November 13 Boundary Study Testimony - SYYAD ALI

Hello everyone, I was here 6 months back testifying in support of naming the new elementary school in Clarksburg as Snowden Farm. Let me convey the gratitude of Clarksburg Community towards the board members who were part of that decision including our previous SMOB Ananya for listening to the community. Unfortunately, contrary to that, today I am very disappointed as during this boundary process voices from Clarksburg were not only ignore but in fact disrespected at times.

First, let's talk about outreach, there was not one focus group meeting held in Clarksburg and out of many schools impacted by this study, not even a single Clarksburg school PTA was approached by MCPS to understand where they stand. This was clearly in contrast to the opportunity offered to Seneca Valley Cluster where constant dialogue happened during the summer.

The most disappointing moment during this whole process came during the work session when a motion to put option 9 as an alternative was defeated. After months of forums, emails, calls, and meetings this board couldn't show the courage to compare the recommendation with an alternate option. As Mrs. O'Neill stated, for the sake of respect to the community that should have been done.

Now coming to factors, When MCPS conducted the survey related to boundary study options, the Clarksburg cluster responded in high number in good faith that those survey results will eventually become one of the tools for the decision-makers in deciding the most suitable option. 92% respondents in Clarksburg Cluster picked Geography as the most important factor. When the recommendation came out that factor was completely ignored. The recommendation will create islands and non-contiguous boundaries. It will also result in buses crisscrossing MD-355 during heavy traffic to move kids away from their communities.

When it comes to demography, the recommendation will actually take most vulnerable of kids away from a neighborhood school where they can have all the resources to succeed. All they can do now is when 355 is gridlocked, their bus driver can take a detour on Middle brook road so that kids can see the shiny new school from their bus window on their way to another school where they will neither have a wellness center nor multiple bilingual counselors. They will not have any ESOL parent coordinators either. Low-income parents with inflexible jobs would be hit the hardest and would not be able to get involved in their children's schools.

Unfortunately, folks supporting the recommendation will cite studies happened in as far as in Los Angeles when it comes to FARMS integration and will conveniently ignore that our own Equity Accountability Model data shows Watkins Mill High School, which has a Wellness Center, appears to have a more successful FARMS population than that of Clarksburg High School.

Only thing I would say about utilization is that out of 14 options on the table, 10 provides higher relief to CHS after the end of the 5-year period than the recommendation. You can easily understand how much weight was given to this factor.

I still think that option 12 is the best option but I also understand your concern for balancing the numbers on paper. So let's meet at halfway. Let's go for option 9!!!

Thank you.