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# Montgomery County Public Schools

200 JUNKIN STREET CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA 24073

May 5, 2011

Mr. Richard Ballengee, Mayor
Town of Christiansburg
325 Maple Drive
Christiansburg, VA 24073

Dear Mr. Ballengee:

I am contacting you on behalf of the Montgomery County School Board and the children we serve across this county. As you know, the impact of the failure of the Blacksburg High School gymnasium in February 2010 has resulted in capital concerns with significant associated costs. The Montgomery County Board of Supervisors and the Montgomery County School Board have used a variety of available financial resources to provide assistance for the unexpected expenses. Funding sources have included school system carry over funds, Montgomery County Public Schools' operating funds, and capital project reserves held by the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors. Despite our combined efforts, even more resources are needed to address the extensive problems that have surfaced as a ripple effect following the gymnasium collapse. We appreciate the past support shown by the Town of Christiansburg as we implemented temporary housing for over 2,500 students beginning on August 30, 2010. Solving the issues we currently face will also require a team effort.

Subsequent changes in the review specifications applied to our facilities county-wide from the perspective of all maintenance needs and especially in the closer evaluation of buildings through the annual fire and safety inspections conducted by officials of the municipalities and the county are a major factor in the financial impact to the school division. We are committed to solving the identified problems, and Montgomery County Public Schools addressed the most critical of the identified issues in the spring using school operating funds. The less critical issues had been planned as projects for the summer months. An initial estimate to complete the work was approximately $300,000. We now have an estimate of approximately $1.1 million to complete the remaining repairs identified through the fire and safety inspections. The ten impacted schools are located throughout the county as follows: Christiansburg High School, Christiansburg Primary School, Christiansburg Elementary School, Belview Elementary School, Old Christiansburg Middle School (now the temporary Blacksburg Middle School), Gilbert

Linkous Elementary School, Margaret Beeks Elementary School, Harding Avenue Elementary School, Shawsville Elementary School (now the temporary Rivendell site), and Shawsville Middle School.

Montgomery County Public Schools is unable to absorb these additional expenses in the school division operating budget. We are faced with tough decisions regarding employee positions, employee compensation, and instructional supplies. To incorporate these capital needs in addition to our educational needs would require the reduction of the equivalent of 19 teaching positions. For this reason, we request that the Town of Christiansburg also consider providing financial support for the upgrades required to the school facilities in order to comply with the recent fire and safety inspection findings determined by building and fire safety inspectors from your jurisdiction. If you deem financial support is not an option, we further request that your building officials work with Montgomery County Public Schools to develop a plan that minimizes the immediate cost of upgrades and establishes a prioritized list of issues that may be accomplished over multiple years. We appreciate your past support and believe that we can work together again to resolve the current facilities upgrades and the associated compliance issues.

We recognize that Montgomery County Public Schools is not alone in facing financial challenges. It is also obvious that the business of education is critical to the future of Montgomery County. The issues that we face cut across all communities. They require that every jurisdiction evaluate new ways in which we can work together to finance the projects and provide appropriate physical environments for every child. The capital needs are unexpected and yet critical to the safety of our schools and to the provision of appropriate settings for learning. Your thoughtful consideration of providing financial assistance and developing a reasonable plan for completion of work is essential and appreciated.

Sincerely,

B. Wendell Jones
School Board Chair
Montgomery County Public Schools

cc: Barry Helms, Interim Town Manager, Town of Christiansburg