



TOWN OF BARNESVILLE  
COMMISSIONERS  
Montgomery County Maryland

**Testimony by  
Barbara Davidson  
before  
the Montgomery County School Board  
regarding  
Monocacy Elementary School  
November 11, 2010**

I am speaking to you tonight on behalf of the Town of Barnesville which – first and foremost – wants to thank the Board for rejecting the Superintendent’s recommendation to close Monocacy Elementary School and, instead, recommended the Roundtable process that bought for our community the time we needed to make our case for keeping the school open. Having learned over the past year something of our spirit, I’m sure you can imagine the enthusiastic reaction this news received out in the country four weeks ago!

With great respect for all that is on your plate tonight, we would like to make a couple of important points about this decision and the manner in which it was reached.

The Superintendent’s memo dated October 15<sup>th</sup> essentially says the school system is withdrawing its recommendation to consolidate Monocacy Elementary into Poolesville because estimates about enrollment trends at Poolesville Elementary were based on flawed assumptions. You will recall that challenging the enrollment estimates was part of the case we made to the Board this time last year – and we are pleased to be exonerated in this fashion. But, the Roundtable process you established – and in which I took part – was charged not with addressing enrollment at Poolesville but enrollment at, *and the continued viability of*, Monocacy Elementary. We do not believe the Superintendent’s memo gives appropriate consideration to the time and effort that 18 of your constituents, representing three separate clusters, provided and the fact that that process resulted in two *unanimous* recommendations specifically addressing Monocacy’s continued viability.

The first recommendation, to create a policy recognizing how impossible it is for schools in the Ag Reserve to reach “down-county” enrollment targets, was dismissed by the Superintendent on the basis of an incorrect understanding of how the Ag Reserve and its communities are defined. The second recommendation, allowing liberal transfer into schools in the Ag Reserve from neighboring clusters, was ignored completely.

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Beyond bringing this matter to your attention, my purpose tonight is to enroll the Board in working with us to more carefully address the Roundtable's recommendations so that you and we don't have to spend our precious time revisiting the viability of Monocacy Elementary School every five years.

We intend to continue to press for a policy addressing schools in the Ag Reserve, including John Poole Middle School and Poolesville High School. While we understand from conversations with individual Board members that you believe creating such a policy is more a matter for the County Council than it is for you, we would like the Board to know that Council members say just the opposite: that it's a matter for the School Board. So, the Town of Barnesville will – in the months ahead – look to facilitate a discussion between these two bodies to get this done.

Second, while the Superintendent's recommendation to liberalize transfers from Poolesville Elementary to Monocacy is most welcome, we are interested in a broader transfer policy. It is our understanding that your Policy Committee will begin to look at transfer policies this fall and we would ask that you consider this unique situation in your deliberations.

Finally, whether it's in this year's CIP process (which we obviously prefer) or next year, following the aforementioned discussions with the County Council, we actually believe the best and easiest approach might be to amend the CIP to recognize a different Preferred Range of Enrollment for our schools. Just as there's a statement in the CIP that says special and alternative program centers will generally have lower enrollment, we would like to see a statement that says something like "Poolesville Cluster schools serving students in the County's Agriculture Reserve will likely not meet these targets". It could be that simple.

Once again, on behalf of the Town of Barnesville and the Monocacy Elementary School community, I want to thank the Board for how you have treated our concerns and dealt with what appears now to have been a hasty recommendation for closure in the first place. We hope you will help us now turn the lemon of that hasty decision into lemonade by capitalizing on the time already invested by all sides so that we can reach a permanent solution honoring the important role Monocacy Elementary School plays in our community and in our county.

Respectfully submitted,

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Representative

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