

October 20, 2020

Commissioners of Charles County
200 Baltimore Street
La Plata, MD 20646

**Re: School Allocation Policy Changes
Comments from Virginia McGraw, CCBOE**

Dear Commissioners,

I am Virginia McGraw, Chairman of the Charles County Board of Education. I am presenting testimony for the record regarding our concerns about the proposed legislative changes to the Adequate Public Facilities Manual. We believe that there has been a lack of transparency throughout the process.

When the Planning and Growth Management staff were tasked by the Planning Commission to develop proposals for changing the Adequate Public Facilities manual, were the citizens and key stakeholders notified in advance? Typically, in the past, a committee was formed that included Board members, CCPS staff, stakeholders and County staff. This diverse group had an opportunity to provide input as the proposed legislation was drafted. There was an exchange of dialogue among the committee members, giving everyone a better format for understanding each member's perspective and questions. As a result, compromises were reached; changes were proposed and were subsequently accepted by the Commissioners during a similar school adequate facilities process in 2016. This did not happen this time around.

Secondly, a meeting was held on February 5, 2020 between CCPS staff and PGM staff about the current process for allocating school seats. We asked PGM staff if there were any pending changes to the school allocation process. We received no response. It was later discovered through a different meeting in May with PGM staff and some CCPS staff that PGM had been tasked with developing proposals months before the February meeting took place.

Thirdly, at the annual Joint School Allocations Cycle meeting between the Board of Ed and County Commissioners on April 29, there was no mention of possible revisions to the current policy to affect subsequent years to follow...yet, shortly after on June 2, 2020, Planning Growth and Management staff made public, possible options to revise the current APF manual...which included revising school allocations.

Overall, we believe there has been a lack of transparency with this process. Specifically

1. There has been little or no advance notice of next steps
2. Documents are difficult to find and/or access on the county's webpage
3. The timing of the entire process coincided with a number of events that distracted the public's attention, i.e. summer break, the pandemic and other social and political events around the country.

This lack of transparency contributed to the lack of collaboration with the Charles County Board of Education and County Commissioners for such an important issue that affects our schools. I respectfully ask that you keep the record open for 30 days. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Virginia McGraw
Chairman, Charles County Board of Education