

Brunswick residents call for new high school and senior center buildings

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Jan. 9—Several Brunswick residents and public schools officials on Monday called on Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater to accelerate the construction of a new Brunswick High School to replace a building they said is posing safety hazards to students, teachers and staff members.

A town hall meeting about the county's budget on Monday was the first of five that County Executive Jessica Fitzwater plans to host in the coming weeks. There will be one meeting in each County Council district.

Monday's meeting was in council District 1, which covers the southwestern part of the county, including Middletown, Burkittsville, Rosemont, Brunswick and land west of Md. 355, including parts of Urbana and the Sugarloaf Mountain area.

Residents who called for funding for a new Brunswick High School during the town hall meeting — many of whom said they have children who attend or who will attend the high school — said the building has undrinkable water and has

doors and bathroom stalls that won't lock.

It's also "riddled" with asbestos, said Ellen Fowler, who is a local parent-teacher organization member and was part of a group tasked with studying asbestos in the building.

"We need to find the money to repair this," Fowler said during the town hall meeting at Brunswick City Hall.

Principal Christopher Berry, who is in his first year at Brunswick High School after leaving his role as principal at Tuscarora High School over the summer, said that most of the classrooms in the building — built around the time of the Vietnam War — are 200 square feet too small.

"Buildings should inspire students. The Brunswick High School that currently exists does not, in the least, inspire students," Berry said during the meeting. "In fact, it has the opposite effect. You're talking about a building where most of the classrooms have a single window."

Board of Education President Sue Johnson said that voters have elected the right people to county offices to ensure progress will be made on pressing matters like the high school.

Johnson, like Fitzwater, District 1 County Councilman Jerry Donald and County Council President Brad Young, are lifelong educators who plan to put the county's students

first, she said.

It's personal for Johnson, too. Her son attends Valley Elementary School in nearby Jefferson.

"I'm right there with them as a parent of a child in this community," Johnson said during the meeting.

Fitzwater has two children. One is in Frederick County Public Schools and the other will be soon.

Residents, including Brunswick Mayor Nathan Brown, also advocated for budget money to pay for a new senior center in the city, which is in a century-old, single-level house.

Not only do senior centers provide older people with a place to get information about the resources available to them or to socialize, but they can be a reason for older people to get out of the house, said Debra Horton, a member of the board of directors for Advocates for the Aging of Frederick County.

"As advocates, we cannot support any new senior center expansion or development until the Brunswick center is addressed and replaced with a building that addresses the needs of our seniors — one that this area's seniors can be proud of and will want to attend," Horton said during the meeting.

Fitzwater is expected to present her proposed budget to the

County Council in April.

The council is scheduled to vote whether to adopt her proposed budget by May 31.

The next town hall meeting about the county's budget is scheduled for Jan. 12 at 6 p.m. at the Urbana Volunteer Fire and Rescue banquet hall in Frederick. The meeting will be in council District 2, which covers the southeastern part of the county, including New Market, Linganore, Ijamsville and parts of Urbana and Mount Airy.

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