

Testimony to County Council on Seven Locks ES Supplemental Appropriation - 3/21/06

I'm Wayne Goldstein. I've been very involved with Seven Locks ES for more than 2 years, as well as the prior search for county-owned land for affordable housing that brought us here tonight. The school system's scheme to build on Kendale Road is fatally flawed for all of the reasons you've heard. I'll add another reason in the form of a demand that Superintendent Weast tell us why three of his top people wrote affidavits pointing a finger of responsibility for Kendale Road at a lone parent volunteer. This message of intimidation is unacceptable behavior by all involved that Dr. Weast must answer for.

I am quite disturbed to see that school officials appear intent on undermining the goals of the task force. There is no reason why the County Council should not decide now to fund a new Seven Locks ES on the current site while the task force looks at additional ways to meet the long overdue infrastructure needs of the four other elementary schools in this cluster. Any delays or other contrary actions will look like a continuation of the school system's scheme to thwart the reasonable expectations of the PTAs and residents of these communities and will send a negative message to school communities across the county.

If the Kendale Road site is environmentally unsuitable for any size of school or for affordable housing, it is perfect as the type of forest bank that preserves trees that would otherwise be cut down. We must increase our environmental infrastructure as well as our educational and affordable housing infrastructure.

Since a majority of the School Board objects to the alleged usurpation of part of its state sovereignty by an independent IG, the Board can resolve this dilemma by voluntarily signing away that one part. Montgomery College voluntarily signed away its sovereignty relating to local historic preservation and building codes in Takoma Park in 2002, thanks to the presence of a certain lawsuit and the persuasive powers of that small municipality. The County Council could choose to be equally persuasive.

If there is any lingering perception that Potomac is not contributing its fair share for affordable housing, the Council may want to consider the plans for the Crown Farm. The land borders the Potomac Sub Region, and is as much a part of Potomac as it is a part of any other adjacent area. Interestingly, a certain public official recently brought together the builder of the Crown Farm and an affordable housing group to talk about not providing any of the 280 required MPDUS due to the apparent financial burden. Shouldn't we make every reasonable effort to ensure that Potomac has its fair share of MPDUs? Working together to build almost 300 of them on the Crown Farm with its complete infrastructure surely makes more sense than struggling to give up irreplaceable school sites in exchange for tiny handfuls of MPDUs in isolated areas.

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