

Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association
9616 Old Spring Road
Kensington, MD 20895
301-949-5452;
240-997-4447
jmarkrobinson@verizon.net

May 7, 2011

Mr. Christopher S. Barclay
President, Board of Education
Montgomery Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive, Room 123
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Barclay:

The Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association is writing to express its deep concern with the way the Montgomery County School Board selected the Rock Creek Hills Local Park as the site of a new middle school for the BCC cluster. The procedures used by the Board deprived Rock Creek Hills of any practical ability to hold a community meeting and to prepare a thoughtful collective position on this matter. It was not until April 13 that we received a copy of the staff report and were able to begin circulating it through our community. Our bylaws required 4 days written notice for an emergency meeting and this requires time to prepare an evaluation, a notice, and mailing. To allow meaningful participation requires at least two weeks to set up and hold a meeting and several more days to effectively place our position before the Board and the Executive.

But even on the morning of the Board's April 28th meeting, the draft resolution and Board agenda only stated that Rock Creek Hills would be evaluated as an alternative to Rosemary Hills. The agenda was modified the morning of the April 28th meeting to place Rock Creek Hills in the top position, which materially altered the situation before any reasonable opportunity to respond even by individual citizens. Moreover, the Rosemary Hills was afforded a community meeting, which we were not. Contrary to any impressions you may have had, the Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association was not afforded any opportunity to meet with your Staff and to obtain any information about the likely impact on our community of developing a middle school on the Rock Creek Hills

Local Park site. In fact, Rock Creek Hills was not even on the site selection committee even though our local park ended up the number one choice on the site selection list.

In response to the Board's April 28 action, the Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association will have a community meeting on May 17th. This is the first day we could arrange a responsible meeting, provide the required written notice to our members, and have a briefing by your staff. On the merits of the matter, it is clear from our previously scheduled May 5 meeting that there is sentiment for and against the selection, but that strong opposition has emerged to the Board's action, just Chair Carrier predicted it would. This is clearly in part from the lack of any meaningful information, but in any event is grounded in four reasonable concerns: that most of the existing recreational space may be consumed; that there would be only limited buffering of the houses around the site given its relatively small size; uncertainty about access patterns, which may involve circulation of buses and cars around the whole site; and possibly a highly visible staff parking lot.

The May 17 Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association meeting is essential if we are to have any ability to make a full and fair response to the merits of this proposal and comply with our own bylaws and democratic procedures. Given this, I respectfully request the Board to defer spending any significant funds until we have our meeting and can provide further comments to the Board. This will afford the Board and the Executive an opportunity to consider other alternatives further if more local opposition to the current middle school decision emerges over the next few weeks. In any event, a full comparative analysis of the two top possible sites, including all related impacts, is the protocol the Board should follow when evaluating school sites in existing neighborhoods. This should be done before any determination of the best site to be selected.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

John M. Robinson
President, Rock Creek
Hills Citizens Association

cc: Ms. Shirley Brandman - Vice-President
Mr. Phillip Kauffman - Board Member
Ms. Judith Docca - Board Member
Ms. Laura Berthiaume - Board Member
Ms. Patricia O'Neill - Board Member
Mr. Michael Durso - Board Member
Ms. Valerie Ervin, President, Montgomery County Council