

**ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES
STUDY COMMITTEE**

ACTION MINUTES

MEETING OF MARCH 24, 2011

The meeting was convened at 7:05 p.m. All members of the committee were present except for Sean Hart and Eric Siegel. Soo Lee-Cho and Charles Littlefield arrived after the start of the meeting. The following were also present: John Ewald, College Gardens Elementary School principal; Troy Boddy, Beall Elementary School principal; Cheryl Peirce, Richard Montgomery Cluster PTA coordinator; Jennifer Young, Ritchie Park Elementary School PTA; John Spano, Beall Elementary School PTA. David Hill, Planning Commission and Victoria McMullen were present in the audience. Jim Wasilak of City staff was also present.

The chair moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0, with Charles Littlefield and Soo Lee-Cho absent.

Dennis Cain moved, seconded by Jason Anthony, to approve the minutes for the March 17 meeting, with corrections noted. The motion passed by a vote of 5-0-1 with Charles Littlefield abstaining.

The meeting began with introductions and Chair Julie Palakovich Carr stating that the Committee wanted to hear the experiences with overcrowding from the principals and PTA members.

Troy Boddy, in his fifth year as principal at Beall ES, stated that with the increasing enrollment, the dismissal of school, as well as core functions such as lunch periods and assemblies, have to be managed differently. In response to a committee questions, both principals stated that the academic programs have not been compromised by the increasing enrollment. At Beall ES, class sizes range from 22-23 students in six kindergarten classes, 18-19 in six first grade classrooms, and up to 24-28 students in four third through fifth grade classrooms. As of the next school year, Beall ES will no longer be a Focus school, with the associated lower student – teacher ratio tied to the school's poverty rate. Beall ES saw an increase of more than 100 students from the previous year. The schools use parateachers (teachers aids) for certain needs. John Ewald of College Gardens ES stated that as much as 30 percent of his students come from families that have moved to the area from out of state. Troy Boddy stated that the mobility rate (total amount of student transfers in and out of the school) averages about 12 to 18 percent per school year.

The principals noted that families look at the schools' performance and the programs they offer, such as special education or IB, and are competitive with private schools in terms of academics and programming. Some programs draw students from outside the high school cluster or the elementary attendance area, while some draw from outside the cluster. The Chinese Immersion program at College Gardens ES draws about 50 percent of the program participants from outside the school's attendance area. The schools in the Richard Montgomery cluster are attractive due to their location and proximity to the Metro red line. John Ewald noted that the programs within the schools do not get larger, as the number of

student participants is limited. The growth is seen in the general population. He estimated that about 150 of 820 students were from outside the College Gardens attendance area.

Troy Boddy stated that the crowding at the school is not noticeable in the classroom but is more apparent in the core functions such as lunch and not being able to fit the entire school into the gym. In response to a question from a committee member regarding relocatable classrooms, the principals noted that the students seem to like them, and sometimes they are larger in size than the regular classrooms. Some of the challenges include making sure that the relocatables have the same technology resources as the regular school. Special care is necessary for managing the core functions such as lunch periods and related discipline issues.

The PTA representatives stated that some of their concerns about relocatables include their condition, particularly with older ones, as well as safety concerns for students that must travel between the portables and the main building. They also noted that relocatables have displaced some outdoor activity areas, which can make managing recess more difficult than before. When schools are crowded and every space is used, there is not sufficient space for art, music including instrumental classes and after school enrichment programs. Art teachers must use a cart and go to each classroom, and gyms are split to allow for physical education classes. Other facilities, such as copiers, become strained as schools become more crowded.

The principals noted that the schools are sprinklered, while not all relocatables have sprinkler systems. The relocatables are inspected every year, and it costs \$85,000 to relocate a classroom. Cheryl Peirce noted that most of the growth in the Twinbrook ES area came from neighborhood turnover and crowding of existing residences (resulting from potential code violations). John Spano, who has been a teacher, noted that teachers can feel isolated from the rest of the school, and that weather can cause problems. The principals stated that the relocatables can attract security problems as an attraction to loiterers, although they noted that teachers are more worried about the school district budget and quality of instruction rather than whether they are in a relocatable classroom. The representatives were asked about any comments they had on the City's APFO. John Spano noted that he felt that the quality of instruction decreases as class size increases, in term of individual instruction. They felt that the student generation rates being used were not accurate, based on their experience in the schools. Some families choose apartments by choice or do not move when they were expected to. Other concerns raised include the fact that MCPS has a significant delay in their project pipeline, and whether there should be a second middle school in the Richard Montgomery cluster. All agreed that the best-case scenario for actual construction of a school addition is five years out. The group discussed redistricting, which might come to pass if the new elementary school is built at the former Hungerford ES site.

The Committee asked if the PTA was involved in the forecasting done by MCPS. The response was that they have been more involved in recent years, as school forecasts have proven to be off significantly. John Ewald encouraged parents to give real data to Bruce Crispell at MCPS so he can include it in his forecasts. Jason Anthony suggested that there might be a way to leverage new development and associated taxes to help solve the problem. The APFO as it stands does not address the school capacity issues associated with the base development already existing in an area.

After the school representatives departed, the Committee discussed questions they have for Bruce Crispell, who is the chief of long range planning for MCPS and will be the speaker on March 31. These include what are the performance metrics that the forecasts are evaluated by, the accuracy of the student generator factors, and how the forecasts could be so wrong recently.

For the April 7 meeting, the Committee would like to hear from someone from the Montgomery County Department of Fire and Rescue who can discuss the standards and guidelines of fire and emergency services, as well as the Chief of the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department.

For the April 14 meeting, the Committee would like to hear about the Rockville Citizen's Survey from a staff member who worked on it. The Committee will also devise questions to incorporate into a survey, as well as decide about a public hearing.

On a motion by Charles Littlefield and seconded by Tom Gibney, the Committee voted 7-0 to invite County Councilmember Phil Andrews to a future meeting. The Committee would also like to hear from someone at MCPS who prepares the MCPS Capital Improvements Program (CIP), which details the improvements to each school and when they are to take place. Bruce Crispell can probably provide guidance on the appropriate person. The Committee would like to hear from someone with knowledge of how the White Flint taxing district was formulated, as well as an expert that can address the quality of education versus school construction.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 p.m. on motion by the chair and supported unanimously.