

November 2011

## **Education News**

Paula Bienenfeld, Education Committee Chair

This month there are updates on some MCPS issues we have been following, and some new information.

### **Farquhar Middle School**

The discussion regarding the ‘land swap’ at the modernization and enlargement of Farquhar Middle School has not been resolved. To recap, the possibility on the table is that, rather than bus the middle school children to the Middle School Holding School facility on Tilden Lane, the new building could be constructed while the children remain in the existing facility. This could happen if there is a land swap between two adjacent pieces of property, wherein the Park Department acquires the current middle school MCPS property (the parcel to the south), and MCPS acquires the property now owned by private developer Pulte (to the north) from the Parks Department, i.e., the ‘land swap.’ MCPS could then construct the new facility on the parcel to the north of the existing school property and the park would be located on the property that is now where the school is. Pulte Homes, the developer, holds ownership of the property as part of their planning to construct a subdivision in the area. It appears that the BOE has not yet submitted a written request to Park and Planning for the exchange of land. In addition, Pulte is responsible for some improvements to the property, including an appropriate buffer for the stream and setbacks from a water main that is on the proposed land to be swapped, in accordance with the subdivision planning. These improvements will be made regardless of who the property owner is. And, should the swap occur, the existing middle school structure’s disposition is unclear. Its demolition is not currently in the cost of the Farquhar modernization.

### **Maryvale Elementary School and Carl Sandburg Learning Center Collocation Recommendation**

Superintendent Josh Starr has released a memorandum regarding the possible collocation of the Carl Sandburg Learning Center and Maryvale Elementary School, dated October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and has recommended the collocation, with the feasibility study to be put into the FY13 MCPS Capitol Improvements Program (CIP).

According to the memo,

“...the superintendent of schools directed MCPS staff to convene a multistakeholder committee to review the possibility of collocating the Carl Sandburg Learning Center on the Maryvale Elementary School campus. Maryvale Elementary School was identified for the following reasons: an upcoming modernization is scheduled for the school, the school is centrally located in the Rockville Cluster, and the site is large enough to

accommodate the programs that exist at Maryvale Elementary School and the Carl Sandburg Learning Center.”

The memo also cites a “Roundtable Advisory Committee” but doesn't list the members of the committee, or when they met. It does outline concerns raised by the committee, and illustrate several possible building configurations.

Here is Starr’s recommendation, from the memo:

“I recommend that the Board of Education adopts the collocation of Carl Sandburg Learning Center with Maryvale Elementary School, beginning in August 2018. Although the modernization for Maryvale Elementary School is scheduled for completion in January 2018, I believe that relocating Carl Sandburg Learning Center midyear would create too much disruption for the staff and students. Waiting until the beginning of the following school year will ensure a smooth transition for students and staff from Carl Sandburg Learning Center and minimize the impact for students with multiple disabilities. To move forward with the planning for the collocation, a recommendation will be made in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013–2018 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for FY 2013 facility planning funds to conduct a feasibility study for the project. The purpose of the feasibility study is to determine the scope, cost, and constructability for the collocation of the two schools. Staff and parents from both schools will participate in the feasibility study.”

It is unclear if the issue of “co-location” of Maryvale ES and Carl Sandburg Learning Center is a foregone conclusion, or whether the Board of Education will carefully weigh the pros and cons of eliminating a valuable placement along the continuum of special education placements and services. Over the last ten years, the population served by the Carl Sandburg Learning Center has changed, and the atmosphere and programming at Sandburg evolved to meet those needs. As the population of children with autism continues to grow, will MCPS regret losing a stand-alone special education facility for those children who need that setting? Lastly: what does MCPS plan for the empty Sandburg facility if the children are moved? Does the Board of Education have plans for that space that they haven't disclosed? Thanks to Lyda Astrove, an attorney and advocate for Special Education, for this information.

### **Concussions and Sports Helmets**

We are in the middle of football and sports seasons and so it is worth noting the tremendous increase in our knowledge of concussions, especially their deleterious effect on teenage brains. We now know that these effects can last a lifetime. Last week the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Chair, held a session on “Concussions and the Marketing of Sports Equipment.”

Providing testimony were Alexis Bell, a senior at University of New Mexico, who had been a star soccer player; Steven Threet, a student from Arizona State University; Dr. Jeffrey Kutcher, director of Michigan Neurosport, University of Michigan and Chair of

the Sports Neurology Section of the American Academy of Neurology; Dr. Ann McKee, Professor of Neurology and Pathology at Boston University; and Mike Oliver, Executive Director of the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment. According to Dr. Kutcher, “There is great uncertainty, and with it significant concern, regarding the notion of possible long-term effects from concussion, especially on the pediatric population, which may be at even greater risk given the ongoing development of the pediatric brain.”

Regarding the role of helmets, Dr. Kutcher stated, “What helmets do not do well is significantly slow down the contents of the skull when the head is struck or moves suddenly. Since concussions occur not as a result of the forces experienced by the skull, but by those experienced by the brain, it is extremely unlikely that any helmet can be designed that will prevent concussions to the same significant degree that they have been shown to prevent skull fractures.”

Here is part of Mr. Threet’s testimony:

“Statistics recently revealed that about 40% of athletes who have sustained a concussion return to play too early and that 50% of concussions go unnoticed. This makes me believe that the only focus should be to create an open dialogue between athletes, coaches, doctors, and families that addresses the seriousness of brain injuries in athletics and the need for a full recovery before returning to play. I know it is possible to decrease those statistics. I also know progress on this issue is already being made and many states have already passed legislation dealing with concussion protocols.”

If your child plays a sport, be informed. Make sure the school and sports staff know the signs of concussion; have the equipment necessary; and know what to do on the field. Be aware that claims by some helmet or other sports equipment manufacturers, that their products can reduce or prevent concussions, are not true. Many hospitals and schools in our area offer education workshops to parents and children on concussions. To see the Senate Committee video or read the testimony, go here:

[http://commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=Hearings&ContentRecord\\_id=3c1ac485-cac3-4d53-9b6a-3f781d32dc49&ContentType\\_id=14f995b9-dfa5-407a-9d35-56cc7152a7ed&Group\\_id=b06c39af-e033-4cba-9221-de668ca1978a&MonthDisplay=10&YearDisplay=2011](http://commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=Hearings&ContentRecord_id=3c1ac485-cac3-4d53-9b6a-3f781d32dc49&ContentType_id=14f995b9-dfa5-407a-9d35-56cc7152a7ed&Group_id=b06c39af-e033-4cba-9221-de668ca1978a&MonthDisplay=10&YearDisplay=2011)

### **Redistricting of Education Districts**

The Board of Education (BOE) voted to recommend a redistricting plan that realigns the voting districts for the BOE. The proposed plan was approved in Annapolis as well. Unfortunately for the citizens of the county, there was no public testimony or public hearing before the BOE voted. The law says that the districts ‘shall be substantially equal in population.’ However, the new districts, which are supposed to be based on the 2010 Census, are not ‘equal in population.’

Here are the new districts, and the population, in the table below

<b>District</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Deviation</b>	<b>Deviation Percentage</b>
1	186,735	-7.620	-3.92
2	186,762	-7.593	-3.91
3	202,229	+7.874	+4.05
4	200,068	+5.713	+2.94
5	195,983	+1.628	+0.84

Source: MCPS Division of Long Range Planning

### **Regional Survey and Meetings for Next State Superintendent**

The State Board of Education has begun their search for the next state superintendent. They have hired Hazard, Young, Attea, and Associates (HYA), the same search firm used here in Montgomery County, to assist with the search. Regional meetings will be held, and there is also an online survey. The firm also developed the survey, which can be found at [www.ecragroup.com/mdss](http://www.ecragroup.com/mdss). The deadline for completing the survey is Nov. 18th.

There will be one public forum in Montgomery County, at Seneca Valley High School, 19401 Crystal Rock Drive, Germantown, MD, on Nov. 3rd.

The State Board will be discussing the input at their December 6th, 2011 meeting.