

Testimony to Board of Education on Superintendent's Recommended CIP -
11/11/04

I'm Wayne Goldstein, First Vice President of the Montgomery County Civic Federation. If the Board of Education and School Superintendent Weast are analogous to a neighborhood shop owner then, in the context of surplus school sites, the County Council and County Executive Duncan are comparable to the neighborhood crime organization that extracts "protection" money from local merchants. In this instance, it appears that the county legislators and executive are threatening to withhold school funding if the school system does not begin to give away its land for infill development.

Last March, I told you that the County Executive was trying to make you responsible for his failure to stop MPDU buyouts by trying to extract various school sites from you. This information seemed to cause you to back away from complying with that demand. Unfortunately, you have once again succumbed to this political pressure, so, once again, I will try to stiffen your resolve to oppose this protection racket, this political blackmail.

You are in need of a holding high school today because of the failure of your predecessors in the '70s and '80s to retain, maintain, and reclaim Peary High School. After the traumatic fights over which schools to close were ended, closed schools such as Peary ended up being sold off as derelict structures to be used by others. Thanks only to the dogged 20-year fight by the Wheaton Cluster community, Belt Middle School was eventually reclaimed at great cost.

In the '90s, the previous superintendent did not ask for much of what was needed so as not to "embarrass" certain County Council members. Dr. Weast showed both political acumen and courage in first asking for Belt and then for the huge sums needed to begin catch up after a decade of using portable classrooms as an unofficial substitute for bricks and mortar.

Now, you are being pressured to make the same kinds of bad decisions that your predecessors made 10, 20, and 30 years ago, and this will result in comparable difficulties for your successors 10, 20 and 30 years from now. There are many schools made up of multiple parcels, many given to you for school use, including the Edson Road site. Expedient county officials have cherry-picked Edson Road and Brickyard Road and other seemingly-surplus sites for the first round of extortion for affordable housing.

Given the County Executive's recent promise to build 1000 affordable housing units in the next 4 years, after this first round of supposedly just removing some fat from the body education is completed, future rounds will be demanded to remove what will then be muscle and even bone from which recovery will not be possible. After the shop keeper makes his first payment to protect his store from broken windows or arson, future payments will eventually cripple his ability to thrive and even survive.

I and many of my civic colleagues are at your service to defend you from any further blackmail or retribution from the syndicate operating out of downtown Rockville.

When you rebuff them, tell them that the 1000 affordable units can be largely satisfied by retrieving some of the 8000 MPDUs lost to the market when ridiculously short control periods were enacted by short-sighted public officials in the '70s and '80s. This repurchase can be financed with new money generated by a relatively modest affordable housing impact fee levied on the million dollar starter mansions being built in large quantities but in small groups that are not required to provide any MPDUs.

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**Testimony Before the Board of Education
November 10, 2004**

My name is Scott Langerman, and I am the father of two current Seven Locks students and one future one. Put another way, my wife and I are in this for the long haul, as we'll be Churchill Cluster parents until the year 2020. My only point tonight is a simple one – that a decision to close Seven Locks Elementary School and surplus the land on which it sits will reveal a fundamentally flawed understanding of the needs, realities and desires of the countless families and communities who must live with that decision.

Some of the proponents behind a quick resolution to this debate would have us believe that what's on the table is a straightforward choice between a brand new school and a renovated 40-year old facility. Reality, however, is much more complicated than that, and it's ramifications much further-reaching. At its core this is of course a question of what kind of building would best serve our children and their educations, and there's reasonable room for disagreement and debate on that subject. But to limit the debate to that question alone is to misunderstand the scope of its impact. While I stand before you as a Seven Locks parent and want nothing more than what's best for our children, factored into that determination must necessarily be questions of community, lifestyle, green space, feasibility, due process, expectations and empowerment.

When all of these issues and more are given the weight they deserve, it's impossible to justify the permanent closure of Seven Locks and the surplus of its land. One need only to look at the portable classrooms in the back of so many of our elementary schools to recognize that there's a problem out there. Nor does one need to be a math major to understand that current overcrowding + continued residential development + population growth = the need to hold on to every available piece of school property in our region.

It's been said that "with great power, comes great responsibility". I love that line, and I believe in that line. I also believe it applies here, in this room, to this issue. You, the Board of Education, possess great power. And, I would argue, have a responsibility not just to current Seven Locks families such as ours, but to generations of Seven Locks families yet to come. I ask, then, that you use this power wisely and prudently – don't close our school, and don't sell its land.

Thank you.

**MCCPTA Churchill Cluster Testimony on the MCPS
Superintendent's Recommended FY 2006 Capital Budget
and Amended FY 2005-1010 CIP
given before the
MCPS Board of Education on
November 10, 2004**

Good evening, I am Janis Sartucci, a Cluster Coordinator for the Churchill Cluster of PTAs. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am here on behalf of the Churchill Cluster, comprised of 8 buildings, 2 future school sites, 26 classroom trailers and currently educating 6,647 students. Since my testimony last year at this time our cluster has gained 48 students, 2 school sites and lost a classroom trailer.

My testimony this evening will concentrate on the basic needs of our school facilities.

The long line at the Bathrooms

We testified about the condition of bathrooms in our schools last year. We gave examples of the deterioration of these necessary rooms and you funded bathroom renovations, thank you! But, not at our two worst schools. Our middle schools were skipped because they may be modernized someday in the next decade. Our middle school bathrooms ranked the 17th and 28th worst in the county LAST YEAR. How will they hold up under another 10 years of use?

I cannot imagine having a bathroom in my home that does not have hot and cold running water, or has a leaky pipe and saying that I will call a plumber in 10 years. Some of these bathrooms have an overpowering stench of urine. Urine has found its way into cracks in the tiles and maintenance staff report it is impossible to remove the odor.

For these reasons, there are many middle school students who refuse to use the bathroom facilities at school. Many students hold their bladders until they return home at the end of the day.

Two years ago at Hoover Middle School one aging bathroom fixture gave out. A male student using a urinal used his foot to push the flush lever. (Students do not like to touch the flush levers because they are old and corroded.) The water pipe feeding into the urinal was corroded and the pressure from flushing caused the pipe to burst sending full force water across the bathroom. Two floors of the school were flooded before the geyser could be shut off.

I apologize for being so blunt in my testimony but I am at a loss as to how MCPS staff could inspect our middle school facilities and recommend that no renovations are needed until 2014 or later. These bathrooms are ALREADY past their prime. What will they be like 10 years from now? With the number of students that use these middle schools I estimate these facilities have some 2 million flushes ahead of them before they will be renovated. That doesn't include staff, teachers and community members who use the school facilities. Let us be clear, staff bathrooms are in no better shape than those used by students.

Last year, at the intermission to the Hoover school play I heard the following exclamation from a community member in the Ladies Room. She said, "This place is disgusting, I am calling Doug Duncan tomorrow about this." Putting off these renovations for 10 years makes the Board of Education look as if you do not have the best interests of children in mind when making budget decisions.

There are thousands of kids coming through those buildings between now and modernizations in the next decade and a sink that is broken will not spontaneously heal itself. *Please put Hoover and Cabin John Middle Schools on the bathroom renovation list.*

Get the Lead out

The lead levels in MCPS schools remains a serious health concern. It is time to find a solution to this dilemma that allows our children to drink clean water while at school.

Play Fair

School sites that receive modernizations also receive playground equipment. But playground equipment does not always last 30 to 50 years. Often, it must be replaced before a school is modernized. However, the current plan in MCPS is that if a school's playground equipment is removed it will not be replaced until a modernization. The current wait for a replacement playground is over 60 years. This creates a great inequity in school sites.

Cluster Resolutions

At our October 2004 Churchill Cluster PTA meeting the following two resolutions were passed unanimously with all PTAs represented:

1. The Churchill Cluster opposes the transfer of any real property by MCPS countywide until the use of all MCPS portable classrooms or equivalents have been eliminated and the entire affected community has formally determined school needs are being fully met.

2. Be it further resolved, that the formal determination process shall be publicized, open to the public, and include written input and oral testimony from the entire community including, but not limited to: civic associations, PTA and PTSAs, MCPS teachers and staff, homeowner's associations, business leaders and taxpayers.

In the last week, both the Seven Locks and Potomac Elementary PTAs have met and re-affirmed their opposition to declaring school land surplus at this time.

Policy FAA, it's still there

Once again, Board of Education Policy FAA is printed in the

Capital Improvements Plan book. It is still in existence and was even updated in 2003. The preferred range of enrollment numbers still exist and the preferred utilization rate of a school still exists. In the last two years the Board of Education has reviewed, revised, rescinded or created 43 policies. Policy FAA still stands and therefore remains a valid policy for planning purposes.

On May 6, 2004, MCPS told the County Council Education Committee that by the year 2020 the Churchill Cluster will be educating 2,600 elementary students. This number represents an increase in students but does not take into account the on-going development in our cluster and the anticipated development over the next ten years. The current plan is to build a school on the Kendale site. However, because capacity needs are different from the pure number of seats available in a school our elementary schools will still need classroom trailers in 2020. Our elementary schools may need as many as 14 classroom trailers in 2020 based on actual utilization of space.

To keep our elementary schools within BoE Policy FAA guidelines, our cluster needs another elementary school site. This has been my testimony for the last two years but this is the first time I have been able to advocate for an additional building on an existing site. In the past, I have referred to the three closed school sites that exist in our cluster as possible avenues for relief. It is no longer necessary to suggest that a private facility be removed from a former school site. Our cluster now has 6 elementary school sites.

When the new elementary school is completed at Kendale the additional space that our cluster elementary schools need will be ready and waiting at Seven Locks Elementary School. The retention of this site as an operational elementary school will allow all of our elementary schools to operate within Policy FAA guidelines, with recommended enrollment numbers and an efficient utilization rate.

***“They took all the trees
And put them in a tree museum
And they charged all the people
A dollar and a half just to see ‘em
Don’t it always seem to go***

***That you don't know what you've got
Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot."(1)***

This year marks the first time that I can stand before you and discuss the needs of our cluster and the possible uses of the dedicated school sites that exist in our cluster. At this time last year we knew that our elementary and middle schools were overcapacity but we did not know that two school sites existed in our community. Tonight, we would ask for a thorough evaluation of the potential uses of these sites based on the current and projected enrollment in our community.

We ask that the Board of Education approach this discussion from an offensive position, instead of from a defensive position. It is unfair and unjust that the County Council is asking for school sites. School sites have been entrusted to the Board of Education for the benefit of school children. I was present at the County Council Housing Committee when a Housing Committee Councilmember demanded that the Tilden parcel be declared surplus immediately. To demand the Board of Education to declare school sites surplus for housing purposes is to ask the Board to break the public trust.

Under the Maryland State Code, school sites can be declared surplus when no longer needed for school purposes. I can find no statutory authority that allows the County Council to demand that school land be turned over to the county for other purposes.

Further, there is no statutory authority for dividing up parcels of school properties that have been in existence for decades. The recommendation to declare a portion of the Tilden Middle School site surplus begs the question, what school purpose do trees, grass and dirt serve? The community dedicated this parcel to the school system 24 years ago. It was entrusted to the Board of Education for the benefit of present and future school children. (*Attachment B*)

The Tilden parcel is trees, grass and dirt located at the back of a baseball diamond. It is equivalent in width to the width of the main Tilden school building. It is much wider than would have ever been

required of a driveway onto this site.

To slice off a piece of a school field for housing is a breach of the public trust and will have a chilling effect on all future dedications of land to the public school system. It will also pave the way for the same type of demand from the County Council at our 84 other school sites that are made up of multiple parcels. **Like the Tilden parcel, 64 school of these 84 sites are also made up of parcels that were dedicated to the Board of Education over multiple years.**

PLAR and the need for “healthy” classrooms

Unhealthy conditions translate into classroom trailers that fill up with carbon monoxide each morning and afternoon due to their placement in a driveway; mold growth in and around classroom trailers and in buildings; frayed carpeting covering asbestos tiles; poor lightening or lack of blinds to prevent sun glare; switching classrooms outside without the benefit of a covered boardwalk, coats or umbrellas; classroom trailers without PA systems; 1950's bathroom sinks that are no longer usable and should be appraised on Antique Roadshow; bathroom stalls that are barely functioning; and HVAC systems that no longer function properly leaving rooms either too hot or too cold for teachers to be effective educators and for students to concentrate.

School facilities are an essential service that needs to be provided to the teachers and children in our communities - and the service should be as good as any other we provide for them. This is not an easy job. As a long-term infrastructure program, facilities must be planned, developed, managed and maintained in a professional manner. Decisions regarding facilities must not be subject to politics - and bad decisions cannot be made due to inexperience or neglect in critical links in an all too long chain.

Science classes without lab space

On Tuesday February 12, 2004, the Board of Education accepted the Churchill High School Modernization project. Unfortunately, as has

happened with other modernized schools, as soon as the new building is occupied and operating it is already overcapacity and unable to serve the students enrolled.

When Churchill High School was being constructed compromises were made that changed the size of some of the science labs. It may have been an easy fix on paper but in practice it has rendered these classrooms unusable as science labs. Science labs are to be designed to hold at least 28 students, however some labs at Churchill can only safely hold 21 to 26 students. Churchill is an overcrowded school and so the typical class size for a science lab is 33 students. Which students should be denied the opportunity to sign up for science labs in a school system that considers itself "world-class"?

Attached is a more detailed summary of the impact of the small science labs on the education and safety of the science program at Churchill High School. (*Attachment C*) Is it in the best interest of our students to put them in an overcrowded classroom to do dangerous experiments?

The Multiplication of Additions

We, along with other clusters, are perplexed by the decision-making behind the construction schedule for additions. The CIP does not state a policy for these decisions or a ranking of the additions. Whereas, schools were assigned FACT scores for modernizations a number of years ago; additions seem to pop up in the CIP without a ranking. Every time a new addition is added to the CIP, modernizations slip further away. In this CIP there are at least 6 additions being put on schools that were built in the last 8 years. How does a new school rate an addition when some of our 40 to 50 year old schools will wait another 7 to 15 years for their first construction project since the 1960's?

We can't plan for what we don't know

We have 42% more classroom trailers than at this time two years ago. Where did these classroom trailers come from? Some of them

came from behind closed-door decisions made by MCPS administrators. These decisions were not in CIP books and there was no community involvement in the decision making process. What surprises are in store for our schools this year? It was my hope that there were no surprises lurking and that MCPS would respect their own policy that says that schools should ***“operate in an efficient utilization range of 80 to 100 percent of program capacity.”*** (Board of Education Policy FAA C.4.b.)

Planning is impossible when Policy FAA is ignored and programs and students are intentionally added to schools that are already overcapacity. Ignoring this policy means that we are forever playing catch-up in our cluster and coming to the Board of Education begging for relief.

Alternatives to Overcrowding

For years our testimony has centered on the information supplied to us by MCPS in the Capital Improvements Program book. We can only testify based on what we know. To our great surprise we have recently learned that 2 vacant parcels of dedicated school property exist in our cluster. We were never able to advocate for the use of these properties in the past because we didn't know they existed. It is troubling that when firms are hired by MCPS to prepare feasibility studies for modernizations and additions that these studies do not take into account all possible alternative solutions.

None of this information has been included in the feasibility studies on our schools. *What else don't we know?* How can we present informed testimony with only partial information? Could these properties be put to good use in our cluster? We have only begun to explore the possibilities.

A diamond in the rough

MCPS has begun an arts initiative in a number of elementary schools. At the same time, a diamond in the rough is being left to rot. It is time to restore the 1,000 seat Old Blair Auditorium and allow the performing arts to be explored and flourish in all parts of the county.

Conclusion

Thank you for your attention this evening and for keeping the best interest of our students at the forefront of your decision making process.

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1. Big Yellow Taxi, Published 1969 Siquomb Publishing Co. BMI

STATEMENT BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

November 10, 2004

SUBJECT: RELOCATION/CLOSING OF SEVEN LOCKS ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL AND BUILDING A REPLACEMENT SCHOOL ON KENDALE
ROAD

David Tiktinsky, Concerned citizen of Seven Locks neighborhood.

My name is David Tiktinsky and I am a resident of the Seven Locks community and the father of a 1st grader at Seven Locks Elementary school.

The Board of Education's current plan to close Seven Locks elementary school and consideration of "leveraging" the property (i.e. surplus), as stated and agreed to by the BOE in March 2004, and the construction of a replacement school on Kendale Road could be called the "4 L Plan" for all the losses it creates.

The first loss is to the Seven Locks community - Building a replacement school at Kendale Road will likely result in the Seven Locks site being surplused and replaced with a high-density, affordable housing development. The Potomac Master plan would be sacrificed by building this high density housing. The traffic impact from the additional housing units will add to gridlock in our neighborhood. The loss of open space and fields (the county already has a shortage of playing fields) in an area in which there are few places for our kids to play. Additionally, the Seven Locks community is overwhelmingly against the plan.

The second loss is to the Kendale Road community. A new school will change the nature of a serene neighborhood. The site is on a very narrow, windy road which can not accommodate school buses in its present condition. The school site is also on a flood plain.

The third loss is to the kids that will be going to the replacement school on Kendale Road. The school will be at capacity when it opens and does

not include any plans for the impact of new housing at the abandoned Seven Locks site. Our students will likely have to deal with trailers in the foreseeable future.

The fourth loss is to Potomac Elementary school. Although their student population will decrease temporarily due to moving some of their students, the current plan does not provide one dime for needed renovations or improvements to a school badly in need of updating.

Let's support fixing this 4L mess with a "4 W (win) Solution" with the following action plan:

- A. Build a one step addition/renovation to Seven Locks Elementary School and do not build a replacement school at the Kendale Road site.
- B. Reallocate the funds from the proposed school at the Kendale Road site for construction at Seven Locks Elementary of 10-room addition, gymnasium, road improvements, enlarged cafeteria, and additional restroom facilities without a "modernization" of the existing building. Further, remaining funds should be allocated to Potomac Elementary school to support their urgent needs such as a three room addition and general renovation of that facility (e.g., painting).
- C. Do not surplus the Kendale site. Hold the site in reserve in the event it is needed as a school site in the future.

I fully support the positions of the West Bradley Citizens Association and the Save Seven Locks coalition representing over 5000 families.

**STATEMENT BEFORE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
Budget Hearings
November 10, 2004
Statement for the Record
(Accompanied by Short Summary for Oral Presentation)**

**Ambassador Sandy Vogelgesang
West Bradley Citizens' Association (WBCA)
Board Member
9009 Charred Oak Drive
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301-365-2347**

**Subject: Seven Locks Elementary School - Replacement School on Kendale Road -
Funding in the Superintendent's Recommended FY 2006 Capital Budget and
Amended FY 2005-2010 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)**

My name is Ambassador Sandy Vogelgesang. I am speaking in behalf of the West Bradley Citizens' Association. We, together with other civic organizations, represent a coalition of over 5000 families who want to save Seven Locks Elementary School and keep school land for school children. My statement for the record addresses two points:

1. Our **longstanding opposition** to the County Board's decision in early 2004 to close Seven Locks Elementary School and propose surplusizing that site for affordable or workforce housing and to build a replacement school with 740-student capacity on Kendale Road.
2. Our **alternate proposal** for the funds allocated for the Seven Locks replacement school in the Superintendent's recommended FY 2006 Capital Budget and Amended FY 2005-2010 CIP.

On the first point of opposition to the Board decision, the community has been clear since the Superintendent announced the change in plans for Seven Locks in late February 2004: we are against that change! Although the Superintendent and County Board say that they are acting in response to a request from the community, they have not been able to identify any individual authorized to speak for the community who supports that position. The fact is that the community has early on and consistently expressed its opposition in testimony at County Board and County Council hearings, community meetings, petitions, letters to the press, and meetings with County Board and County Council members, as well as other County and State officials, and by other means. We filed a legal appeal with the State Board of Education over the substance and process of the decision. When rejected, we followed up with a motion for reconsideration of the

appeal (also rejected) and discussion of this matter with the Maryland Interagency Committee on Public School Construction.

We have requested, so far in vain, a voice for our community in a decision that will change, fundamentally, the character of our neighborhood. The Board's plan will mean that we lose a facility that is not only an outstanding school. It is also our community center. Its green space constitutes the only recreation area within walking distance for most of our children. Instead, we will get increased development on the Seven Locks site – with the potential for a high-density affordable housing complex that will add to already growing traffic gridlock.

We have asked for basic information so that, as taxpayers, we can understand the rationale for this change in plans – again, so far in vain. For example, we have asked for data on student demographics and full construction costs. We wonder how it makes sense to surplus any school property in our area, given the likelihood of increasing student enrollment due to new development and generational turnover in the community. We want transparent data on the full cost of the proposed school on Kendale (not just the construction cost but the cost of widening and straightening narrow Kendale Road and the cost of environmental remediation for building near a flood area). Were the School Board and County Council provided these full costs when they were told that the Kendale replacement school would be \$2-3 million cheaper than expanding and modernizing Seven Locks? Do the projected costs take into account the money already spent to update Seven Locks, with such expenditures as installing a new roof and other improvements or completing architectural plans and feasibility studies with the community?

Why can't we as taxpayers get answers to those questions? We continue to believe that, until there are public hearings to address these kinds of questions, no more money should be allocated for the so-called Seven Locks replacement school. In any event, as reflected in a vote of the Seven Locks PTA this month, we firmly and overwhelmingly oppose surplusing of school property, including Seven Locks.

Having underscored why we oppose the County Board's reversal of plans for Seven Locks this year, let me outline one solution that would redound to the benefit of all concerned. (There might well be variants that could be explored.) We propose that you reallocate the amount earmarked for Kendale in this year's budget document as follows:

- Use part of that amount to build the planned 10-classroom addition, gymnasium, and bathrooms for the existing Seven Locks E.S. That long-planned expansion would bring Seven Locks up to the prescribed 500-550 student capacity recommended by the Board for elementary schools and address the needs of overcrowded Potomac Elementary School. In the interest of saving time and money, we might forego, for now, the planned modernization of the existing Seven Locks facility and thus not need to move children to a holding school during construction of the addition.

- Use the rest of the earmarked money for adding 3-4 classrooms and an expanded cafeteria for Potomac Elementary, thus assuring a 500-550 student school for that community. There, too, we would suggest, for now, holding on modernization of the existing facility.
- Retain the Kendale site for possible future school construction.

According to information available to the community, the money allocated for construction of the Kendale facility should more than cover building additions to Seven Locks and Potomac Elementary Schools. There might well be funds remaining to modernize the existing facilities at both schools – particularly if the County were to allocate the full amount of money that we believe will be needed to build the Kendale school, widen and straighten Kendale Road, and address site and environmental challenges.

This proposal has the following advantages:

- It uses the funding already allocated by the County Board for our community and does not take funding from other County projects.
- It could facilitate faster relief for overcrowding at Potomac since architectural plans and feasibility studies have long since been done for the Seven Locks expansion.
- It appears to be cheaper and less complicated with no need to move students during construction of the additions.
- It has the strong support of the most affected nearby community because it preserves school property for schools (not developers), saves taxpayer money, and provides the best education for our children.

In sum, we ask that you meet with community representatives to discuss this proposal or amend the CIP by reallocating the funds from the Kendale site and proceeding with highest-priority additions for Seven Locks and Potomac Elementary Schools. This could be a win-win for both the County Board and Council – and our community!

(Seven Locks – Statement for Record)

Good Evening. My name is Jay Weinstein and I am a parent of two children at Seven Locks Elementary School. I am here to strongly object to the plan to close the current school, surplus the land to the County, and build a 740 seat school at the Kendale site.

First, we must all acknowledge that the decisions to build the new school and surplus the land are one and the same, flip sides of the same coin if you will.

The notion that closing a perfectly good school and giving the site away is GOOD for the school system strikes me as a bit Orwellian. As Janis Sartucci has testified, it is clear that we will need ALL the school sites we have for future use. You might ask yourselves, how did we get in this predicament? Well, we all know of many school sites that were closed, sold, and leased to others over the last 20 years. Did any of the demographic forecasts of the 80's and 90's foresee the explosive growth in the County? Of course not. It's not the demographer's fault-- no one can see that far into the future about anything. If he can, then set him loose on where the stock market and interest rates will be in ten years so we can all make some money.

Building high density housing on the current site is in violation of so many sections of the Montgomery County Potomac Subregion Master plan that I had a hard time choosing one to quote. I chose the Special Exception Policy section, which reads as follows: "Increase the scrutiny in reviewing special exception applications for highly visible sites, such as properties and parcels located at corners of residential streets with major arterial highways..." A perfect description of the intersection of Bradley Boulevard and Seven Locks Road where Seven Locks Elementary sits.

Here's the rub-- this plan has no chance of actually coming to pass. Why? Because, it is inherently counterproductive, in direct violation of the County master plan, and aggravates an already overloaded traffic problem. And what are the chances of it getting funded anyway, when there are over \$600 million in requests for spending versus \$100 million in the state budget? Do you really think this will get approved over other equally worthy projects when the affected community is battling this hard against it?

So instead of wasting time, financial capital, and political capital fighting with your constituents, the Board needs to work WITH the community to find a solution that we can back together. There is no need to create our little version of "Crossfire." For instance, I suggest a forming a small committee of civic association members and a representative of the Seven Locks PTA to meet with Board staff to find some common ground. There are plenty of compromise plans that can work. But giving away valuable and irreplaceable property will never be part of that solution.

Resolved:

The Parent-Teacher Association of Seven Locks Elementary School issues the following resolution:

1) We absolutely oppose any school building plan that includes the closure of the current site of Seven Locks Elementary School and/or surplus of the property to Montgomery County. The County Council and School Board should re-examine this short-sighted decision to give away scarce and expensive physical resources that are needed for the education of the children of Montgomery County.

2) The process by which the surplus decision was executed was unfair and did not include sufficient input by our organization. The entire decision should be revisited so that all affected parties can have the opportunity to present evidence and testimony in an open public hearing.

3) We reprimand the Montgomery School Board and County Council for publicly misrepresenting the position of this PTA. At no time has there ever been support for the closing and surplus of the current Seven Locks site.

We invite other Parent Teacher Associations of other schools in Montgomery County to join this resolution.

Geoffrey Wolfe

9009 Charred Oak Drive, West Bethesda, Md.

I have lived in Montgomery County since 1941 and owned homes here since 1972. I attended schools in Takoma Park and Silver Spring, and in College Park, Maryland.

During my adult life, I lived in the U.S., Canada, and Asia. Among the long list of places I have lived and others I have visited, **I prefer to live and raise my children in Montgomery County and particularly in the neighborhood of the Seven Locks Elementary School.** There are many reasons: convenience, familiarity, safety, natural amenities and parks, cultural resources, and the tangible and intangible benefits of neighborhood and an extraordinarily rich wider community. In particular, and in addition to the formal benefits, the school has provided a place to use playground equipment, to shoot toy rockets, to fly kites, to run a quarter-mile, to throw Frisbees and other such activities essential to childhood and parenting.

The Seven Locks Elementary School, convenient to our home, has provided all of the benefits that schools can provide for my children, who continue their education now at the Winston Churchill High School. They were welcomed into the Montgomery County education system having begun their formal education abroad. (Our gratitude to Mrs. Robin Gordon, the current principal of the school and others who worked and taught there is unbounded, beyond our ability to express or compensate.)

Beyond the services provided by the school system, the Seven Locks Elementary School serves as a community meeting place for all local issues. It provides the polling place for our precinct; it provides a place for Cub Scouts to run and play and a home for the pee-wee soccer league. The school has provided a meeting place for neighbors concerned with environmental issues affecting Cabin John Creek and the local watershed. There is no similar tract available to the community elsewhere.

My points in regard to the budget regarding Seven Locks Elementary School are not complicated:

- The school grounds provide advantages to our community in terms of size, convenient location, and favorable terrain that other sites cannot.
- The school is of appropriate size for our community. Experts have argued that a small school provides a better education than one much larger.
- Investment of large sums of tax resources in a more distant, less desirable facility, dealing with important disadvantages of terrain such as flooding, steep grades and community opposition—is unwise.
- Over the longer run, to invest in the destruction of a unique community resource and devotion of the land and buildings to purposes unrelated to our community, however worthy in terms of other objectives, cannot be considered progress.

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