

## Reader's Viewpoint-South County Middle School Needed

Why should parents with children attending Hayfield, Lee, West Springfield, or Lake Braddock high schools care whether South County parents get a new middle school built? Because, along with the 19,000 Army jobs coming to Fort Belvoir main post and the Engineer Proving Grounds, the county predicts an additional 3,200 kids in the area. Given that South County Secondary School (SCSS) already has trailers, if the South County Middle School (SCMS) is not built in the next two to three years, these new students will be pushed into all of the surrounding schools. Thus, West Springfield, Hayfield, Lee and Lake Braddock will be overflowing.

Despite this impending tsunami of students, Fairfax County School's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has SCMS slated for 2017.

How did such poor planning occur? It is really no one's fault. The CIP was developed before the massive development occurred in Lorton and before the Army announced the relocation of 19,000 jobs to South County and central Springfield. At the time, SCMS was not really needed.

The purpose of this letter to the editor is not to cast blame, but to offer some solutions:

1. The current CIP is based on outdated demographic information. Any rational person will agree that the CIP needs to be re-ordered based on current information.
2. Use the Public/Private School Construction plan that the South County parents and I developed for the South County Secondary School to build the school quickly. It worked with SCSS, so it will work with SCMS.
3. Leverage adjacent county-owned land to build a school. There are vacant county-owned parcels in South County that could be sold to help pay the cost of SCMS. For example, the county is contemplating selling land it owns at the Vulcan quarry area off of Ox Road and using the money to pay for a park it has already purchased. While the Park Authority won't want to spend park money on a school project, the county Board of Supervisors needs to stop in-fighting amongst county departments and use the money to build a school.
4. Play hardball with the Army. They are moving 3,200 kids to our South County school system. Make them step up and deliver some funding for the school.
5. The school board needs to immediately budget the planning money for SCMS to keep it moving forward.
6. The county is using new authority granted by the state's Transportation Act of 2007 to charge fees on commercial offices for transportation improvements. But that bill also allows for impact fees on developers. However, the county is not implementing these new impact fees. While these new fees will not directly build a school, they will free up millions of dollars the county is currently using to pay for transportation bonds, which can then be used to pay for SCMS.
7. Voters need to elect school board members who support building SCMS now.

The purpose of government is to solve problems. Let's solve the problem of overcrowded schools and get SCMS built before the 3,200 new students arrive.

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