

## Communities renew push for new high schools

### Advocates ask school board to fund projects to replace Towson and Dulaney

BY MARGARITA CAMBEST  
mcambest@baltsun.com

A group of parents and community members who want to see Baltimore County replace Towson and Dulaney high schools with new facilities brought their message to the county school board May 24.

Clad in Dulaney red or Towson maroon and holding signs supporting their respective schools, dozens of supporters of building two new high schools made their voices heard at a Baltimore County Board of Education meeting designed to take public input on the board's fiscal year 2019 budget. The 2019 fiscal year begins July 1, 2018.

One by one, parents, teachers and elected officials urged the board to fund planning and design for new Towson and Dulaney high schools. Others spoke in support of renovating Lansdowne High School, adding money for new guidance counselors countywide and a new gym for Hereford High School.

"Our children and communities deserve to have a quality environment for a quality education," said Gretchen Maneval, a member of a community group dedicated to seeing county officials build a new Towson High by 2022.

The "New in '22" committee is composed of Towson High parents and other community members. Members say the existing high Towson High, which was built in 1949, is overcrowded and that its facilities are outdated.

Towson High is more than 200 students over capacity, according to its profile on the Baltimore County Public Schools website. Some students attend class in six portable buildings that are located behind the main school building.

"This is our constituency, this is our community, and we urge you to give support to Towson High School by giving planning money," Maneval said, adding that the group has the support of 95 percent of community members who responded to an online survey petition it posted ahead of the hearing, to garner support for a new school.

More than 450 people had responded since the survey was posted May 18, Maneval said.

Eight-year-old Genevieve Gamero, a West Towson Elementary student, said she is on track to go to Towson High. She wants to be an astronaut and asked for a new school in which she would receive a good education.

Her father, Ray Gamero, said he moved to Towson from Oklahoma for the schools.

"I don't know if she'll go to Towson," Gamero said. "The main reason that we made Towson our home was because of West Towson Elementary."

Baltimore County Councilman David Marks, a Republican who represents Towson, also spoke in support of building a new Towson High.

"Baltimore County can be rightfully proud in the investments it has made in the southern part of the York Road corridor...but the missing part in this investment is Towson High School," Marks said.

### Dulaney advocates return

Supporters of a new Dulaney High School, including County Councilman Wade Kach, a Republican who represents District 3, also made a pitch to the board.

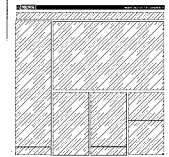
Kach, who had called on proponents of a new Dulaney High School to come to the budget hearing and renew their request for a new school, spoke in support of new high schools for both communities, noting that the 1990s renovation of Towson High School already is dated.

"We don't want the same thing to happen to Dulaney," Kach said. "That's why we opposed the \$37 million remodel because we know in the future it's going to need replacement."

Dulaney High, which opened in 1964 and lies in Kach's district, is overcapacity by about 160 students, according to its BCPS school profile.

After parents pushed for a new Dulaney High School in 2016, County Executive Kevin Kamenetz proposed a \$40 million renovation of the school in his fiscal 2018 budget.

The Board of Education ruled against the renovation funding in March, citing the advocates' desire for a new building. Kamenetz then cut the renovation money and diverted it to remaining elementary school construction projects in the county.



County spokeswoman Ellen Kobler said Kamenetz is proud of the \$1.3 billion Schools for Our Future Program. The funding has been earmarked to complete 16 new schools, 12 additions and seven comprehensive renovations throughout Baltimore County, but not a new high school for Towson or Dulaney.

"The Board of Education will now begin a comprehensive study of middle and high school enrollment and capital needs this fall, and both Towson and Dulaney will be included in that review," Kobler said in a May 23 email.

State Sen. Jim Brochin, a Democrat from Towson, stressed support of new schools in elected officials' districts with-

out pitting the areas against each other.

"It should be a comprehensive plan for both schools," he told the board. "I was in Dulaney last week. Some of the walls are literally crumbling there, which is unbelievable."

Steve Lafferty, a Democrat who represents Towson in the Maryland House of Delegates, agreed, asking the board to consider future population growth in Towson that may require bigger schools.

"I urge for planning money in 2019 and to take students into account," he said. "Nothing can be more important in the education realm than making sure we have a new Towson High School in 2022."



MARGARITA CAMBEST/BSMG STAFF

Parents, faculty and elected officials connected with the Towson and Dulaney high school communities attended a May 24 Board of Education budget hearing to encourage the board begin the planning and design of new, replacement schools in fiscal 2019.