

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY

INFORMATIONAL REPORT

DECISION ON SCOPE STUDY FOR JOHN ARCHER SCHOOL ADDITION TO BEL AIR MIDDLE SCHOOL

November 23, 2009

Background Information:

Smolen & Emr Associates was hired to perform a scope study to consider the relocation of the John Archer School (JAS) to the Bel Air Campus and to present and recommend the best option for the construction of an addition to the Bel Air Middle School facility. As mandated by the federal and state governments, it is the intent of Harford County Public Schools to create inclusionary educational opportunities for the special needs students who attend the John Archer program. The existing John Archer building has reached a point where components and systems need to be replaced. The original John Archer School was built in 1971 and was designed to serve students with severe disabilities. The instructional needs, as well as the support service requirements, of the students attending John Archer have changed since the construction of the original building.

The current student population and staff are in need of a facility with the appropriate spaces and building systems that support the program, is centrally located, is located near a major medical facility, and establishes opportunities for inclusion. During the planning process, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) expressed its non-support of a freestanding special education facility. With this in mind, our planning team was tasked to consider options to build an addition onto Bel Air Middle School and to define educational objectives that are based on inclusionary opportunities.

Discussion:

It has been determined that the Bel Air Campus is the most feasible site for the relocation and placement of the JAS. The campus currently houses Homestead/Wakefield Elementary School, Bel Air Middle School, and Bel Air High School and provides inclusionary opportunities at all grade levels. Under the guidance of the Director of Special Education and the Facility Planner for HCPS, programmatic and spatial requirements were defined and used by the Scope Study Committee to develop three (3) concept schemes that address the instructional and site requirements for the future development of the campus.

The Scope Study Committee concluded that Option #3 is the preferred option. It has been determined that the recommended option satisfies the John Archer program requirements and provides the most efficient use of the existing site. This preferred option will provide access to the site from MacPhail Road and would allow easy access for emergency response vehicles to the new John Archer School addition from the hospital (Upper Chesapeake Medical Center). Additionally, the new entrance will control vehicular traffic and volume resulting from the addition of a new school facility to the Bel Air Campus.

The recommended scheme will be designed with large open corridors, parking areas for adapted physical therapy equipment, a large health suite, IEP meeting rooms, and support offices. This design will encourage motor skill development and provide plenty of space for the support staff to work with children, individually and in group settings, on a daily basis. This facility will include a therapy pool that will support the student population of John Archer School as well as the community of Harford County with financial participation from the Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Schools recommends that the Board of Education approve the Option #3 scheme for the new John Archer School addition to Bel Air Middle School.