

## Montgomery County Council Public Hearing – March 7, 2006

**Subject: County School Board Request: Special Appropriation for the Seven Locks Elementary “Replacement” School on Kendale Road (\$3.3 million)**

**Statement for the Record: Speaking AGAINST the School Board Request for Special Appropriation for Seven Locks “Replacement” School and FOR the Denis’ CIP amendment to build a new school on the current Seven Locks site**

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President Leventhal and Members of the County Council – Good evening.

My name is Amy Gleklen. I appreciate the opportunity to testify tonight **against** the School Board’s request for a \$3.3 million special appropriation for the Kendale School. I also support Council Member Denis’ proposed CIP amendment to build a new school on the current Seven Locks School site. The Seven Locks PTA and the community surrounding the school strongly support Mr. Denis’ proposal.

While money has been spent and mistakes have been made throughout the process since 2000 in working on the Seven Locks project, it is not too late to stop and to set things right. That means working with the current Seven Locks site.

You have already heard from others about the issues with the Kendale site and the issues with the School Board’s decision-making process described in

the OIG report. I would thus like to focus on one of the reasons that has been offered for not using the Seven Locks site – the claim that the current Seven Locks site is not safe. That is just not true. Further, there are safety issues at the proposed Kendale site, Rodney Tanner will be addressing those issues in his testimony.

I wear, and have worn, many hats in my community. Three years ago I moved to the Seven Locks community from a Potomac Elementary neighborhood and became active in my new community. I am a member of the Ashleigh Community Association; I am the Seven Locks PTA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; and I founded the Seven Locks Civic Association in an attempt to bring the community together and to ask for sidewalks all along Seven Locks Road.

I have been interested in pedestrian and traffic safety issues since I moved to my new home near Seven Locks Road, so I understand the concerns that some have expressed. But, you should know that we have been working on improving the situation. I am happy to report that there are straightforward ways to improve the safety of the Seven Locks site, and that these have already been identified and are already in progress.

1. Thanks to you on the County Council and the Department of Public Works and Transportation, the sidewalks sought by the Seven Locks Civic Association are in the planning process. I congratulate you for making that happen. Part of the \$900,000 for sidewalk planning will be spent on intersection and road improvements.

- 2 On March 2, 2004, MCPS presented their findings addressing the traffic impact of the addition and modernization previously proposed for Seven Locks. MCPS concluded that traffic would be **better** than current conditions if a Bradley Boulevard entrance were built – even with a significant expansion of school capacity. We are pleased that the MCPS architect's drawings for an expanded Seven Locks School thus include access and egress onto both Bradley Boulevard and Seven Locks Road.
- 3 Adding an entrance on Bradley Boulevard, plus the County's efforts to improve the Seven Locks community by building sidewalks, should be a complete answer to any safety concerns regarding Seven Locks elementary. I live less than a tenth of a mile from Seven Locks Elementary School. With these projects my dream of my daughters being able to walk to school could become a reality.
- 4 In addition, I recently asked the County's Transportation Systems Engineering Department to look at traffic patterns on Seven Locks Road between Democracy and Bradley during rush hour. Those of us living on Seven Locks have trouble crossing both lanes of traffic. Simple no-turns on red at the two major intersections during rush hour and/or school hours can improve traffic flow and make the street safer. If the county decides to pursue this easy solution, intersection safety will be vastly improved.
5. Finally, I cannot help but wonder about the MCPS's post-hoc safety justification. If Seven Locks were unsafe, why hasn't MCPS asked that a traffic warning light be installed to warn motorists that they are

approaching a school? Adding such warning would be a low-cost way to improve safety.

I am a mother and a community activist, not a safety expert. But it seems clear to me that there are straightforward and cost-effective ways to easily improve safety at the corner of Seven Locks and Bradley Boulevard. With these changes, Seven Lock Elementary will be safe and remain the centerpiece of our community.

Thanks for listening.