

THOMAS V. MIKE MILLER, JR.  
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

MICHAEL E. BUSCH  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
STATE HOUSE  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

October 11, 2017

Mr. Robert A. Gorrell  
Executive Director  
Interagency Committee on Public School Construction  
200 W. Baltimore Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Mr. Gorrell:

We write to inquire about the impetus behind the attached memo sent by you to Maryland school superintendents requesting, on behalf of the Interagency Committee on School Construction, that legislators attend the October 18, 2017 Board of Public Works meeting.

Since you are new to Maryland, you may not know that we have worked very hard to ensure that the school construction allocation process remain apolitical so every county, regardless of political leadership or party affiliation, has the opportunity to receive school construction funding based on the merits of their project.

It may be helpful for you to better understand the history of this process, since this will be your first exposure to Maryland's apolitical school construction review. The Board of Public Works (BPW) has no role in the decision-making process for specific school construction projects. Technical review and recommendations regarding specific school construction decisions are simply not the purview of any elected state official nor should they be. Specific projects will be proposed to the Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC), comprised of two gubernatorial appointees, two legislative appointees, and the State superintendent of schools. The IAC will then make project by project recommendations taking into account local priorities. Those recommendations are final and are no longer subject to the January appeals process which had turned into a worthless display of BPW bullying of local officials.

This is not a new or partisan issue as members of the General Assembly were not required to participate in what had become known as the "beg-a-thon" under both Governor Ehrlich and Governor O'Malley's administrations. In 2008, Governor O'Malley officially altered the format


of the BPW process to be more professionalized, in which only a county School Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee were invited to participate. This was long overdue as the BPW was not technically equipped to change any recommendations and the political fanfare detracted from any substantive discussion that might have occurred.


Not surprisingly, your current request of superintendents, one month into the academic year, to include legislators, has generated tremendous confusion. It is unclear what the purpose of this parade of superintendents and local officials will serve at a time when school officials need to be in their districts focused on the actual needs students. To the extent any schools systems or officials choose not to attend, we can assure you and them that the Maryland General Assembly has the ability and commitment to ensure that all school systems are treated fairly and that projects are funded based on merit and local priorities and not political whims.

Allocation of school construction funding for specific projects should not require a personal appearance to beg for funding by any legislator, regardless of political affiliation, but be based on the actual needs of students in a particular county. Similarly, it is wrong for elected officials at any level of government to threaten local officials or to confuse communities by falsely pretending they can promise school construction projects outside of the State's merit-based process.

We hope this background is helpful to you as your public comments and recent memo seem to lack clarity on Maryland's statutory process and the appropriate role of elected officials. Please feel free to contact our office with any additional questions.

Sincerely,

  
Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.  
President, Maryland Senate

  
Michael E. Busch  
Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates

Cc: Members, Maryland Senate  
Members, Maryland House of Delegates  
Members, Interagency Committee on School Construction





LARRY HOGAN  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MARYLAND  
PUBLIC SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM  
200 W. BALTIMORE STREET  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201  
410-767-0617

INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

ROBERT A. GORRELL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KAREN SALMON, Ph.D.  
CHAIRPERSON

MEMORANDUM

To: Superintendents of Schools  
LEA Directors of Facility Planning  
County Government Officials

From: Mr. Robert Gorrell, Executive Director

RAG

Date: August 30, 2017

Re: Fiscal Year 2019 Capital Improvement Program: BPW Appearance

---

The Board of Public Works (BPW) invites the local superintendents and board members, their representatives, and the legislators to appear at the October 18, 2017 BPW hearing. Each school district will be given five to eight minutes to present information regarding their FY 2019 CIP request. Please remember to bring fifteen (15) copies, three-hole punched, of your written testimony.

Please find attached a schedule for LEA appearances at the BPW. Let us know as soon as possible if you have a major conflict and we will do our best to accommodate or adjust the schedule. Also, if you have not submitted the completed **Standard LEA Template**, please do so no later than Thursday, September 21.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the upcoming hearing on October 18, feel free to contact me. We look forward to seeing you at the hearing.

Attachment

cc: Mr. Susanne Brogan, Deputy Treasurer for Public Policy Office of the State Treasurer  
Mr. John Gontrum, Assistant Comptroller, Office of the State Comptroller  
Mr. Mark Newgent, Deputy Policy Director, State of Maryland Executive Department  
Dr. Karen Salmon, Chair, Interagency Committee on School Construction  
Mr. Ellington Churchill, Member, Interagency Committee on School Construction  
Ms. Wendi Peters, Member, Interagency Committee on School Construction  
Ms. Barbara Hoffman, Member, Interagency Committee on School Construction  
Mr. John Bohanan, Member, Interagency Committee on School Construction  
Ms. Joan Schaefer, Deputy Director, Public School Construction Program  
Ms. Kim Spivey, Manager of Fiscal Services, Public School Construction Program  
Ms. Arabia Davis, Programs Manager, Public School Construction Program