

**Written Testimony of
Patti Twigg
On Behalf of the
Paint Branch HS PTSA**

**Montgomery County Board of Education
Community Forum
October 16, 2008**

Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight. My name is Patti Twigg and I am testifying on behalf of the Paint Branch High School PTSA.

I am here tonight to speak to you about the importance of not allowing the high school modernizations to be delayed any further.

Paint Branch HS is over capacity – we currently have 5 portables, up from 4 last year. Indeed, we are predicted to remain over capacity until our new school is built. Our halls are not wide, as in newer schools, and students struggle to get through them between classes.

Certainly it is true that in tough economic times, it is easiest to target the largest projects for delays. And, recently the news that elementary growth will increase faster for the next few years seems to make justification for delaying the high school modernizations even more reasonable. But I submit to you that both of these are flawed lines of thinking.

Delaying the modernizations of the high schools is not a cost effective use of funds. It is, in fact, a false economy. Deteriorating infrastructure is very costly to maintain, and outdated facilities are much more expensive to heat, cool, and keep dry and safe. I have told you before of the fire alarm system that was damaged last fall, and was so out dated that replacement parts were not available. We had a live fire watch patrol for almost a month in order to remain open. At what cost? This is only one example of infrastructure failure. I would be remiss in not complimenting the staff at the Randolph Maintenance Depot, since they have been very responsive and creative in keeping our building functioning. But, they are not magicians! Having the Maintenance Depot in our “Fave Five” is not a good thing. I have attached to my testimony a list of other recent problems.

With the current modernization schedule, Paint Branch would be completed in 2012. That means that the students currently in 8th grade will be the first to graduate from our new building, after having spent a year in it. Today’s 5th graders will be the first class to spend all 4 years in the new building. Of course, all of that assumes the current schedule is maintained. As it currently stands, we are allowing thousands of students to be educated in an outdated building. Will they become the lost generation of students? They will never have the same advantages as other high school students elsewhere in our county. Can we really wait for the projected enrollment bubble to reach our high schools before addressing the crumbling infrastructure? For schools after us on the modernization list -

Gaithersburg, Wheaton, Seneca Valley - the situation is even worse. Even more classes of students will be educated in inferior buildings.

New high schools are not an extravagance, but rather a necessity; and I submit, an important necessity. In fact, new schools impact all of the goals of your strategic plan, Goal 1: Ensure Success for Every Student – Milestones 5 and 7, Goal 2: Provide an Effective Instructional Program – Milestones 2 and 4, Goal 3: Strengthen Productive Partnerships for Education – Milestones 3 and 4, Goal 4: Create a Positive Work Environment in a Self-renewing Organization – Milestone 4, Goal 5: Provide High-Quality Business Services that are Essential to the Educational Success of Students – Milestones 1, 2, and 4.

Let me close with the thought that “Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap” requires up to date facilities, especially in the most highly impacted schools.

I thank for your time and attention to my comments tonight.

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Facility Ailments for Paint Branch High School
October 2008

- 1) We have two chillers in the newer section of the building (H wing, built in 1987). In the spring of 2008, both went down. We struggled through the last month and a half of school with only one chiller functioning – a technician had to come to the school each morning last spring and into the summer to jump start the chiller. At the present time only one chiller is functional and there is concern about whether it is worth it to repair it.
- 2) The weight room requires a sump pump and dehumidifier to maintain adequate air quality because the room is built over an underground spring; air quality concerns required additional waterproofing and the installation of special mats in 2006-2007. The only permanent fix is when we build our new school.
- 3) Fire alarm panel replaced – Nov. 2007 after a small electrical fire. The original system was so old, prefabricated replacement parts did not exist and had to be manufactured. During the time it took to manufacture the parts, we had a live “fire watch” patrol so that the school could safely remain open.
- 4) The building design makes it difficult to isolate areas and secure the building. The hallways are too small to accommodate the student body at the change of classes.
- 5) Stadium bleachers – a safety concern had been expressed regarding the visitor’s bleachers due to rusting of supports. Maintenance came out within one day and worked with our structural engineer to reinforce the supports so the bleachers could be used through the fall athletic season. A more permanent fix is required and planned.
- 6) Power surges are common, wreaking havoc with electronic equipment and systems – security cameras, fire doors, copiers, computers, phones, etc. In all fairness, it is currently not known if this is a building problem or a BG&E problem but new wiring certainly should help.
- 7) The building is terribly energy-inefficient – we try our best to conserve where we can, but only so much is possible. Lights, windows, A/C and heating are all issues.
- 8) Expanding staff and student body has required that spaces be converted for use as never intended. In some cases closets have been converted to offices and rooms have been divided creating issues with ventilation and temperature control as new walls and doors are added.
- 9) A water pipe broke in the parking lot (2007-2008 school year). By the next day it had been repaired, thanks to the Randolph Maintenance Depot, but old pipes are more prone to failure.
- 10) We have inadequate storage, especially for clubs, programs such as the Sports Academy, etc., we want to be “Community Friendly” but space is a real issue.

- 11) Old and outdated equipment in Foods Lab used by our restaurant management program.
- 12) Lockers –we are running out of them; locker room lockers are rusting.
- 13) Old and inadequate restroom facilities; stalls are rusting.
- 14) Carpeting in the media center was noted to be “unsightly” by a member of the BOE.