

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

February 27, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Amendment to the Board of Education's Requested FY 2018 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program for Outdoor Play Space Maintenance Project

Many of our school sites, especially at the elementary school level, face site constraints and limitations due to school overutilization, the need to place relocatable classrooms on paved play and field areas, as well as site size and other conditions. To date, funding to maintain and sustain our outdoor program/play areas has not been included in either our capital or operating budgets. I recommend that we designate funding through a Capital Improvements Program project to ensure that elementary schools have appropriate outdoor play areas for recess, physical education, and other school activities, particularly at elementary schools with severely compromised sites.

Funding in this project will allow us to more fully integrate our outdoor play areas into our maintenance practices and create solutions when individual schools present challenges to a conventional approach. I anticipate an ongoing review of outdoor play spaces based on facility and maintenance information, capacity and utilization data, and site specific conditions. This review will inform our efforts to improve our maintenance practices as well as undertake larger capital investments when necessary. I envision that some schools may need alternate playing surfaces, more or different play equipment, or a combination of approaches to meet the outdoor play and instructional needs of the school. Other schools may need renewed attention to the existing grass combined with adjustments in the use of the play areas to better protect them from overuse. As we continue to move through our case-by-case analyses of these areas, this project will enable us to address specific issues flexibly as they arise and as site conditions at schools may change over time.

At this time, I recommend funds for Fiscal Year 2018 to begin this as a pilot effort to address the program/play area of four to six schools that will be identified through our initial review. The challenges in maintaining outdoor play areas will continue for the foreseeable future due to our continuing enrollment growth and considerable school and community use of our outdoor spaces. I expect that this pilot program will transform into a level of effort project to address this ongoing need.

WHEREAS, Many of our school sites face site constraints due to the need to place relocatable classrooms on paved play and field areas due to student enrollment growth; and

WHEREAS, Funding has been limited to maintain and sustain our outdoor program/play areas that are significantly used by both the schools and the community; and

WHEREAS, The challenges facing our school sites with respect to the quality and/or lack of outdoor program/play areas will continue for the foreseeable future; and

WHEREAS, The capital or operating budgets currently do not include funding to appropriately maintain and sustain outdoor program/play areas; now therefore be it

Resolved, That a pilot program be developed to evaluate the outdoor program/play areas of our schools, establish improved maintenance practices for these sites, and identify potential solutions to provide adequate and appropriate outdoor program/play areas, particularly at elementary schools with severely compromised sites; and be it further

Resolved, That a new project entitled Outdoor Play Space Maintenance Project be created as part of the *Board of Education's Requested FY 2018 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program*; and be it further

Resolved, That this new project include \$750,000 in Fiscal Year 2018 in order to begin the pilot effort and address the outdoor program/play areas of four to six schools identified through the initial review in Fiscal Year 2018; and be it further

Resolved, That this amendment to the *Board of Education's Requested FY 2018 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program* be forwarded to the county executive and the County Council for consideration.

JRS:AMZ:JS:alk