

Testimony of Stuart Moore, President, Old Blair Auditorium Project
To the Montgomery County Council
Regarding the FY13 Capital Budget and FY13-18 Capital Improvements Program Budget
February 8, 2012

Last year, our community was thrilled when the Montgomery County Council voted to add funding to the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget for the renovation of the Elizabeth Stickley auditorium at the old Montgomery Blair High School location in Silver Spring. The CIP included \$600,000 of County funding in FY12 to meet the matching funds requirement of the \$600,000 State bond bill, originally issued in 2005. The matching funds were successfully certified and the capital grant was approved by the State of Maryland Board of Public Works on July 27, 2011.

This year, we were greatly disappointed to learn that the County Executive is proposing to delay the start of the project from FY12 to FY13. This creates a problem, in that the State's expenditure deadline looms. The original bond bill was issued in 2005 and while the matching funds deadline was extended three times, the deadline for expenditure of the \$600,000 was not extended and remains fixed at June of this year.

We urge the County to get started on the project with planning, design, and supervision efforts as originally budgeted in last year's CIP. As a precaution, Senator Jamie Raskin and Delegates Sheila Hixson, Tom Hucker, and Heather Mizeur plan to submit a bill to briefly extend the expenditure deadline. The success of this extension bill is, as you know, subject to the voting of the Maryland legislature.

We also urge the county to accelerate the actual construction efforts, currently proposed for FY16 and FY17, to reduce the chronological gap between starting and completing the project, and to reduce the effect of construction cost escalation over time.

In the meantime, the auditorium and adjacent space sits deteriorating, awaiting action to bring a vibrant, multipurpose space for after-school programming and community use back into service once again.

Thank you for your consideration.

Stuart Moore