

Statement by Neil McMullen
9600 Kendale Road, Potomac, MD 20854
Montgomery County Council Hearing
Regarding Seven Locks School
March 21, 2006

I. To be accurate, meaningful, and useful for decision makers cost comparisons must evaluate two very similar, if not identical, outcomes. This is not the case in comparing the Seven Locks and the Kendale school sites.

- For approximately the same total budget allocation the school on Kendale will be inferior in several important respects to the same size school on the Seven Locks site.
- Bringing the Kendale site up to Seven Locks' standards with regard to playing fields, walkways, parking, environment, storm water discharge, road access and safety, and contingent future off-site expenses would involve considerable additional outlay as compared with keeping the school at Seven Locks.

II. Playing field area

- It appears that there is more useable land area at the Seven Locks site. Kendale is irregularly shaped and at least an acre of the site is steeply sloped and not suitable for use, whereas the rectangular Seven Locks site is level and cleared.
- The additional useable land combined with the fact that a relatively compact two story structure could be built on the Seven Locks site means that the children should end up with more recreation and playing field space at Seven Locks than at Kendale.

III. Walkway access

- A walkway exists out of the back of the Seven Locks site into the adjacent neighborhood. Lengthy walkways exist in two of the four directions (south and west) exiting from Seven Locks, but are not commonly utilized by elementary school children. The community is in the planning stage for a walkway running in the northerly direction.
- By contrast no walkways exist at the Kendale site and none are included in the existing plans or cost estimates.

IV. Parking problems

- Cooperative parking agreements have already been worked out between Seven Locks and other schools and churches immediately adjacent to or across the street from Seven Locks for special events, and some parents do walk to the school for meetings.
- By contrast there is no neighborhood parking available near the Kendale site and the current idea being discussed for overload situations is to bus parents to the school from the Postal Service facility parking lot which is about a mile away.

V. Flooding and contingent liability issues

- One of the original goals of construction on the completely wooded Kendale site was to save as many trees as possible; however, the size of the proposed school, the vulnerable nature of the site (less than 1,000 feet from a natural stream subject to flash-flooding), and the downward slope of the property have resulted in a plan that saves very few of the mature trees.
- The underground storm water storage reservoirs need to have very large capacity, extend under most of the site not covered by the structure, and this necessitates cutting down nearly all of the trees.
- The timed release drainage system would still be inferior to the existing water runoff situation at Seven Locks.
- At Kendale the underground storm water tanks would drain downhill from an open pipe at the southwest corner of the property, releasing water across Kendale Road into the front yard of a house which sits below the level of the road and already suffers periodic flooding in heavy rains.
- The area where the water will cross the road is a curved section where accidents have occurred in the past. In winter flowing water of any amount will be subject to icing on the roadway.
- No private builder would be allowed to use this type of drainage arrangement, but regulations are more lenient for MCPS.
- The Kendale site thus implies contingent future liabilities in terms of water or ice on the road in an already dangerous spot and flooding around the house located in the path of the drainage outlet.

VI. Kendale Road: Safety and Access

- The Seven Locks site is served by two primary roads that intersect, enabling school buses to go in any of four directions within seconds of leaving the school. Both roads are wide, with full shoulders, left turn lanes, a traffic light, and safe walkways.
- In addition a completely new entry/exit from the school site onto Bradley is included in the plans and costs so access will be better than it now is for Seven Locks school.
- Kendale Road by contrast is 18 feet wide, with no space for shoulders or walkways. North of the site Kendale is to be widened to 22 feet allowing school buses needing 9 and a half feet of clearance to pass and all the school traffic will flow in that direction up to Kentsdale Road.
- South of the school site the Kendale Road has 3 blind curves, numerous grade changes, a one lane bridge, and no shoulders or escape routes. When Ken Branch floods, the entire road is closed to through traffic between Bradley Boulevard and Kentsdale Drive. Kendale could be a rural road in West Virginia. Traffic flow is light, but there are already numerous accidents because of the narrowness and winding configuration of the road.
- Straightening Kendale and widening it to present Seven Locks standards in both directions would cost millions of dollars and could take years. Easements do not exist for much of the road's length and the bridge over the Ken Branch would have to be rebuilt and widened. Seven Locks, by contrast, presents little if any future cost to county taxpayers to improve traffic flows and its roads are and will remain far superior to Kendale's in terms of convenience and safety.

V. Comprehensive Costing

- All costs including storm water management, road widening, grading, and the inherent inferiority of the Kendale site in terms of useful area, road safety and convenience, parking, access for walkers, contingent liabilities regarding water drainage, etc. must be considered as components of the total cost and benefits to county taxpayers before additional money is appropriated and construction begins.
- Important differences, such as the playground area, should not be ignored but can be brought into the cost estimate through imputed costs. For example, what would it cost to purchase an

extra acre or so of land adjacent to the Kendale site to bring it up to the level of the Seven Locks site? That represents additional value inherent in the Seven Locks site that is available at no cost.

- School construction costs in the education budget should not be considered apart from necessary modifications to roads or other types of expenditures that would have to be incurred to bring the Kendale site up to the level of Seven Locks regarding safety and accessibility for students and for the broader community. In evaluating the Kendale site versus Seven Locks the Council needs to integrate the full cost to the county of the alternative options over time, not just the part of it that appears on the current education budget.

VII. Conclusion

- The utility of the Kendale site for a full-sized 740 student core elementary school is severely limited owing to the numerous inherent shortcomings of the site and its location.
- Comprehensive fiscal, educational, and common-sense analysis indicates that the appropriate course of action is to build the new school on the much more suitable Seven Locks site which provides immediate advantages and avoids significant future contingent costs to the county.