

July 14, 2011

Matt Zaborsky
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WILLIAMSBURG VILLAGE

Dr. Joshua Starr, Superintendent
Montgomery County Public Schools
Carver Educational Services Center
850 Hungerford Drive, Room 122
Rockville, Md. 20850

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL TO: Joshua_Starr@mcps.org

Dear Dr. Starr :

We are an umbrella organization whose membership is made up of 30 neighborhood civic and homeowners associations. We have been a voice for over 40,000 residents since 1976. We have advocated for many issues concerning the residents of Olney - such as land use and zoning, traffic, roads, and occasionally issues concerning our school aged residents who attend Montgomery County Public Schools. We are well known to the County Council, County Executive, and other County and State officials and agencies.

We have been asked to weigh in on the Modernization Proposal for Farquhar Middle School. We all want what is best for our community's children. GOCA applauds the great reputation of MCPS and their many dedicated professionals. At our June 14th meeting we received a presentation from James Song, Director of MCPS Department of Facilities Management and were informed that MCPS is considering three modernization approaches as you are aware.

At our July 12th meeting, our delegates passed the following resolution:

Now therefore be it resolved that GOCA supports the PTA's position that busing Farquhar Middle School students to the Tilden Holding Center for two years would not be in the best interest of the students.

For the record, this resolution should not be construed to imply support for any other position that has been advocated by the FMS PTA or any options being considered by MCPS. As taxpayers, we would urge you and MCPS to consider other options and even "think outside the box". We have been informed that MCPS was considering many, many options in regards to this modernization and we question why you have narrowed to scope only 3 options so early in this process? Furthermore, GOCA strongly feels these may not be the best options. We must ask why not consider the possibility of temporarily using the former Mark Twain school in very nearby Rockville, or the Washington Christian Academy (literally right down the road from FMS) as questions have risen concerning their financial condition? It is our understanding that any possible relocation of students would be only for 2 years, therefore we would encourage consideration of temporary facilities as mentioned. What about the Broome Middle School Building on Twinbrook Parkway?

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GOCA would like to point out The 2005 Olney Master Plan, which many of our long time GOCA delegates helped author is **silent** on the proposed land swap idea that MCPS is considering. *The 2005 Olney Master Plan states: "The approximately 17 acre portion of the Casey property next to Farquhar Middle School, would serve the need for a future active recreation local park in the area and could be shared by the school". The plan further specifically recommends: "Acquire the open field site adjacent to Farquhar Middle School for a new local park".* We have a very long tradition of support for the Olney Master Plan and its recommendations. We certainly support the modernization of FMS as it is the oldest middle school in the county never to be renovated or modernized, however as with most land use issues, we seek recommendations which complement the Olney Master Plan.

We completely understand that both county and state money are involved in this modernization and time frames are very tight. GOCA is urging MCPS to make a decision that is most prudent for everyone concerned and most importantly for the best interest of our children that do and will attend Farquhar Middle School.

Thanks very much for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely Yours,

Matt Zaborsky

Matt Zaborsky
President