

Montgomery County Council Public Hearing

March 7, 2006

**Subject: Seven Locks Elementary School
Budget Requests and Inspector General's Report**

Statement for the Record:

- **Against School Board Request for Special Appropriation for Seven Locks “Replacement” School on Kendale Road**
- **For CIP amendment proposed by Council Member Denis to build new school on current Seven Locks site**
- **For strong County Council follow-up on the findings and recommendations in the Inspector General's “Seven Locks School Projects” Report**

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Seven Locks Parent, PTA Member,
Seven Locks Elementary and
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Good Evening, Mr. President and Councilmembers. I am Geoffrey Wolfe, member of the Seven Locks and Churchill PTAs. My role is to help introduce the presentations from the Seven Locks area and highlight major themes. You will hear tonight and on March 21 from a representative group of speakers, including students and civic leaders. They will cover issues from cost to the environment.

First, I will ask the Seven Locks Elementary School community and their friends to stand now -- because some with young children must leave early -- and ask them to remain standing for a moment. We want to thank you and your staffs for the time you have given us over the past two years and the two evenings that you are spending on Seven Locks this month. For all of you, a warm round of applause!

Second, our testimony will focus on both the specific question of what to do about Seven Locks Elementary School and the more general significance of Seven Locks for Montgomery County. The fate of Seven Locks School is important to our community. But, we agree with many of you that the Seven Locks issue is most important because it reflects larger questions that merit attention. Those include:

- **Transparency of decision-making by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).** We taxpayers value transparency because the school budget accounts for about half of County spending.
- **Accountability and due process.** These matter because an MCPS decision can, and does, change an entire community. In our case, MCPS announced in Spring 2004, with no prior notice, that it planned to stop work underway for four years to expand and modernize Seven Locks Elementary. Instead, it planned to close Seven Locks,

build a so-called “replacement” school on Kendale Road, and sell the Seven Locks site in order to fund building the new school. Although Board Vice President Cox has dismissed that change as “not dramatic,” you can imagine what our community thinks!

We look forward to a constructive dialogue and hope that you support our position:

- **Reject the special appropriation for the Kendale project.** (It is what one Planning Board Commissioner calls the “mistake that has taken on a life of its own.”)

- **Approve the budget amendment to build a new school on the current Seven Locks site.** (This was the preferred option of the MCPS architect and Seven Locks PTA in 2001 when the Council first directed MCPS to expand Seven Locks Elementary. If that option or the addition for Seven Locks had gone forward when proposed, children at Potomac Elementary would be ready to enter a new school this fall!)

- **Act on the Inspector General’s findings. You can thus ensure that our schools do their best to serve the children of Montgomery County.**

Thank you!