

School Report to GFCA Board June 30, 2021, from Julie Merberg:

The County Council recently passed the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. Of the \$6.2 billion budget almost half is dedicated to school spending. The \$2.8 billion Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) budget supports 24,500 staff serving around 160,000 students at 209 schools. MCPS is the largest school district in Maryland and the 14th largest district in the nation.

Hot topics for MCPS schools include:

- COVID recovery
- Charter schools (the county accepted one application to establish a school but rejected a second proposal)
- School Resource Officers (SROs) - the County Executive has directed that there will no longer be school based police but the full County Council may still weigh in on the issue. Over the past three years, 460 students have been arrested by SROs; 83% of those arrested were black or Hispanic raising issues of racial justice.

Farmland Elementary School

Current population: 770

Capacity (expanded by 2011 renovation): 714

Estimated Enrollment for the next three years: 813, 804, 805 (roughly 10% over capacity)

- Current population is low due to COVID, particularly kindergarten (only 102 enrolled)

Luxmanor Elementary School

Current population: 665

Capacity (just reopening after major expansion): 756

Estimated Enrollment for the next three years: 731, 754, 753 (virtually at capacity)

- Current population is low due to COVID, particularly kindergarten (only 79 enrolled)

Tilden Middle School

Current population: 1,022

Capacity: 1,216

Estimated Enrollment for the next three years: 1,028, 1,034, 998

- Tilden's fellow WJ feeder school North Bethesda MS has a capacity of 1,223 and enrollment forecasts show the school pretty much at capacity for the next few years.

Walter Johnson High School

Current population: 2,820

Capacity: 2,321 (even with COVID, 500 over capacity)

Estimated Enrollment for the next three years: 2,908, 2,931, 2,951

- Currently operating with 6 portables despite a recent renovation and expansion

Woodward High School

\$120 million facility to accommodate 2,700 students. The building will be three stories in the front and four stories in the back.

Schedule

Current - Demolition completed and construction of Phase 1 started

Summer 2023 Construction begins on Phase 2

2023 - 2024 School Year Northwood High School occupies building

2024 - 2025 School Year Northwood High School occupies building

March 2024 MCPS conducts boundary survey to determine who will attend Woodward

2025 - 2026 School Year Woodward High School opens

Phase 1 - Academic and basic facilities only (Northwood may continue to use the athletic fields at their home campus and adjacent Timberlawn Park may be used for athletics)

Phase 2 - 2nd gymnasium, stadium, auditorium, track, tennis courts, baseball/softball fields.

Walter Johnson Cluster - Hot Topics

- Support for "large" schools like those in the WJ cluster which are at or over capacity. Current MCPS formulas for the allocation of resources tend to short larger schools for things like counselors, reading/math specialists, lunch/recess aides, paraeducators, and equipment like copy machines.
- Vandalism - the new Tilden MS is already having issues with young people vandalizing the school (particularly skateboarders who seem to be arriving by car from outside the area)
- Traffic as a larger Luxmanor and a rebuilt Tilden reopen. Even at 25% capacity, the schools had major traffic back ups (afternoons are worse than mornings). As the schools get back to normal, this will be a top focus of administrators of both schools.

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Additional information post-meeting to the Board via email:

Hi friends! A few more notes on the Luxmanor/Tilden traffic situation:

The traffic pattern we saw this spring will change in the fall with Tilden students arriving and leaving about an hour earlier than Luxmanor and Rock Terrace students - more cars but less overlap between the schools. Per our discussion last night, Rock Terrace has around 50 teachers/staff in addition to the 84 students, but they arrive and depart an hour after Tilden (and have a separate parking lot) so they don't add to the Tilden traffic woes.

Most students covered by our neighborhood association are not eligible for bus transportation to Tilden because of our proximity to the school (there is one stop at Montrose and Tildenwood <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/transportation/busroutes/03232bus.pdf>). The alternatives are walking, riding a bike, or being driven. As the mom of a kid who sometimes rode his bike to Tilden this spring, I can tell you that it is a challenging bike ride - steep uphill and fairly scary downhill ride dodging walkers and cars.

Next steps -

If it's ok with the board, I will pull together an ad hoc group of parents and community members (through my personal contacts and a listserv solicitation) who are interested in the issue.

I am meeting with the Tilden principal next week, but one option might be to press for school bus support as an option to get our Farmland kids safely to Tilden. I understand that a bus was added for Windermere because they were concerned about kids crossing Tuckerman and then walking up Marcliff to get to school. Our situation is a little less scary, but one bus can get as many as 50 kids off the road. Knowing of the coming traffic Armageddon at Tilden and Marcliff, maybe that's an option the County would consider?? Better traffic control, new cross walks and more bike racks are also needed, but let's hear what Tilden/Farmland parents want and what the school is already working on.