



**Testimony of the Rockville Mayor and Council
Board of Education Boundaries and Facilities Hearing
Superintendent's Proposed FY14 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY13-18 CIP
November 15, 2012**

Speaker #1 – Opening Remarks

Good evening President Brandman and members of the Board. I am Phyllis Marcuccio, Mayor of Rockville, and I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Superintendent's Proposed FY14 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY13-18 Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

Advocating for funding for MCPS capital projects in Rockville schools continues to be a tremendously important priority for the Mayor and Council. My colleagues and I are here in unity tonight to testify in strong support of the recommended capital budget, with a few recommended amendments.

For more than two years, the Rockville Mayor and Council has been collaborating with the Board of Education (BOE), MCPS staff, and MCCPTA to advocate for resources to relieve overcrowding in Rockville schools. Montgomery County Public Schools are the cornerstone of our wonderful neighborhoods, and are among the premium services that make Rockville such a desirable place to live. Ensuring that our children receive a top-notch education in spacious and updated facilities is a priority that we are all committed to.

From 2007 to 2012, MCPS enrollment has skyrocketed, with more than 11,000 new students coming into the County's public education system. This trend continues, with an additional 10,382 students

projected to enroll in MCPS by 2018. As the largest school system in Maryland, we empathize with the difficult challenges before you. MCPS continues to be faced with balancing the needs of overcrowded schools and aging facilities in a context of scarce resources and a prolonged economic downturn. We reiterate our pledge to MCPS to stand together with you to advocate before the County Executive and County Council in support of the necessary funding to alleviate overcrowding in Rockville schools.

Our collaboration with MCPS last year in strong support of the BOE requested FY13-18 CIP was highly successful, and we are extremely pleased that the County Council adopted the MCPS solution for overcrowding in the Richard Montgomery Cluster where the problems are most severe and other resources for Rockville Clusters. I urge the Board of Education to adopt all of the recommendations in support of Rockville schools in the Superintendent's recommended budget with two important exceptions related to the elementary schools in the Richard Montgomery Cluster, which my colleagues will discuss next.

Speaker #2 Richard Montgomery Cluster –New RMES#5

Good evening, my name is John Hall, and I serve as a Rockville Councilmember. As a former MCCPTA Cluster Co-Chair and parent of a child that graduated from Richard Montgomery High School, I believe it is of the utmost importance that our children are educated in a safe and healthy environment.

To that end, the Mayor and Council continue to strongly support the construction of the Richard Montgomery Elementary School #5 at the former Hungerford Park school site. Approval of this project by the County Council was greatly aided by the foresight and leadership of the Superintendent and Board of Education, who included the project in last year's request to the

County. While it's important that the County Council approved funding for this project in the adopted County FY2013-2018 CIP, we were disappointed with their decision to delay the opening of the new school to August 2017, which is two years later than your request.

While major CIP revisions are not envisioned in the coming year, we nonetheless believe that the severe overcrowding conditions in the Richard Montgomery Cluster warrant serious consideration of an amendment to the Adopted County FY2013-2018 CIP. The top priority for amendments in the Superintendent's Recommended CIP is an urgent school capacity need. Well, we've got it. The elementary schools in the RM Cluster combined are at greater than 120% of capacity at this time, and will steadily increase until the new school is built.

Beyond the utilization issues are clear Growth Policy considerations throughout the cluster. Under both the County's and City's growth and school capacity policies, the Cluster exceeds adopted capacity thresholds, which adversely impacts child-generating development. For these compelling reasons, Rockville requests that the Board advance the request for planning and design funds from FY2015 to FY2014, which would advance the completion date by one year, to August 2016.

Rockville will also aggressively advocate with the County Executive and County Council that there be no delay in the construction of a new Children's Resource Center on the Broome School site. This project must proceed as quickly as possible in order for the new elementary school to open on schedule. We understand that no boundary decisions have been made for the five schools that will be in the cluster and on the future location of the Chinese Immersion program. Rockville urges MCPS and the Board to make these decisions well in advance of the current projected Richard Montgomery elementary school #5 opening date of August 2017. It will also be critical that these decisions be made through active consultation with parents, including the MCCPTA

leadership at the individual schools, at the Cluster level, and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Speaker #3 Richard Montgomery Cluster - Julius West Addition and Twinbrook Modernization

Good evening. My name is Tom Moore, member of the Rockville City Council, and a parent with six children in Montgomery County Public Schools. I will address the overcrowding at Julius West Middle School and the deteriorated condition of Twinbrook Elementary School. First, it was an extremely positive outcome that the County Council approved funding in the FY13-18 CIP for the Julius West Middle School addition with no delays to the August 2016 opening date. Again, we thank the Superintendent and the Board of Education for their successful efforts to convince County elected officials of the urgent need for this project. As the sole middle school, Julius West is a critical link in the Richard Montgomery Cluster. In addition to the four existing elementary schools, the proposed elementary school #5 will feed into Julius West.

As actual and projected elementary school enrollments continue to increase, a massive student population bulge will hit Julius West soon. In fact, MCPS projections show the school utilization data at a staggering 128% of capacity for the 2015-2016 school-year. As a result, it is essential that the project not be delayed. We strongly support the appropriation request in the Superintendent's recommended budget for FY14 planning funds and urge you to approve it. It is important for the planning and design work to be completed on schedule, so that an appropriation request for construction funds can be made in FY15. Any delays could cause significant adverse ramifications for many years.

Giving appropriate attention to the conditions of the existing elementary schools is also a priority. Of particular concern to us is the condition of the antiquated Twinbrook Elementary School, which

was built in 1962. While it's been added onto six times, it has never been modernized. The poor, deteriorated, and overcrowded condition of this facility has an enormously negative impact on the community. The MCPS assessment of this facility revealed numerous safety, security, education and instructional space inadequacies. The Superintendent's Recommended CIP proposes the completion of the Twinbrook modernization to occur in 2021. This part of our community should not have to be subjected to these conditions for another nine years. Accordingly, we urge you to expedite the completion date for Twinbrook's modernization. .

Speaker #4 Rockville Cluster

Good evening. My name is Mark Pierzchala and I serve on the Rockville City Council. Capacity needs are also prevalent in the Rockville Cluster elementary schools where utilization exceeds 120%. Rockville supports the FY13 appropriation for facility planning funds to determine the scope and cost of additions at Meadow Hall Elementary, and Barnesly Elementary.

We urge that these planning studies be completed this fiscal year so that the needed additions can be funded in the next capital budget. It is also important for the programmed Maryvale modernization project to be completed. Wood Middle School utilization data for the 2018-2019 school-year is projected to be at 118% of capacity. Rockville commends MCPS for the early planning and recognition of the rapidly approaching overcrowding problem at Wood Middle School, and supports the FY14 request for facility planning funds for an addition.

Speaker #4 Concluding Remarks

The Mayor and Council reiterate its great appreciation to MCPS for developing solutions to overcrowding problems in schools serving Rockville's children. To summarize, Rockville's highest priorities are to move the Richard Montgomery Elementary School #5 up by one year, to expedite the Twinbrook Modernization before 2020-2021, and to ensure

that the Rockville Cluster elementary Schools are ready to proceed with expansion plans next year.

The Rockville Mayor and Council look forward to continuing the close partnership with MCPS to advocate for this critically important funding. We plan again to be actively involved in advocating with the County Executive and the County Council, who have the ultimate decision making authority on school construction funding. Rockville is also available to support you with making requests to the State for school construction funds. We recognize that sufficient State funding is needed for MCPS projects to be completed on time. Without it, more pressure is placed on the County's stretched budget, which would increase the likelihood of project delays.

We must do everything in our power to provide the best learning environment possible for our Children, who are tomorrow's leaders. Despite a challenging fiscal context, with determination and creativity we can prevail. By working together to make these critical infrastructure investments now, we will be successful in achieving our goal of a better future for our children. Finally, we thank you for the opportunity to participate in the process, and urge the Board of Education to adopt the Superintendent's Recommended CIP.

