

[This is a copy of a Councilmember Valerie Ervin's letter of February 26, 2010.]



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALERIE ERVIN
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 5

Greetings,

As you all know, funding for the Elizabeth Stickley (Old Blair) Auditorium was not specifically designated in the County Executive's Recommended Capital Improvements Program (CIP). I have worked with many of you to re-open Old Blair, long before I served on the County Council.

This facility is a precious community asset that has the potential to benefit the greater Silver Spring area and Montgomery County. A renovated Old Blair would restore a beloved destination for arts performances, and provide essential community use space. Located just a few blocks from downtown, it can and will contribute to Silver Spring's ongoing renaissance.

Since my election in 2006, I have worked with residents and community leaders, including representatives from the Old Blair Auditorium Project, Inc., on strategies to reopen the Old Blair Auditorium's doors as a multi-use facility that can accommodate musical and theatrical performances, after-school programs, and school and community events.

My advocacy in 2007, along with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) leadership, resulted in façade improvements at Silver Spring International Middle School. These improvements included fresh paint, new windows, screens for the utility equipment and new handrails.

Later in 2007, I sought federal funding for Old Blair Auditorium. With help from Senator Mikulski and Senator Sarbanes, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$200,000 towards the Old Blair Auditorium project budget under the Economic Development Initiative account in FY07. Unfortunately, Congress was unable to complete action on the overall appropriations bill and eliminated all earmarks in the Continuing Resolution. I am currently working with our Congressional representatives in the hopes of securing another earmark for Old Blair.

In 2008, I secured funding for a feasibility study in the FY09-14 CIP in an effort to jumpstart the renovation. In the spring of 2009, MCPS, in collaboration with my office and the Executive Branch, conducted the study to explore options to renovate the auditorium, including identifying potential project designs and costs. The feasibility study was completed in September of 2009 and a joint Education and Health and Human Services Committee met to review the options.

In 2005, the County's District 20 State Delegation worked to get a \$600,000 bond bill passed in the Maryland General Assembly. I supported the extension of this bond bill in 2007, and again in 2009, so that the matching funds could be appropriated for the project. I asked County Executive Leggett to use the available \$600,000 State bond bill and include the renovation of Old Blair in the CIP. To my disappointment, no funds were specifically designated in the County Executive's Recommended FY11-16 CIP released on January 15, 2010.

With construction costs low and the need for additional job creation, now is the time to move this important project forward. With this community waiting on a renovation for so many years, now is the time to demonstrate our commitment to the continued revitalization of Silver Spring and to unleash the potential of Old Blair Auditorium.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you towards achieving our goal. I want to thank the members of the Old Blair Auditorium Project, Inc. for continuing to advocate for this project. I know that by working together we can achieve great things.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valerie Ervin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Valerie Ervin

Councilmember – District 5

Montgomery County Council