

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

August 28, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Reopening of Charles W. Woodward High School (07-29-19-01-A,
07-29-19-01-B, 07-29-19-03-B)

Question (07-29-19-01-A)

During Public Comments, Board members requested the following:

- A. Ms. Dixon requested information regarding the degree to which MCPS engaged the Walter Johnson High School (“WJ”) community in the discussions surrounding the reopening of Woodward High School, especially the exploratory committee.

Response

On Friday, August 16, 2019, Mr. Seth P. Adams, director, Division of Construction, forwarded a letter to the Walter Johnson Cluster community in response to the questions raised by the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, Inc. (MCCPTA) Walter Johnson Cluster leadership in a letter to the superintendent of schools and the Board of Education president, dated July 22, 2019. This letter is attached for your reference and outlines several community engagement concerns that have been raised.

Question (07-29-19-01-B)

During Public Comments, Board members requested the following:

- B. Ms. Dixon requested that the written materials presented during the evening’s update discussion be disseminated to the community. Please share with MCCPTA officers and cluster coordinators.

Response

Following the July 29, 2019, presentation to the Board, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff forwarded the presentation materials to the MCCPTA Walter Johnson Cluster leadership for further distribution and availability. In addition, the materials are available on the Board of Education web page.

Question (07-29-19-03-B)

During the *Charles W. Woodward High School Reopening Update* discussion, Board members requested the following information:

- B. Mrs. O'Neill suggested that staff cast a wider net in their community engagement efforts regarding all aspects of the project.

Response

Our work on the reopening of Charles W. Woodward High School in the 2018–2019 school year primarily focused on facility design and conceptual building approaches. A key focus also has been the core needs of Phase I to support Northwood High School as a holding facility. The community for these initial and focused conversations was centered around school and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) leadership in the Walter Johnson Cluster, Northwood High School, as well as the Downcounty Consortium. The meetings included the following information.

- Capital Improvements Program planning and Charles W. Woodward High School concept discussions in fall 2018;
- Architect selection in fall 2018;
- Discussion with Educational Facility Advisory Group in January 2019;
- Holding center requirements and design concept meeting in March 2019;
- Concept discussions with Walter Johnson Cluster and Downcounty Consortium Cluster Coordinators in May 2019;
- Meetings with the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services, the Department of Planning, and the Department of Transportation in spring 2019; and
- Discussions with Walter Johnson Cluster and Downcounty Consortium leadership in July 2019, prior to the Board presentation.

It is important to note that these discussions and meetings involved a core group of school and PTA leadership given the very initial and conceptual nature of the discussions.

Having received feedback and direction from the Board's discussion of the concept plan, we now are able to begin wider engagement with the community about the Charles W. Woodward High School reopening project. This work will be important as we move toward developing a strong preliminary plan to bring to the Board this fall. To this end, we are convening a Charles W. Woodward High School Reopening Project Advisory Group that will include representatives from the broader community. We have invited representatives from the civic associations and homeowners' associations from the immediate area surrounding Charles W. Woodward High School; our stakeholder advocacy groups; and MCCPTA leadership in the Walter Johnson Cluster and the Downcounty Consortium.

The first meeting was held on August 26, 2019, from 3:30 to 5:50 p.m. at Tilden Middle School. This will inaugurate our more traditional design and planning process with the community as we work develop the preliminary plans presentation for the Board of Education in October 2019.

At this time, we have planned the following steps to communicate and engage the broader community in the next phase of our planning and design work for the reopening of Charles W. Woodward High School.

- A series of three community meetings with the Charles W. Woodward High School Reopening Project Advisory Group to review and provide feedback on project concepts as the preliminary plans are developed;
- Establishment of a web page on the reopening project to house documents and materials for public reference;
- Maintenance of a “Frequently Asked Questions” document on the web page with updated answers to questions raised throughout the process;
- Multiple communications to the Walter Johnson Cluster and Downcounty Consortium communities regarding the planning and design process and alerting them to view the web page for updates; and
- A webinar to walk through the design concepts and share information for viewing at community members’ convenience.

We look forward to continued dialogue with stakeholder communities as this complex and multi-faceted project moves into this and future stages of design and construction.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Andrew M. Zuckerman, chief operating officer, at 240-740-3050.

JRS:AMZ:em

Attachment

Copy to:

Dr. McKnight
Dr. Navarro
Dr. Statham
Dr. Zuckerman
Mr. Civin
Dr. Johnson
Ms. Diamond
Mr. Turner
Mr. Song
Ms. Webb



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
 MARYLAND
 www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

August 16, 2019



Dear Walter Johnson Cluster Coordinators and Cluster Community:

Thank you for your letter dated July 22, 2019, and for your ongoing dialogue with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) regarding the planned reopening of the Charles W. Woodward High School. We appreciate the engagement and advocacy of the Walter Johnson Cluster community as we work through the early planning and design stages of this complex project.

The questions you raise are important considerations that we also are wrestling with in our work, and we acknowledge the degree of uncertainty that is present at this stage of concept design. On July 29, 2019, we provided an update presentation to the Board of Education about the initial conceptual design direction for the reopening of Charles W. Woodward High School. We hope that this presentation sheds light on some of the questions you are raising; we know that for others, the answers are not readily known at this stage of the project.

We have shared with you the presentation materials from the July 29, 2019, Board of Education meeting. This letter seeks to respond to the key areas of questions you raised in your July 22, 2019, letter. As we continue to work with you and the school communities of the Downcounty Consortium clusters to guide the future of the reopened Charles W. Woodward High School, we will continue to work through these and many other questions.

Capacity

As you note, the primary purpose in reopening Charles W. Woodward High School is to provide much needed additional capacity at the high school level across the Walter Johnson Cluster and the Downcounty Consortium. This remains our primary purpose and concern. It also is the reason that we continue to plan for a Charles W. Woodward High School capacity of 2,700 students. Current projections indicate that together, the Walter Johnson Cluster and the Downcounty Consortium will have nearly 2,500 students over capacity by 2025. While we have multiple secondary projects in the area approved to provide capacity, we also know that this is a dynamic and growing area where we must look ahead to build capacity for potential growth beyond the immediate projections.

The reopened Charles W. Woodward High School will be designed and planned for a capacity large enough to alleviate the enrollment pressures of the entire Downcounty area. The decisions that ultimately are reached around how students are assigned to the new Charles W. Woodward High School will be predicated on this priority.

Programmatic Focus

First and foremost, the reopened Charles W. Woodward High School will provide a high quality, comprehensive high school program in which all students will have access to the rigorous coursework needed to successfully graduate and ready for career or college.

Division of Construction

From a design perspective, our MCPS facilities staff and our contracted architects have worked together to identify a conceptual design that makes efficient use of the site, maximizes flexible use space, supports core high school coursework requirements, and preserves multiple options for Phase II build out of possible site amenities and programmatic focus. One primary benefit of the integrated design approach is to allow more time to finalize decisions about the next phases of construction while continuing to make progress on the core building aspects of Phase I construction. The core building in Phase I will not only support Northwood High School during its construction but also form the core of the fully reopened Charles W. Woodward High School.

The work of Eliot Pfanstiehl to envision future direction for secondary arts programming is on a related but somewhat separate track. Our initial design work on the Charles W. Woodward High School facility sought to capture the potential inclusion of arts into the facility design concepts. However, the design at this stage allows flexibility in designing future programmatic aspects. At this juncture, Mr. Pfanstiehl's work has primarily been to lay the foundational benchmarking and research needed with internal MCPS staff prior to initiating a broader community conversation about secondary arts programming. To the extent that this work connects the Charles W. Woodward High School facility as a center for arts programming, that will be connected in our Phase II work. And as this arts programming work moves into its more public phase, parent representation absolutely will be an integral component.

Site Amenities

A key achievement in our work to design an efficient use of space in the building is that it preserves our options for additional features of the building and the site. We are pleased to be at a point in design that eliminates the need for some of the "either or" dilemmas that were present in our early design conversations. We know that it is possible to include amenities such as a stadium, parking, or performance or gathering space in a future phase of construction.

At the same time, the topography and configuration of the site itself presents challenges and the potential for increased project costs as amenities are added. For this reason, we continue to examine a range of possibilities to structure athletic and other site resources to maximize use of the site and maintain fiscal balance. This is true regardless of changes to the essential building design, size, program, or structure.

While we cannot answer all of the operational questions you raise at this time, we share your view of the importance of these questions and the importance of athletics in the student experience. Going forward in our continuing design conversations, we will seek the input of the community on the issue of site features. We also will work with our director of Systemwide Athletics and the team of high school athletic directors to envision creative and appropriate approaches to supporting robust athletic programs in increasingly challenged and constrained high school sites. We anticipate that this will be an ongoing issue for MCPS not only at Charles W. Woodward High School but at future projects given the relative scarcity of available land in most of Montgomery County.

Community Engagement

Our work on the reopening of Charles W. Woodward High School in the 2018–2019 school year focused primarily on facility design and conceptual building approaches. A key focus also has been the core needs of Phase I to support Northwood High School as a holding facility. The community for these initial and focused

conversations was centered around school and Parent Teacher Association leadership from the Walter Johnson Cluster and from Northwood High School, as well as the Downcounty Consortium. Meetings included work on architect selection, the feasibility study analysis, design concepts, and holding center requirements. The engagement with this group of school and cluster leaders has informed our iterative design process, and input and ideas from these discussions are reflected in the conceptual design at this stage.

Having received feedback and direction from the Board of Education's discussion of the concept plan, we are now able to begin wider engagement with the community about the Charles W. Woodward High School reopening project. This work will be important as we move toward developing a strong preliminary plan to bring to the Board of Education later this fall. To this end, we are convening a Woodward High School Reopening Project Advisory Group that will include representatives from the broader community. We have invited the civic associations and homeowners' associations from the immediate area surrounding Charles W. Woodward High School; our stakeholder advocacy groups; and Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Associations leadership in the Walter Johnson Cluster and the Downcounty Consortium.

Our first meeting is scheduled for August 26, 2019, from 3:30–5:50 pm at Tilden Middle School (the Woodward holding center). This will inaugurate our more traditional design and planning process with the community as we work towards developing the preliminary plans presentation for the Board of Education in October 2019. There will be many phases of planning and construction over the course of this multifaceted and complex project. We value and actively will seek the engaged participation of the parent, staff, and neighborhood communities in each stage of the process.

We greatly appreciate the time, energy, and thoughtful attention you continue to bring to your school and the MCPS community. We look forward to continuing this important conversation as we move forward the work to design and build a reopened Charles W. Woodward High School that meets the needs of all of our students for many years into the future.

Sincerely,



Seth P. Adams
Director, Division of Construction