

FCPS CIP Public Hearing: January 9, 2008
Luther Jackson Middle School
Supervisor Pat Herrity, Springfield District

Mr. Chairman and members of the Fairfax County School Board, thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight on the CIP. I am here this evening because like many of you, as I went door to door before the election I heard loud and clear from the community on two school facility issues—the renovation of West Springfield HS and a new middle school for South County.

My Board of Supervisors office neighbors West Springfield HS. As I drive by it, I am reminded almost daily that it is in dire need of renovation. As a 1978 West Springfield graduate, I want to be proud of my alma mater, but it's hard when it's apparent it is falling apart. West Springfield High School was constructed in 1966 and it has not seen any significant renovations since that time despite the changes in educational programs, technology, and student needs we've seen over the last forty years. Except for the additional trailers, it looks inside and out like a run down version of the school I attended in the 1970s. The bottom line is the West Springfield High School renovation needs not only to be placed on the CIP but also be given high priority. Currently, the school's renovation is not included on the CIP through 2018—West Springfield is a legacy Fairfax County School and deserves better than this. I ask that you include West Springfield High School on the CIP.

As you are aware, the construction of a middle school in South County is also a serious concern of many residents of the Springfield District. I have reviewed the presentation you will be given tonight by the South County Middle School Solutions Group; it makes a lot of good points and I support all of them. I would like to focus on three additional points.

First, as an At-Large member said at a recent South County Middle School planning group meeting, accelerating the middle school should be done because, I quote, “it is the right thing to do.” I firmly believe the facts show this is the single most pressing school facility need in the County.

Second, I also want to stress the time-sensitivity of this issue; the Fairfax County School System risks losing the valuable land set aside for the middle school if construction of the school does not start by April, 2012.

Third, as we know, the need for the middle school is compounded by the Fort Belvoir BRAC which will bring many new jobs and people to South County. I want to caution the Board that studies to date have only examined the impact of the personnel moving as a direct result of BRAC. What has not been studied is the impact of the one-to-two times that number of jobs from contracting and support services that will follow these jobs. My company, Arrowhead Global Solutions, is a prime example. One of our current customers is relocating to Ft. Meade as a result of BRAC. As a result, we recently opened an office there and are currently planning a 6,000 square foot expansion. This impact of the support contractors and services is real and I do not believe it has been considered. South County has a documented need for the middle school based on current demand; the need is even more pressing when you look at what I believe are underestimated projections.

I fully support options to accelerate the effort by looking at available Fairfax County land that could be utilized to fund construction of the school. Accordingly, I request that the School Board move the South County Middle School to 2012 on the Fairfax County Capital Improvement Plan and allocate money for the design and planning of the school.