

Testimony – May 5, 2005
Preliminary Forest Conservation & Mandatory Referral
Kendale Replacement School and Seven Locks Elementary
From
Riverhill Homeowners' Association

Riverhill Homeowners Association consists of 111 households built as an empty nester/adult community in the late '80's, *located at River and Seven Locks*. Like the majority of the County, we do not have kids in the public school, except a handful of new entrants. Therefore, our perspective is that of local area residents and taxpayers versus parents or communities adjacent to either school.

Reviewing the documents, the Kendale site clearly was never intended for a school to house potentially 740 kids. Pervasive flooding with routine and lengthy road closures, narrow road, and lack of sidewalks and lighting raise questions of suitability. Also, such extensive deforestation in an area of such close proximity to I-495 will negatively impact air quality and residents' health, particularly given the unusually high number of elderly in the surrounding area.

Remember that this entire subject began as an effort for Bethesda to provide relief to an overcrowded school in Potomac. What happened to the River Falls Elementary School and the Great Falls Elementary School, both slated to support development in the Potomac area? Then, there is the Lake Normandy Elementary School which was surplus to the county to provide community space for Potomac. Georgetown Hill and Tuckerman Elementary Schools are now used as Private schools.

The public sees the role of MCPS as real estate developer as inappropriate and in conflict with their purpose as educators. It undermines the master plan and zoning processes which are the purview of County Council and MNCPPC. The BOE Minutes of 2/23/04 on page 34 specifically discusses Kendale and Mr. Hawes states that:

“the school system would find a developer that would make land use decisions for the Seven Locks property to establish a commercial value. Through the bid system, a developer would agree to build a new school on Kendale in exchange for the Seven Locks site. The same could be done for Brickyard Road and Edson Lane, and the commercial value of the land would be given to the school system in terms of either cash for capital improvements or school improvements. The highest value would be realized if the developer built out the property and did school improvements for the value of the land. Mr. Lavorgna explained that the sequence of events would have to be a bid through the county government followed by a Memorandum of Understanding that the Board would surplus the properties contingent on a satisfactory joint partnership agreement.”

Riverhill opposes surplusing the existing Seven Locks Elementary School for high density housing in ANY price range. It violates the Master Plan, eliminates much needed West Bethesda community space and would create impossible traffic. Massive development already slated for Fortune Parc, the quarries at Stoneyhurst and Giancola,

Montgomery Mall expansion, the complex across from WJ High School, a new development across from Cabin John Shopping, the new development across from the Heights School, as well as multiple Potomac developments plus infill, promises to overtax the roads.

On a more technical level, the Joint Traffic Plan appears to have some problems. Page 6 of the Staff Report lists school staff hours (8:15 to 3:45 and after school activities ending at 4:15 with rental activities concluding by 9:30 PM). However, the traffic plan, recommends no entry from Bradley Blvd for blocks of time inconsistent with school needs.

I'm going to deviate a little from my written testimony. Listening today, I hear that the only entrance is via Kentsdale – a road with speed bumps and requiring a circuitous route for anyone south of the proposed school.

The traffic plan also recommends “No Stopping or Standing Signs” and parking restriction signage. Rest assured that respect for traffic regulations has changed in Montgomery County. People will violate traffic and parking signage. Riverhill is clearly marked with a “Private Property, No Trespassing” sign and several “No Parking or Standing At Any Time” signs. Non-residents routinely violate the signage and park their cars right under the sign. Rest assured that enforcement will require assistance from the Police.

While Montgomery County likes to tout community and quality of life, the reality is that more and more residents are beginning to recognize that line as simply propaganda. MNCPPC has an opportunity today to walk the talk and support the concept of community by at least maintaining Seven Locks Elementary as a community space.

Thank you for the opportunity testify today and for all the hard work put into this by Staff.

Riverhill Board of Directors
Speaker: Linda Guest

