

BCPS High School Capacity Study Email Log: 06/29/18 through 07/13/18

June 29, 2018, 0755 hours

A. Sparks

Please consider partnering with Connections Academy. My family has used their private virtual school for over 10 years. This program could help with overcrowding immediately. Thank you, Amy

July 08, 2018, 0853 hours

R. Dongarra

Good morning I am reading the questions that the Sage Policy Group, LLC put together for the high school study. There is an error with the tax rate increase question. The Baltimore County tax rate is \$1.10 / \$100. not per \$1000. as the question is currently written. I hope this error is corrected prior to the public information sessions otherwise this will definitely cause problems out of the gate.

Response: Thank you for bringing this to our attention. SAGE will be addressing/correcting this shortly.

July 09, 2018, 0839 hours

K. Stephens

As we all know, one is either a morning person or a night person. Here is an idea for a possible solution for the overcrowding: Do a survey to see who feel they are morning people & those who are night. Doing Morning/Day School and then Night/Evening School could reap many good results. Just my Out-of-the-Box Solution. p.s. you might find test scores improving if you get them when they are at their best. Kimberly Stephens from Bel Air (used to reside in Parkville) - thought I'd share my idea.

July 09, 2018, 1048 hours

J. Berg-Gaither

I attempted to find the link to the high school capacity study and it was not available. The flyer states it should be available at this time. Could you please send me the active link? Thank you, Jodi

July 09, 2018, 1152 hours

K. Wishon

I go to Towson high, the most overcrowded school in the district. In the two years I have been in attendance I have had classes ranging from 10 students to 60. As a freshman in 2016-2017 I had issues navigating the school because there were so many students. Sophomore year I found that most of my classes had 30 students or more. My largest class this past year was 57 students but that was choralle. My second largest class was 35 students in am honors chemistry class. In my opinion, the zoning needs to change for the 2018-2019 school year. We need to shrink the Towson zone by 25-50% as well as Pikesville (5-20% shrink) and Dulaney (20-40% shrink). Through this we need to grow the size of Hereford, Milford Mills, Woodlawn, Eastern and Randallstown. Also the Law and Public Policy program at Towson needs to be moved to Carver or Western Tech. This will remove 100-200 students of overflow in Towson extremely quickly in and of itself. I am aware this may seem like an idea provided in the presentation on the page, the changes from this can be done quickly and do not include any capital projects.
Karah M. Wishon Class of 2020

July 09, 2018, 1355 hours

R. Pulliam

Good afternoon, the school overcrowding survey was supposed to be available today, when will the survey be available online?

July 10, 2018, 1155 hours

M. McDonald

Good morning, I completed the survey but found most of the questions to be leading and confusing. Multiple times I looked for explanations about what the questions were referring to and found none. Please, for the September session, be more clear about what you are specifically looking for. For example, is busing outside of a students school district on the table? What does it mean when you are asking if utilizing all spaces are a high priority? Does that mean redistricting, busing, or something else? The questions need to be more clear and with explanations wherever possible. Thanks, Meghan

July 10, 2018, 1255 hours

Y. Wynn

Good afternoon, I thought on this as we watch the section 8 families keep moving in with 5-10 after people with kids ;that They not be allowed to register their kids in those schools. Amount of undocumented kids living in a house that was given to a single family on legal papers should ONLY be allowed to register.

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July 10, 2018, 1304 hours

C. Berger

Good afternoon. I am writing to express my concern regarding the redistricting proposals offered by BCPS. In six of the seven proposals offered, redistricting is presented as the solution to issues of overcrowding. My wife and I bought our house in 2006, paying a double premium with the timing of the market, and for the schools that were deemed the highest performing. We didn't choose the house in the desirable school district because we planned to necessarily use them. I teach at St. Mark, my third and sixth graders attend there, and I anticipate that they will likely attend Catholic High school. We chose the house because we were investing in the community. Now, we are effectively being told that our children would not be welcome at our home schools. I appreciate that school planning and planning is a challenging process.

That being said, I feel as though governments and legislators should honor the commitments that have been made. If homes were bought with a particular school designation, they should have the opportunity to attend those schools. The presentations given at Catonsville High suggest that building and keeping boundaries is the most expensive option. I would suggest the highest cost comes to Baltimore County with a lower tax base as the property is devalued when boundaries are redrawn. Thank you for your attention and concern to this matter.

July 11, 2018, 1259 hours

C. Bailey

I would like to see an explanation of how BCPS decides which kids from the city are allowed to attend county schools and WHICH county school? If a school is already over capacity by 500+ kids, city applicants should be refused. The State and Baltimore City need to fix the city schools, too, so those parents aren't so desperate to get their kids out.

July 11, 2018, 1545 hours

T. Buck

Hello all, I'm emailing you today because it has come to my attention that BCPS is currently facing an issue of overcrowded schools and most of the proposed solutions offered by the Sage Policy Group involve some form of redistricting. I have lived in Maryland my entire life and grew up in the BCPS system. I have attended both fantastic schools and ones that I would never think about sending my children to – so the idea of redistricting is particularly disturbing to me for a number of reasons. I was fortunate enough to buy a house in Catonsville last June, and extreme weather aside, it has been nothing short of an amazing year. I disciplined myself to have saved up enough money to have plenty of options to choose from when it came time to browse the market. One of the biggest draws for me (and I'm sure many other families) was the schools in the area.

Fast forward one year, and I'm now hearing the possibility of having my house re-zoned for Woodlawn schools... the contrast between the two areas is nearly night and day. The thought of having not only my home lose significant value because of it, but also any children that I have later down the line being stuck in an undesirable school zone (unless I decide to pay for costly alternatives), is infuriating. I have reviewed all of the proposals from the Sage Policy Group feverishly and have found little imagination or vision to any of them. They feel like knee-jerk reactions to the projected data of certain schools becoming overcrowded in the next 10 years. Essentially forcing families who live in Catonsville to attend schools in Woodlawn is not a fix to the problem. The population density, median age, as well as the percentage of married couples in both Catonsville and Woodlawn are nearly identical. Clearly the issue of underattendance is not due to there not being enough families in the area – it's due to the quality of education and overall school safety within the district.

I can't speak to the other BCPS locations in question for re-districting, but in every option that involves Catonsville, I guarantee you that folks will not tolerate sending their children to Woodlawn schools – not in their current condition. BCPS should focus on making the school system in Woodlawn more attractive to middle-class families if they want to address the root-cause of low enrollment. Expansion and renovation to existing schools is certainly a step in the right direction, but if Catonsville continues to be a desirable area, (which it probably will be) then overcrowding of schools will be a persistent problem until more schools are built. Redistricting certain homes in Catonsville to Woodlawn will likely provide minimal impact to attendance, and is also likely to widen the inequality of education between the two districts. I can only see redistricting hurting the families involved a lot more than it helps them. Being 26 years old, I can definitely foresee children in my near future. I do not want to have to fight to give them a good education, and I can only imagine what parents with younger kids are feeling right now. Again, moving to Catonsville was a very purposeful decision and I was blissfully unaware of potentially having my house redistricted when I bought it. I'm sure many others feel the same way. Thank you for your time, I appreciate your hearing multiple perspectives before jumping on any ideas. Taylor Buck

BCPS High School Capacity Study Email Log: 06/29/18 through 07/13/18

July 11, 2018, 1717 hours

M. Pulliam

Members of the Board and other stakeholders; As a parent, taxpayer, investor, and citizen of Catonsville, I'm writing to express my concerns around the overcrowding issues. In regards to the proposals to address overcrowding in our schools, I'm particularly concerned that all plans are not inclusive of related issues. How can we possibly look at plans for renovation or rebuilding to alleviate capacity, when we have not addressed the issues of deteriorating facilities and student safety? Lansdowne needs a new school; yet several of the proposals don't include a new or renovated facility for them at all. Ironically, the Scenario titled "Just Build It" completely ignores Lansdowne altogether.

Further, I don't believe the data has been adequately vetted. When we look at a district map and talk about enrollments in each school, we're ignoring factors that will have a bearing on future enrollments. The idea that we could move 500 students from Catonsville and put them in Woodlawn is flawed. Woodlawn does not have a shortage of high school aged children in its district. It has a shortage of parents willing to send their kids to Woodlawn High School. They opt for magnets, private schools, home schooling, or other creative ways to get districted to a better school. So, moving kids on a map to a new school isn't going to fill open seats; it's just going to drive kids out of the system altogether. Personally, I don't want my kids to go to Woodlawn. I bought my home in Catonsville 2 years ago with plans to settle down and invest in my community. That is what we have done. I chose Catonsville and my specific home for the schools. I love the diversity and neighborhood of Westowne Elementary; and the opportunities offered at Catonsville Middle and High Schools. My property value and home price reflected those opportunities. To face the prospect of now being redistricted to Woodlawn is unfathomable to me. The deterioration of my home value, the stark contrast in educational opportunities of a 7 rated school versus a 3, the lack of a safe school environment for my kids; these are all factors that cannot be ignored. And it would leave me with little choice but to leave Baltimore County or to pursue private school.

This entire study is also really ignoring the reasons why people don't want their kids to go to schools like Woodlawn. It ignores how people are able to circumvent their district schools and get into others (both legally and illegally). It doesn't address the problems. It doesn't address Catonsville High School having 72% of teachers with advanced degrees, while only 36% of Woodlawn teachers have the same. It doesn't address safety concerns. Can I really trust Baltimore County to keep my children safe in a school like Woodlawn? I see the state of things now; the violence and bullying and repeat violent offenders walking our halls; and that reason alone would be enough for me to keep my kids out of BCPS altogether. This study only addresses capacity; and frankly, that is just not good enough.

The inequity of resources is evident; I realize that this is not an issue that is easily fixed. I empathize with the challenge facing the school board in rectifying all that has been allowed to go so awry. I fear that acting swiftly for a quick, easy fix, like a redistricting, would have disastrous effects. I applaud the engagement of consultants and engaging the communities; I just hope that all of this information is weighted heavily and community concerns are heard. There is much information left to be gathered and I look forward to an open, transparent process moving forward. Thank you for your time, Michelle Pulliam

July 12, 2018, 0645 hours

M. Papale

I am a single parent. I recently purchased a home in April of this year based solely on the high school zone for my current child who attends middle school. While looking for a home, the school zone was the top priority, and I am numb to think that now he may not be in the Catonsville High School zone and would actually go to Woodlawn or Lansdowne. It's appalling and disgusting. CHS is one of the best high schools in Baltimore County.

Those two options for high schools do not compare to CHS academically or in any other way for that matter. They both have very poor reputations with testing scores, drug activity and "trouble". They have been on the decline for decades. I based life decisions - the largest financial decision of my life based on a school zone.

I want my child to attend CHS as he is currently zoned. This problem did not happen overnight and should be addressed in any way that does not involve moving students to the other sub-par schools. It is a huge disservice to the families in the current zone who may have children attending CHS. Not to mention the effects on property values due a revised school zoning. BCPS needs to take rezoning students off the table as they are not offering a comparable high school to our children and they know it. Maria Papale

July 12, 2018, 2130 hours

C. Gates

Good evening, I am a Westowne Elementary school parent who has recently heard that it is being considered that students get redistricted to Woodlawn MS and Woodlawn HS instead of Arbutus MS and Catonsville High School. My husband and I moved here seven years ago for my children to specifically go to Westowne, Arbutus and CHS. I'm extremely concerned to hear they might be sent to Woodlawn. I'm concerned about the years of failing to reach set state standards, the low test scores, as well as the value of my property dropping should WHS be the 'local' high school. My kids can walk to Catonsville HS - and should they ride the bus it's less fuel to get them to CHS. CHS is also in a safer neighborhood. We are active in our community of Catonsville and plan on living here for a long time. We do not want to have to sell our house and move just so our kids do not attend Woodlawn. If this happens we will have to. The wonderful town and people of Catonsville will go on a downward spiral if this re-districting happens; while discussing this with other parents my husband and I find ourselves among similar opinions. Please do not re-district our Westowne students to Woodlawn MS or HS. We love Catonsville! Sincerely Catherine Gates

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July 12, 2018, 2200 hours

J. Jaeger

Hello, Thank you for the presentation at Carver tonight. It was very informative and I am grateful that the community is being given the chance to give our input. Some thoughts: (In no particular order)

If money is to be spent on new buildings or additions, etc., why wouldn't those buildings be made to increase the number of seats even more - so they are not at or above capacity when they "open"? It seems as though spending millions of dollars on building a new Towson High would be a complete waste when the projected enrollment is still 9 seats over capacity. I would like to see more "future" planning to keep the enrollment below capacity as much as possible. Especially if money and efforts are spent to build new buildings or add on to existing ones.

Baltimore County is HUGE. It seems as though it would be better to break it up into districts. Like feeding patterns, so schools aren't broken up (like Ridgely Middle). Like 3 elementary schools go to one middle, which then goes to one high school. This would alleviate students being moved and disrupted, as well as maybe solve some problems with inclement weather.

I think there need to be some additional schools added - like a Lutherville High and one around the Catonsville area. In addition to other plans.

My favorite scenario (I think) is Scenario 3, so families don't have to change the schools they think they are going to. However, I still think additional schools need to be added to this scenario, like mentioned above.

Thank you again!

July 12, 2018, 2200 hours

J. Jaeger

Good evening,

Has anyone given any thought to on-line classes to be offered to seniors and/or juniors? This would eliminate over crowding. This would also prepare many students for on-line classes that may be offered in college.

July 13, 2018, 0929 hours

L. Rowe

I was just reminded by someone that Sage is the same company that advised the County Council on the \$43 Million dollar Towson Row bailout. They advised the county should give them \$43 million in tax breaks over future years so that the project could move forward.

1. Why are Sage and GWWO architects (hired by the school system) asking us to only consider overcrowding projections in high school capital projects for the next ten years excluding high school facility conditions? Why would we ever want to exclude facility conditions as a reason for doing a capital project?
2. Why are the presentations being tailored to only spend not more than \$600 million when in the last ten years we spent \$1.3 Billion?
3. Why are people being asked to state how much they would be willing to have property taxes raised when there are other funding options available like developer impact fees?
4. Sage told us at the first meeting the reason their projections are accurate for overcrowding (which a lot of people are calling into question) is that they include future developments. How can they do that? How would they know what future development would be approved that have not been approved yet?
5. Is it possible that the developer lobby is steering how we spend school capital improvement budget dollars in order to give the council no reason to disapprove future development?
6. Are we being steered to solve a problem that hasn't been created yet and could be prevented simply by not building more housing units?
7. Are we being steered to accept raising property taxes instead of imposing developer impact fees?
8. Can we trust the population projections when we know already several populations that were not included?

Lily Rowe