Re-Opening of Woodward High School

An Introduction

**History of the Decision to Re-open Woodward High School**

As you may know, Montgomery County Public Schools group schools into “clusters” based on the elementary and middle-schools that feed into a particular high school. Our cluster is the Walter Johnson cluster. This cluster includes two middle schools (North Bethesda and Tilden) along with six elementary schools: Wyngate, Ashburton, Kensington Parkwood, Farmland, Garrett Park, and Luxmanor. The first three elementary schools feed into North Bethesda. The second three elementary schools fees into Tilden.

Walter Johnson High School currently has a capacity of 2,335 students. Based on the number of students currently enrolled in the elementary and middle schools that feed into Walter Johnson High School, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) estimates that Walter Johnson High School will be approximately 600 students over capacity by the 2021-2022 school year.

During the 2015-2016 school year, two main options for reducing anticipated overcrowding at Walter Johnson High School were discussed by the PTAs that make up the Walter Johnson Cluster: (1) an addition to Walter Johnson High School to increase capacity to 2800, 3000 or 3200 students; or (2) re-opening Woodward High School to alleviate overcrowding at Walter Johnson.

The consensus within our community was that an addition to Walter Johnson would create a high school that was simply too big. Accordingly, the Cluster PTAs took the position that:

* that Woodward High School should be re-opened in order to remedy anticipated overcrowding at Walter Johnson High School;
* that all households currently districted to Walter Johnson should be assigned either to Walter Johnson or Woodward High Schools; and
* that Woodward and Walter Johnson High Schools should be designed to provide equivalent opportunities to students at each school.

As you may know, the Woodward High School building is located on Old Georgetown Road, less than 1.5 miles from Walter Johnson High School. It was originally built as a high school in 1966 and was closed as a high school in 1987 due to declining enrollment. It has housed Tilden Middle School since 1991.

By all accounts, county decision-makers have appeared committed to re-opening Woodward High School. Funding to re-open Woodward was included in the out-years of the Superintendent’s recommended Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for 2018-2024, and Board of Education members have expressed their support for re-opening Woodward in public meetings and in their approved 2018-2024 CIP.

**Re-opening Woodward FAQs**

**When will Woodward Re-open?**

MCPS has publicly stated that the earliest Woodward High School could re-open would be the 2022-2023 school year. In order for Woodward to re-open in the fall of 2022, construction planning would need to begin very soon. It is expected that a feasibility study (the first step in the construction planning process) will take place this school year. Any delays in planning, funding or enthusiasm for the project on the part of relevant decision-makers could delay the re-opening past the 2022-2023 school year.

**Who will go to Woodward and who will go to WJ?**

Any time MCPS opens a new school, it must conduct a boundary study to determine which students will be assigned to the new school. A boundary study usually begins about 18 months before the school is scheduled to open. A decision is then made, based on the options discussed in the boundary study, approximately 8-12 months before the school opens. MCPS will not decide who goes to Woodward until much closer to when the school opens.

**What is the cluster working on now?**

Your cluster representatives are continuing to work on advocating for a Woodward High School that any of us would be happy to send our children to. There are decisions that may be made during the construction planning process (before any boundary study) that are important to our students and families. For example will the old building be completely razed and a new structure built, or will the County opt for “additions” to the old building?

**What can I do?**

There is strength in numbers. When parents come to a meeting at the Board of Education or County Council, elected officials notice. We will be sending out notices and reminders of various opportunities to show up for Woodward.

**How can I find out more/ask a more specific question?**

Your PTA Cluster Representative is your connection to more information on this issue. IYou can contact your Wyngate PTA Cluster Representatives at Michael Baratz (mbaratz@steptoe.com) and John Hoffner (john.hoffner@gmail.com).