

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

September 13, 2011

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Joshua P. Starr, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Superintendent's Recommendation for the Modernization of William H. Farquhar Middle School

The modernization of William H. Farquhar Middle School is scheduled for construction during the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 school years, with completion in August 2015. A feasibility study was conducted for the modernization in spring 2011. It has been the practice that during a middle school modernization, students and staff of the affected middle school are relocated to the Tilden Holding Center, the only middle school holding center for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The Facility Advisory Committee (FAC) expressed concerns over the travel distance to the Tilden Holding Center during the two-year construction period. William H. Farquhar Middle School is approximately 11 miles from the Tilden Holding Center, and the northernmost portion of the school's service area is approximately 16 miles from the Tilden Holding Center.

In response to the concerns regarding travel distances and time, options were explored in the feasibility study to allow students to remain in the current school building while the replacement facility is constructed. Three options were developed that would allow an on-site modernization and two options were outlined that would necessitate relocating the students to the Tilden Holding Center during construction.

A draft report of the feasibility study was released for public comment from July 18, 2011, through August 19, 2011. Most of the comments in regard to the feasibility study expressed support for either Option One or Option Two—the land swap and retention of students at the current school during construction of the replacement facility on the adjacent property. A total of 132 responses were received supporting these two options. Two other responses favored transporting students to the Tilden Holding Center. Several additional comments were received, including one comment that requested assurance that stream buffers would be adequate, and another comment that sought assurance that Options One and Two would be in compliance with

the Olney Master Plan. An additional comment requested a modification to Option Three so that only the building would be visible from the street.

In response to public comments, the feasibility study revealed that all five options will retain and protect the existing stream buffers. The building in Option Three would be visible from the street. As for compliance with the Olney Master Plan, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) staff stated that the proposed land swap is compliant with the intent of the Master Plan to provide an active recreational park adjacent to the school.

While the FAC recommended Option One, staff recommends Option Two—construction of a replacement facility for William H. Farquhar Middle School on the adjacent property through a land swap with M-NCPPC. This option includes construction of a three-story facility that will result in a smaller building footprint and a more efficient building. The smaller building footprint also will leave more land available for site amenities and green space.

In the event that M-NCPPC does not support the recommended land swap option, staff recommends Option Four as the back-up plan. While the parents' concerns related to travel distance/time to the Tilden Holding Center is a valid concern, Option Four eliminates the safety and security issues related to the construction activities while the school is in operation and costs less than other remaining options.

I concur with the recommendations by staff in the Department of Facilities Management and offer the following resolutions for the Board's approval:

WHEREAS, Funds were approved in the Fiscal Year 2011–2016 Capital Improvements Program to begin a feasibility study in Fiscal Year 2011 for the modernization of William H. Farquhar Middle School; and

WHEREAS, The modernization of William H. Farquhar Middle School is scheduled for construction during the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 school years, with completion in August 2015; and

WHEREAS, The Facility Advisory Committee for the William H. Farquhar Middle School modernization met from March through June 2011 and completed a feasibility study; and

WHEREAS, The draft of the feasibility study for the modernization of William H. Farquhar Middle School was available for public comment from July 18, 2011 through August 19, 2011; and

WHEREAS, The Facility Advisory Committee recommended the land swap option with a two-story school building, identified as Option One in the feasibility study, as the preferred option; and

WHEREAS, Staff in the Department of Facilities Management recommends the land swap option with a three-story school building, identified as Option Two in the feasibility study, as the three-story building offers a smaller building footprint that allows more land for site amenities and green space; and

WHEREAS, The recommended Option Two requires review and approval by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, Staff in the Department of Facilities Management recommends the relocation of students to the Tilden Holding Center and construction of the replacement facility at the location of the current building, identified as Option Four in the feasibility study, as the back-up plan in the event that the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission does not support the land swap option; and

WHEREAS, The superintendent of schools concurs with the recommendations by staff in the Department of Facilities Management; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the land swap option with a three-story school building, identified as Option Two in the feasibility study, is selected for the modernization of William H. Farquhar Middle School; and be it further

Resolved, That the relocation of students to the Tilden Holding Center and construction of the replacement facility at the location of the current building, identified as Option Four in the feasibility study, is the back-up plan if the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission does not support the land swap option; and be it further

Resolved, That staff in the Department of Facilities Management begins the process with the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission to facilitate the land swap option; and be it further

Resolved, That design development for the replacement school on the undeveloped land adjacent to William H. Farquhar Middle School begin in fall 2011, and construction for the replacement facility begin in summer 2013, pending approval by the Montgomery County Council for construction funds as part of the Fiscal Year 2013–2018 Capital Improvements Program.

JPS:LAB:JS:ak