticipated school needs.

The County Council, the Planning Department, and the Parks Department are all eager to strengthen our working relationship with MCPS. Our coordination on area land use plans is essential to ensuring that our community can meet its needs for job creation and housing as well as maintain the quality of our public schools. As you know, the increasing strain on our school facilities over the past few years has made discussions about future growth in the County a challenge. An important part of instilling trust in our planning efforts is demonstrating our collaboration by providing residents with tangible solutions for future students.

To that end, the Planning Board and Council would like MCPS to provide viable options for addressing capacity as master plans are drafted, even in cases where additional capacity is not required within the time horizon of the current capital budget cycle. These options for medium-to-long term school capacity are especially important in the Walter Johnson, Whitman, and Bethesda-Chevy Chase clusters, where redevelopment interest is strong and land is scarce. As we move forward with plans for the future of communities served by these school clusters (such as the Westbard, Downtown Bethesda, Greater Lyttonsville, Rock Spring and White Flint II master plans), we need the support and assistance of MCPS in developing specific and achievable recommendations for school capacity in each area where development is anticipated.

We look forward to working closely with you and your staff during our master planning process to develop solid alternatives to address anticipated growth, particularly in the southwest part of the County. To that end, we would appreciate having the benefit of your ideas on how to provide more detailed options for meeting school capacity needs as part of the master plans currently being drafted by the Planning Board for the County Council's consideration.