

## **Eight options for Seven Locks**

### **County Council does not support building on Kendale Road site**

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by Sean R. Sedam  
Staff Writer

The County Council wants to vote on where to build a new Seven Locks Elementary by the end of May but will not support building it on Kendale Road in Potomac.

Tuesday's vote was unanimous.

The waters could be muddied, however, if the county school board decides it wants to stick to its original plan of a new building on Kendale Road. In May 2004, the council approved \$14.4 million to do that.

Councilman Michael L. Subin said Tuesday that he wants to work with attorneys for the council and the board to determine if the council has the authority to take that money back.

"We've always operated under the assumption that once it's appropriated to the school system, it's gone," Subin (D-At large) of Gaithersburg said last week. "I believe, theoretically, they could take the \$14 million, stay at Kendale and do a smaller project.

"From an institutional standpoint," he said, "that's a difficult thing to do. You never know how individual members of the council as a whole would react to that."

If the school system recommends building at the Kendale site, "it will be done with the knowledge that the votes [on the council] are not there to do it and you get a \$14.4 million solution rather than a \$17.7 million solution and you get the wrath of the community," Subin said.

Awarding the \$14.4 million construction contract to build on Kendale Road is contingent on the council approving \$3.3 million more for material cost increases on the project.

That approval is on hold as a task force of council staff and school planners considers eight options for the project. The task force is expected to make its recommendation to the school board next month.

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| <b>Options for Seven Locks Build on the Kendale Road site.</b>  | The board will hold a public hearing and recommend one of the options to the council, which will approve one in time for final approval of the county's fiscal 2007-2012 construction budget at the end of May. |
| <b>Demolish existing building and rebuild at school's current site by December 2008.</b>                    | The goal of the task force is to find common ground between the board and the council, County Council President George L. Leventhal said.   |
| <b>Demolish and rebuild at current site by August 2009, moving students to holding school for one year.</b> | "It will be an unhappy circumstance if we go back to a place where the two bodies are arguing whose prerogative is what," said Leventhal (D-At large) of Takoma Park.   |
| <b>Demolish and rebuild at current site by December 2012; no holding school.</b>                            |   |
| <b>Build addition at Potomac Elementary to reduce crowding and modernize existing</b>                       | The council's support for building on Kendale Road  |

**Seven Locks building. Build addition and modernize existing building.** dissolved after 60 speakers at two public hearings this month said they did not favor building there, Subin said.

**Make enrollment capacity 540 students at five schools, including Seven Locks.** The council also decided Tuesday that an option to balance enrollment at other schools near Seven Locks, if approved, should be limited to schools in the Churchill cluster.

**Make enrollment capacity 640 students at four school and close Seven Locks.** The council cannot tell the school board what it can or cannot consider, Councilman Howard A. Denis said.

**Source: County Council** But the council's vote sends the message to the board that building on the Kendale site is a "nonstarter," he said.

**Council sets hearing At 7:30 p.m. on May 2 in the County Council Office Building at 100 Maryland Ave. in Rockville. Call 240-777-7900.** Last month, Denis (R-Dist. 1) of Chevy Chase introduced a budget amendment that would rebuild the school on its current site on Seven Locks Road.

If the board, after considering all options, still recommends building on Kendale Road, "my [budget] amendment is still on the table," Denis said Tuesday.

The council and the school board decided to form the task force to look at all options for the project following a Feb. 15 report from the county's Inspector General. That report said school planners did not consider less costly options than building on Kendale Road. School officials have said planning decisions are not simply a matter of cost.

On Thursday, school board President Charles Haughey (At large) of Rockville said he had no idea where the board now stands on the Kendale Road option. Board leaders, during discussions of the inspector general's report, stood firmly by the decision to build on Kendale.

Monday night's school board meeting showed signs of lingering tension between the board and the council.

Board member Stephen N. Abrams blasted Denis, saying Denis called for the council to consider all options, then used Thursday's Education Committee meeting to take the Kendale Road option off the table.

"I have no idea what he had for breakfast to make him do an 180-degree turn ...," said Abrams (Dist. 2) of Rockville. "I am more convinced than ever that the inspector general, rather than being an independent body, was set up to make his study and that he was duped by the very people who set him up."