

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

February 26, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Recommendations for Amendments to the Board of Education's Requested FY 2019 Capital Budget and FY 2019–2024 Capital Improvements Program

On November 27, 2017, the Board of Education approved the *Requested FY 2019 Capital Budget and the FY 2019–2024 Capital Improvements Program* (CIP) for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The requested CIP totals \$1.83 billion for the six-year period and includes many capacity projects to address school overutilization throughout the system, as well as capital projects to address our aging infrastructure. Each spring, the superintendent of schools has the opportunity to recommend amendments to the Board of Education's requested CIP, should such an action be warranted.

This winter, MCPS staff conducted three site selection processes that require spring recommendations in order to move forward. To address student enrollment growth, the Board approved three elementary school site selection processes—Clarksburg Cluster Elementary School #9 (November 21, 2016), Downcounty Consortium (DCC) Elementary School (lower portion) (August 31, 2017), and Gaithersburg Cluster Elementary School (August 31, 2017). All three reports by the respective site selection committees have been released. After review of these reports, I am prepared to make a recommendation for each one. Also, I am prepared to make a recommendation regarding the Shady Grove Sector Plan Boundary Study, which was conducted in spring 2017, with the committee report released on September 6, 2017.

In addition to the four recommendations noted above, I would like to update the Board on two program-related issues—Career and Technology Education (CTE) at Seneca Valley High School and performance space at A. Mario Loiederman Middle School. Both of these issues were discussed during the CIP review process in the fall, and I would like to take this opportunity to provide a status report for your consideration.

Recommendations

1. Clarksburg Cluster Elementary School #9 Site Selection

The Clarksburg Master Plan allows for the development of up to 15,000 residential units. A new cluster of schools was formed in the 2006–2007 school year when Clarksburg High School opened to accommodate the enrollment growth from the new development. Since 2006, three new elementary schools have opened, in addition to two new middle schools, and an addition at the high school. In order to prepare for further elementary school student enrollment growth, the Board of Education authorized the formation of a Site Selection Advisory Committee (SSAC) to evaluate site options for a new elementary school in the Clarksburg Cluster—Clarksburg Cluster Elementary School #9.

The SSAC was composed of community members and county agency staff with a wide range of expertise. The first meeting was held on November 16, 2017, and the second meeting was held on December 13, 2017. Both meetings were held at the Upcounty Regional Services Center in Germantown. The SSAC initially considered a total of six sites. However, after the first meeting, the committee voted to remove three sites from consideration. The SSAC rated and scored the three remaining sites, which included two master-planned candidate sites and one privately owned site.

The SSAC recommends that the Cabin Branch Elementary School site be the location of the new Clarksburg Cluster Elementary School #9. This site is located at the intersection of Clarksburg Road (Route 121) and Byrne Park Road. This site will be the third elementary school site reserved in the Clarksburg community. The first was the Clarksburg Village Elementary School site, now Wilson Wims Elementary School, and the second, Clarksburg Cluster Elementary School #2, currently is in the planning/design phase of the construction project. The recommended site is not subject to the Montgomery County Planning Board mandatory referral process because the site is identified in the Master Plan and was dedicated by the developer during the development review process. The [SSAC report](#) for Clarksburg Cluster Elementary School #9 is available on the website.

I want to thank the members of the SSAC for their time and commitment to explore possible sites for a new elementary school in the Clarksburg Cluster. I support the recommendation of the SSAC that Cabin Branch Elementary School site be the location of the new Clarksburg Cluster Elementary School #9. This site is located within a large residential community, which will provide many students the ability to walk to school as the development is built to completion. In addition, the Cabin Branch Elementary School site is located adjacent to a planned park that would enhance the opportunities for outdoor activities for the school and community. The Board of Education's requested CIP includes planning and construction funding for this new elementary school; therefore, no additional funding is recommended for this new school at this time. Attachment A is a map of the recommended site.

2. DCC Elementary School (lower portion) Site Selection

In the 2014–2015 school year, a capacity study was conducted to address overutilization in several elementary schools in the lower portion of the DCC. On November 16, 2015, the Board of Education approved the following capital projects to address the overutilization in the lower portion of the DCC:

- An addition at East Silver Spring Elementary School to relieve the overutilization at Rolling Terrace Elementary School, to be completed by September 2020.
- Additions at Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools to relieve overutilization at Forest Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools, to be completed by September 2020.
- An addition at Piney Branch Elementary School to relieve its overutilization, to be completed by September 2021.
- An addition at Woodlin Elementary School to relieve its overutilization, to be completed by September 2020.

The Board of Education also approved a feasibility study to explore the possibility of opening an elementary school in the lower portion of the DCC to address the space deficits. Based on the feasibility study, I recommended that a SSAC convene to evaluate potential elementary school sites in the lower portion of the DCC. I also recommended that the funds approved in the adopted CIP for the five elementary school addition projects would remain in the CIP through this analysis and review process.

On August 31, 2017, the Board of Education approved my recommendation for a site selection process to explore the possibility of a new elementary school in the lower portion of the DCC. The SSAC was formed in November 2017, with the first meeting held on November 15, 2017, the second meeting held on December 12, 2017, and the third meeting held on January 3, 2018. The SSAC reviewed 12 publicly owned sites and 4 privately owned sites. At the third meeting, the SSAC voted to remove two public sites from consideration due to timing, availability, and location of the sites; therefore, a total of 14 sites were reviewed and evaluated by the committee.

The SSAC recommends that the former Forest Grove Elementary School site be the location for a new DCC elementary school. This site is located at 9805 Dameron Drive in Silver Spring, and would be the first new elementary school in the DCC since 2012. This site currently is owned by Montgomery County Government and is leased by Holy Cross Hospital. The alternate site with the next highest point rating was the MacDonald Knolls Elementary School site, located at 10611 Tenbrook Drive in Silver Spring, which also is owned by Montgomery County. The [SSAC report](#) for a new DCC elementary school is available on the website.

I would like to thank the members of the SSAC who participated in this site selection process for a new elementary school in the lower portion of the DCC. It is my recommendation at this time; however, to continue with the addition projects included in the adopted CIP and continue

to monitor the student enrollment at the elementary school level in the DCC for consideration of a new elementary school in the future. Staff also will continue to evaluate the feasibility and community impact of the sites recommended by the SSAC to have the benefit of additional information and community feedback for future consideration.

Of the five elementary school addition projects, Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest elementary schools have a Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 request for construction funds and the remaining three—Piney Branch, East Silver Spring, and Woodlin elementary schools—have a FY 2019 request for planning funds. I recommend that these funds remain in the Board of Education’s requested CIP. The funding schedules will allow MCPS to address the most immediate capacity need in the DCC at Forest Knolls Elementary School without any delay. The requested planning funds will allow MCPS to begin the design for the three remaining addition projects, while continuing to evaluate student enrollment projections into the fall.

3. Gaithersburg Cluster Elementary School Site Selection

Elementary school student enrollment growth continues in the Gaithersburg Cluster, and several schools exceed their program capacities—Gaithersburg, Rosemont, Strawberry Knoll, Summit Hall, and Washington Grove elementary schools. In the 2014–2015 school year, a *Gaithersburg Cluster Elementary School Capacity Study* was conducted to determine whether additions to cluster schools could address the projected space deficits. Along with additions to existing schools, a new elementary school also was considered.

On October 15, 2015, the *Findings of the Gaithersburg Cluster Elementary School Capacity Study* were released. The report concluded that challenges existed with both approaches—additions or a new school—including concerns regarding future student enrollment, size of schools, and potential reassignment of students. As a result, a *Tri-Cluster Roundtable Discussion Group (Roundtable) for the Gaithersburg, Col. Zadok Magruder, and Thomas S. Wootton Clusters* was formed. This Roundtable reviewed school enrollments, utilization levels, and facility options at the three adjacent clusters to more broadly address student enrollment growth and space deficits in the Gaithersburg Cluster.

On April 19, 2016, the Board of Education approved the following recommendations for the elementary schools in the Gaithersburg Cluster that stemmed from the Roundtable.

- Gaithersburg Elementary School—construct an addition at the school that would provide two schools in one building—Grades Pre-K–2 and Grades 3–5—with physical separations where possible or a building with one school that would house Grades pre-K–5. In order to expedite the project, a feasibility study was recommended to be conducted in FY 2017 followed immediately with planning to begin in FY 2018 and construction completed by September 2020.

- Rosemont Elementary School—monitor student enrollment before any capital solutions or reassignments are considered. At the time of the Roundtable, the projected overutilization was 250 seats in the 2021–2022 school year, and only a 4-classroom addition would be feasible at this school. Reassignment of the area west of Interstate 270 to Thomas S. Wootton Cluster schools was considered; however, reassignment of additional students to the Thomas S. Wootton Cluster was not supported, due to projected student enrollment at Thomas S. Wootton High School.
- Strawberry Knoll Elementary School—monitor student enrollment and consider an addition in a future CIP. At the time of the Roundtable, the projected overutilization was 144 seats in the 2021–2022 school year.
- Summit Hall Elementary School—the future revitalization/expansion would address the overutilization at the school. In the short-term, replace the six older relocatable classrooms with new units or modular classrooms. At the time of the Roundtable, the projected overutilization was 191 seats in the 2021–2022 school year.
- Washington Grove Elementary School—conduct a boundary study in spring 2017 to reassign the portion of the Shady Grove Sector Plan within the Gaithersburg Cluster service area to Col. Zadok Magruder Cluster schools. At the time of the Roundtable, the projected overutilization was nine seats in the 2021–2022 school year.

To date, based on the recommendations listed above, a feasibility study was conducted at Gaithersburg Elementary School to determine the scope and cost of constructing an addition at the school with a capacity for 1,000 students. Also, a modular unit was installed at Summit Hall Elementary School to replace the existing older relocatable classrooms. Finally, a boundary study was conducted to reassign the portion of the Shady Grove Sector Plan within the Washington Grove Elementary School service area to the Col. Zadok Magruder Cluster schools.

With respect to the feasibility study for the addition at Gaithersburg Elementary School, there were a number of challenges that were revealed during the process. For example, with minimal site opportunity to construct the addition, several options were explored for a two- or three-story addition, raising questions related to program adjacencies, potential difficulties in navigating the building, as well as challenges for passive security design opportunities. Also, due to the challenging existing pedestrian and vehicular infrastructure on the site, as well as surrounding the school, concerns were raised regarding the arrival and dismissal of 1,000 students. Finally, while a second cafeteria would ensure that students have sufficient time to eat lunch, recess for students would be impacted as a result of the additional footprint of the new building on the site.

Based on the challenges that were discovered during the feasibility study process for the addition at Gaithersburg Elementary School, as well as the absence of a solution in the approved CIP to address the overutilization at Rosemont and Strawberry Knoll elementary schools, I recommended, and the Board of Education approved on August 31, 2017, that a site selection committee convene to evaluate potential elementary school sites in the Gaithersburg Cluster to address the overutilization at the elementary schools in the cluster.

Therefore, a SSAC was formed in November 2017, to select a site for a potential Gaithersburg Cluster elementary school. The SSAC met twice—the first meeting was held on November 14, 2017, and the second meeting was held on December 5, 2017. The SSAC reviewed 10 publicly owned sites and 4 privately owned sites; however, because of the timing, availability, and location of some of the sites, the SSAC members voted to remove a total of 8 properties—4 privately owned sites and 4 publicly owned sites—from further consideration.

The SSAC recommends that the City of Gaithersburg Kelley Park site be the location of a new Gaithersburg Cluster elementary school. The site is located at 400 Victory Farm Drive in Gaithersburg. It would be the first new elementary school site in the Gaithersburg Cluster since 1988. This site is a 27.68-acre park site, which provides for a shared school/park facility. The [SSAC report](#) for a new Gaithersburg Elementary School May be found on the web site.

I want to thank the members of the SSAC for their time and commitment to explore possible sites for a new elementary school in the Gaithersburg Cluster. I support the recommendation of the SSAC that the Kelley Park site be the location of the new Gaithersburg Cluster elementary school. This site is centrally located in the Gaithersburg Cluster, off a primary residential street with sidewalks to allow for a high number of students to walk to school. We will need to work with the City of Gaithersburg to resolve use of this site, and we have had preliminary conversations with the City to initiate this discussion.

My recommendation includes utilizing the funds currently allocated to the addition project for Gaithersburg Elementary School in the Board of Education's requested CIP for the new elementary school, and indicating the new project scope. At this time, no additional funds are recommended for the construction of this new elementary school; however, it is likely that additional funding for this project will be requested next fall as part of the Amended CIP process. I also recommend that the expenditure schedule include planning funds in FY 2019, with a completion date of September 2022.

Student enrollment projections will continue to be monitored in this cluster, and it is possible that an addition project, along with the new school, may be required to address the elementary school overutilization in the Gaithersburg Cluster. A recommendation regarding the need for additional capacity in the cluster will be considered as part of the Amended CIP process in the fall.

Finally, with respect to the Shady Grove Sector Plan Boundary Study, my recommendation at this time is not to reassign the portion of the Shady Grove Sector Plan within the Gaithersburg Cluster service area to Col. Zadok Magruder Cluster schools. I believe it would be prudent to reevaluate the student enrollment projections at Washington Grove Elementary School, as well as the other overutilized elementary schools in the Gaithersburg Cluster in the context of the new elementary school and any other potential capacity projects considered in the fall. A recommendation will be considered as part of the Amended CIP process next fall, if enrollment projections indicate reassignment should be reexamined. Attachment B is a map of the recommended site.

Information Update

1. CTE at Seneca Valley High School

A revitalization/expansion project is scheduled for Seneca Valley High School with a completion date of September 2020. A FY 2018 appropriation was approved to begin construction for the project. A *Career Readiness External Review* recently was conducted and provided various recommendations to increase the number of students prepared for employment in high demand fields. Given that Seneca Valley High School is under construction, there is an opportunity to expand CTE for students living in the upcounty area. Therefore, the Board of Education approved, in the requested CIP, that the master-planned shell on the fourth floor of the new building be constructed as part of the new facility.

The next step in this process is to determine which additional CTE programs need to be included at Seneca Valley High School after the building is revitalized and expanded. At this time, staff in the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs is collaborating with staff in the Department of Facilities Management (DFM) to determine the program requirements for the additional CTE spaces. Once those spaces are defined, cost estimates will be developed. It is anticipated that additional funding will be necessary to build out these new CTE spaces, and therefore, a recommendation will be included in the Amended CIP process in the fall for Board of Education consideration.

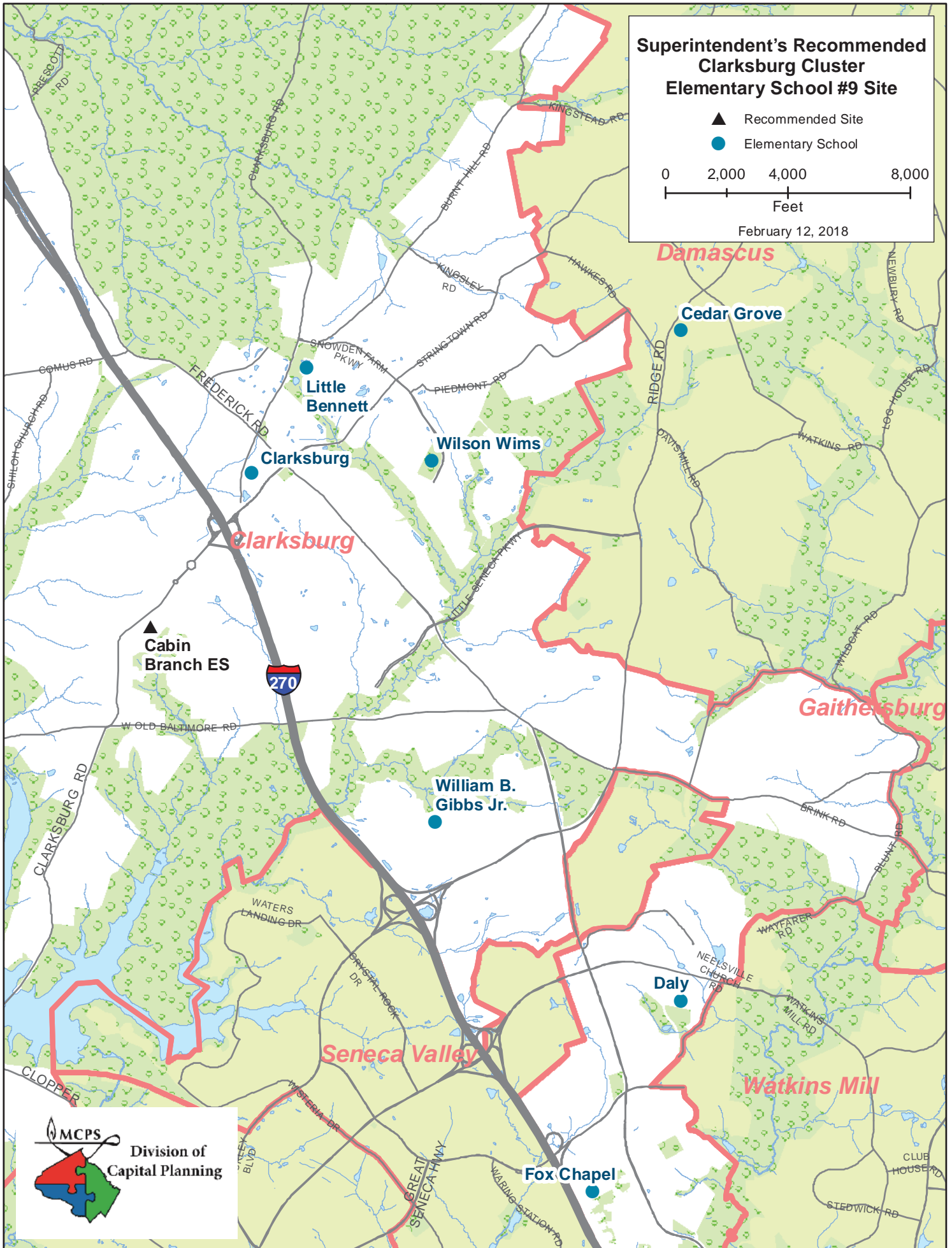
2. Performance Space at A. Mario Loiederman Middle School

The Board of Education's requested CIP includes \$5 million for a black box theatre at A. Mario Loiederman Middle School to address the needs of the performing arts program. The Board of Education requested, during the CIP review process in November 2017, that MCPS staff collaborate with school staff regarding the needs of the various performing arts programs at the school and to evaluate options for the proposed performance space.

DFM staff has met with school staff on two occasions to discuss possible options for a multi-use performance space at the school. Meetings will continue in order to evaluate the options that are generated by DFM staff. If the preferred option requires additional funding beyond the requested \$5 million, a recommendation will be considered as part of the Amended CIP process in the fall.

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Attachments



Superintendent's Recommended Gaithersburg Cluster Elementary School #8 Site

- ▲ Recommended Site
- Elementary School



February 12, 2018

