

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

November 21, 2016

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Supplement B—Walter Johnson Cluster Schools

The Walter Johnson Cluster has experienced large enrollment increases during the past nine years, primarily driven by the sale of existing homes to new families. Also, new development in the cluster has played a role, although to a lesser degree than demographic changes in existing communities. In the future, the cluster will see substantial new housing development associated with the adopted White Flint Sector Plan and two new sector plans now under review—Rock Spring and White Flint II. In addition, other developments, such as the WMAL site, may be redeveloped with new housing units.

To address the high enrollment in Walter Johnson Cluster schools, Farmland, Garrett Park, and Wyngate elementary schools were previously expanded, either as part of revitalization/expansion projects or with classroom additions. The adopted Fiscal Year (FY) 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program includes plans to expand Ashburton, Kensington Parkwood, and Luxmanor elementary schools and North Bethesda and Tilden middle schools in the coming years, either as part of a revitalization/expansion project or with classroom addition projects. To address increased enrollment at Walter Johnson High School, FY 2015 facility planning funds were approved in the adopted FY 2015–2020 Capital Improvements Program to conduct a feasibility study for a possible addition at the school. Despite the capacity projects, some of the Walter Johnson Cluster schools are projected to have space deficits in the six-year planning period.

On November 16, 2015, the Board of Education authorized the Walter Johnson Cluster Roundtable Discussion Group (Roundtable) to include representatives from the Walter Johnson Cluster. The purpose of the Roundtable was to develop general approaches to address the short- and long-term enrollment increases and projected space deficits in the elementary, middle, and high schools in the Walter Johnson Cluster.

Several high school approaches were considered during the Roundtable process, including the construction of an addition at the school and the possible opening of the former Woodward High School. Based on long-term enrollment projections, the reopening of Woodward High School solely for Walter Johnson High School would leave significant space available in the Walter Johnson Cluster. Several high schools in the Downcounty Consortium that are located adjacent to Walter Johnson High School, also have experienced high enrollment increases during the past four years and will have critical space needs in the future. To address the large enrollment increases in the Downcounty Consortium high schools, FY 2016 facility planning funds were approved in the Amended FY 2015–2020 Capital Improvements Program to conduct a capacity study for these high schools. This study is currently underway to explore possible additions at Montgomery Blair, Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, and Northwood high schools.

WHEREAS, Enrollment levels at Walter Johnson Cluster schools are quickly reaching existing school capacities and the planned increased capacities of schools; and

WHEREAS, A considerable amount of new housing development is occurring in the Walter Johnson Cluster and more will follow as the adopted White Flint Sector Plan builds out and new sector plans under development are approved and begin to be built out; and

WHEREAS, As part of the adopted Fiscal Year 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program, there is an approved addition project to increase the capacity at Ashburton Elementary School to 881 seats with a completion date of August 2019; and

WHEREAS, As part of the Fiscal Year 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program, there is an approved addition project to increase the capacity at North Bethesda Middle School to 1,229 seats with a completion date of August 2018; and

WHEREAS, As part of the Fiscal Year 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program, there is an approved revitalization/expansion project to increase the capacity at Tilden Middle School to 1,200 seats and collocate Rock Terrace School with a completion date of August 2020; and

WHEREAS, The Downcounty Consortium that includes Montgomery Blair, Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, Northwood, and Wheaton high schools that are located adjacent to the Walter Johnson Cluster are projected to have space deficits beyond the existing school capacities; and

WHEREAS, As part of the Amended Fiscal Year 2015–2020 Capital Improvements Program, a capacity study was approved for the Downcounty Consortium high schools; and

WHEREAS, On November 16, 2015, the Board of Education authorized a Roundtable Discussion Group for the Walter Johnson Cluster to develop general approaches to address the short- and long-term enrollment increases and projected space deficits in the elementary, middle, and high schools in the Walter Johnson Cluster; and

WHEREAS, On October 13, 2016, the superintendent of schools submitted several recommendations to the Board of Education to address the short- and long-term student enrollment increases for the Walter Johnson Cluster elementary and middle schools; and

WHEREAS, On October 13, 2016, the superintendent of schools submitted a recommendation to the Board of Education to continue and expand the study of both the five Downcounty Consortium high schools and Walter Johnson High School to address the space deficits at these schools; and

WHEREAS, On November 3, 2016, the Board of Education conducted a work session to consider the superintendent of schools' recommendation to address the short- and long-term student enrollment increases for the Walter Johnson Cluster elementary and middle schools and the Roundtable Discussion Group; and

WHEREAS, On November 3, 2016, the Board of Education identified an alternative to the superintendent of schools' recommendation to include Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Walt Whitman high schools in the expanded high school capacity study; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Education conducted public hearings on November 10 and 14, 2016, in accordance with Board of Education Policy FAA, *Long-range Educational Facilities Planning*, and Montgomery County Public Schools Regulation FAA-RA, *Long-range Educational Facilities Planning*, on the superintendent of school's recommendation; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the addition project at Ashburton Elementary School be reduced from 881 seats to 770 seats with the planned core improvements and be completed on the approved schedule for August 2019, and that prior to staff's final decision regarding the relocation of the Preschool Education Program (PEP) from Ashburton Elementary School, that staff conduct further analysis of the fiscal and physical implications of moving the PEP program and report back to the Board of Education; and be it further

Resolved, That a modular addition that can be relocated in the future be constructed at Ashburton Elementary School to be completed by August 2019 to accommodate the enrollment not served by the permanent addition; and be it further

Resolved, That prior to moving forward on using the Garrett Park annex as a solution for the space deficits at Garrett Park Elementary School, a conversation with the Montgomery County Child Care Association, the Garrett Park Town Council, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) be convened to discuss the overcrowding and possible solutions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Walter Johnson Cluster elementary school enrollment be monitored to determine the timing for opening a new school in the long term, and that a preliminary growth management study be conducted for the elementary schools this year and that various options for potential sites be presented to the Board of Education based on multiple scenarios so that an elementary school site selection process can be considered for the next full CIP year; and be it further

Resolved, That the enrollment at Farmland Elementary School be monitored, and if the space deficit continues to remain at high levels, student reassignments be considered to Luxmanor Elementary School one year prior to the completion of the Luxmanor Elementary School revitalization/expansion project which is currently scheduled to be completed in January 2020; and be it further

Resolved, That the North Bethesda Middle School addition project continue as approved with a capacity for 1,229 seats to address the projected space deficits at the school; and be it further

Resolved, That the Tilden Middle School/Rock Terrace School revitalization/expansion project continue as approved with a capacity for 1,200 seats to address the projected space deficits at the school; and be it further

Resolved, That a capacity study to address the overutilization of high schools include representatives from the Downcounty Consortium high schools and Walter Johnson High School, as well as representatives from Walt Whitman and Bethesda-Chevy Chase high schools and consideration be given to offering relief to these overutilized schools with the opening of Woodward High School; and be it further

Resolved, That as the superintendent of schools develops the charge for the capacity study that he evaluate whether the highlighted items in the attached testimony (given on November 14, 2016, by the Walter Johnson Cluster) should be included in the scope/charge of that study; and be it further

Resolved, That the superintendent of schools solicit community input in a capacity study process consistent with Montgomery County Public Schools Regulation FAA-RA, *Long-range Educational Facilities Planning*, to obtain viewpoints of affected stakeholders regarding possible approaches to address high school capacity issues; and be it further

Resolved, That the superintendent of school's expanded capacity study process include consideration of space deficits at the five Downcounty Consortium high schools that include Montgomery Blair, Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, Northwood, and Wheaton high schools as well as Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Walter Johnson, and Walt Whitman high schools; and be it further

Resolved, That the former Woodward High School be reopened to address the overutilization at Walter Johnson High school and the other identified high schools; and be it further

Resolved, That the superintendent of schools solicit community input about the possibility to address space deficits at these high schools as well as others countywide by offering alternative programmatic, career technology education, or other educational options for high school students through the use of nontraditional facilities, including commercial space; and be it further

Resolved, That discussions of specific boundary reassignments, choice program patterns, or special education program placements will not be in the scope of the community input process at this time; and be it further

Resolved, That the superintendent of schools provide a report on the results of the community involvement process to members of the Board of Education by June 2017.

JRS:AMZ:JS:bmr

Attachment

**Excerpt from Walter Johnson Cluster Testimony (pages 6 and 7)
November 14, 2016**

Therefore we ask that the charge to the Roundtable be crafted in such a way to appropriately focus the challenge but also allow discussion on those things that will be of most value to you and to the Superintendent. To that end, we ask that when developing the charge to the Roundtable that the following be considered within the scope of the Roundtable:

- If the scope of the Roundtable includes moving or creating programs, we ask that the scope also include moving or creating programs that create equity between Walter Johnson and the new Woodward. The cluster does not believe that the programs have to be picked exclusively to be moved to or created at Woodward and that the decision as to the location could be Woodward or Walter Johnson. We ask that as part of the Roundtable charge you review the possibility of programs that could be moved to or created at Woodward or at Walter Johnson.
- However, the WJ Cluster has heard concerns from the DCC about moving programs away from their schools. We support their efforts to keep their school communities together and respect their desire to maintain programmatic offerings at their schools. Our preference is to create new and diverse offerings that could benefit students from all regions of the County.
- While we understand boundary studies are not part of the Roundtable's scope, we ask that approaches to be considered within the Roundtable have as a principle that our schools have continuous articulation, as this is an important aspect of keeping our neighborhoods together. Children thrive when they feel like they are part of a community school. Therefore, we ask that elementary and middle schools not be split up unless the family makes the choice to do so, for example, under a choice program.
- We ask that the Roundtable consider programmatic options that leave space for neighborhood growth. We request that the Roundtable consider options where Woodward will initially be built with capacity of roughly 1800, with core space of 2400, and plan for additions that would get the school to an eventual capacity of 2400. As the geographic areas surrounding Woodward continue to develop at a high speed pace, we need to make sure the school can accommodate the number of students projected to be attending 30 years from now. Based on the DLRP projections for the Roundtable and for the White Flint 2 and Rock Terrace plans, the neighborhoods that are now in the WJ cluster will need space for 3400 students in 15 years and over 3800 students in 30 years. We want the solution that comes from this Roundtable to be a long-term sustainable solution to capacity issues in our region.
- Finally, we ask that the Roundtable be tasked with developing creative solutions for Woodward, WJ, the DCC and possibly Whitman and BCC. Woodward is a MCPS asset that belongs to everyone in Montgomery County. This is an opportunity to develop something new, innovative, and cutting edge for the County. Questions could be posed to the Roundtable: Should both Woodward and WJ have special programs that will create differentiation, yet educational equality and equity between the schools? What will help the county close the opportunity gap?
- We recommend reasonable constraints on the scope of the Roundtable (as a participant in the last Roundtable, I can assure you that I will appreciate them if I am a participant in the next one). But we also want the freedom and flexibility to dream big and help shape the future of our children's collective educational experiences.