

I am Cynthia McMullen. My husband Neil and I built our home at 9600 Kendale Road in 1981. I'm grateful to the Council for making this time available. A copy of our Kendale Neighborhood Coalition position statement has been sent to your offices and is attached here. It summarizes our neighborhood's preference for a much smaller school on the site rather than this regional mega-school.

The Inspector General's recent report highlights what I and many neighbors have experienced throughout this process. We go to hearings, write letters, listen to testimony, but it is extraordinarily difficult for an ordinary citizen, civic association or public agency to be involved—in sufficient time—before neighborhood-transforming decisions are made and then launched by MCPS. We've been told that agencies can only comment and recommend; they cannot stop an MCPS decision, regardless of thoughtful objections. Three of the commissioners of the Park and Planning Commission, meeting last December 22nd, expressed "serious reservations" to Dr. Weast in their summary letter of January 9, 2006 about the wisdom of putting so much concrete and asphalt on the Kendale site. Yet they can only express their views. In the public hew and cry following the decision to replace Seven Locks with a 68,000 square foot school on Kendale, we have repeatedly been told what Mrs. Cox said calmly here as recently as March 2nd: "we are satisfied that our traditional processes and procedures have been followed" and "we are only thinking of what's best for the children." Discussion closed.

Now, in view of the serious procedural questions raised by the Inspector General's report, and Councilmember Denis's timely amendment to halt further funds for Kendale and to return the school to its historic home on Seven Locks, I offer 3 points for your consideration:

Location. Kendale Road is listed in the County Master Plan as a primary road, although it is only 18 feet wide at its widest point. Fender-benders occur there because of poor grading, poor visibility, speed, and drivers who don't gauge the width of the road well—myself included. Our neighborhood knows that, if the huge school is built, cars and buses trying to use the road will have serious problems. There will be significant public pressure to widen the road to accommodate the volume of traffic. Any widening will cost untold amounts of taxpayer dollars which will be charged to another agency's budget, as MCPS well knows. That is a serious potential hidden cost to taxpayers, and it's unfair. Seven Locks, however, is located at the intersection of two wide streets with full shoulders, left turn lanes, and a traffic light. Traffic can be heavy at Seven Locks and Bradley, but both roads are already configured to keep traffic flowing. The advantage is to SLES. Furthermore, I've never heard anyone ever refer to a road near any school as "safe."

Storm Water Management has been a major concern in our neighborhood since we learned of the unprecedented size of the proposed school. Given the sloping, flood-prone nature of Kendale Road, we expressed alarm about the adequacy of storm water management on the site once the 10 acres of mature trees are removed and acres of concrete, asphalt and deep footings are in place. Kendale descends to and ascends from a

narrow bridge across Ken Branch--a meandering stream now lined by huge trees that have been uprooted in serious flash flooding over the last couple of years.

That was after the county spent more than half a million dollars installing culverts at the stream to handle the flow of water in sudden downpours. I believe the original storm water management plans for the school have been redrawn at least twice, possibly more. Regulations for storm water management on school sites are apparently more lenient than for other construction sites. An example: On the Kendale property, current plans show that storm water will exit a two-inch above-ground pipe at the southwest corner and flow across the road toward the front lawn of our neighbors to the south. These neighbors asked what could be done if the runoff poses a problem. MCPS consulting engineers did a survey and asked them to grant an easement for a culvert to divert the water to the stream—not unreasonable except that the easement bisected their property through its center, less than 10 feet from their home, and would require them to lose mature evergreens more than 35 feet high. My neighbors declined to grant the easement for fear that no one would ever buy a home on a piece of property visibly split in two. They were cooperating, but were given only one choice.

Seven Locks Elementary School has for more than 40 years been an outstanding school, a vital community center and a green oasis for family recreation in the heart of a densely-settled area of the county. The neighborhoods surrounding Seven Locks want the school, even this enormous school, on that site. It is the unflagging efforts of their civic associations which have persevered, despite rejection and often outright scorn, to keep this issue before the public. And it is their efforts that give hope and encouragement to other groups seeking to broaden the traditional decision-making system in the county to better reflect the depth of field in taxpayer professionalism and expertise. Whether in Clarksburg or elsewhere, the people who foot all the bills and yet who must live with expensive mistakes—taxpayers-- now and hereafter must be accepted as legitimate stakeholders in serious consultation before further decisions of such magnitude are made.

Finally, given the wholesale surplusage of irreplaceable school acreage over the last 20 years, I join with every person, neighborhood and school district that opposes any further surplusage of school property. School property for school children. Isn't that "doing what's best for children"? Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

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