

Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association
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The Honorable Valerie Ervin
President, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Ervin:

This letter advises you of the results of the Rock Creek Hill Citizens Association's (RCHCA) meeting on Monday October 3, 2011. RCHCA residents attended to discuss the community's collective response to Board of Education September 22, 2011 final feasibility presentation for the proposed middle school at Rock Creek Hills Local Park. At the meeting the electronic version of that presentation was available, as well as a hand out summarizing the most important site layout and massing diagrams.

Over the course of a one hour and twenty minute discussion period, the community discussed the site layout; environmental issues; the size of the school and its prospects for expansion; probable cost, traffic and safety issues; and environmental issues related to deforestation and storm water runoff. The basis for the discussion was the MCPS Staff presentations and comments presented at the feasibility study meetings.

After the discussion, including arguments for and against the appropriateness of a new school on the Rock Creek Hills Local Park, of the more than 100 members who attended we decided by at vote of 80 to 3 to continue our opposition to the construction of the proposed middle school on this site. The community's concerns continue to be:

- The size, configuration, utility, and equivalence of the physical plant, especially in comparison to other middle schools.
- The lack of sufficient space on the site to meet the long term needs of the County school system.

- Concern that the curriculum would not be as sophisticated as that at Westland Middle School.
- The high cost of the project estimated at 60 to 70 million dollars.
- The marginal nature of the athletic fields, again due to the constrained site.
- The fact that no option could be configured that would provide for the minimum number of parking spaces for a middle school, especially one expected to be expanded to its maximum capacity of 1200 students.

Our concerns about the adequacy of this site for the proposed middle school are exacerbated by the loss of extensive recreational facilities in high demand and utilized by the broader community, including the two regulation soccer fields developed with state and/or federal funds. It should be remembered that, as noted by MCPS Staff, any school facilities likely will be secured and unavailable for recreational purposes to the community except for minimal times when they are not needed for school purposes. It is clear that there also will be severe, if not extreme, deforestation and strong potential for storm water damage due to the extensive grading that will be required for this site. For example, the existing playing fields will be dropped by four feet and at least two ten foot high retaining walls are required under any of the final options presented at the September 22 meeting. Buffering will be limited accordingly and will take several years to grow in to a point of effectiveness. Moreover, important information, such as the specific points of traffic impact, was not available before the meeting, and there has not even been a study of whether this is a safe community for a walking school.

To summarize, the proposed middle school on the Rock Creek Hills Local Park would involve high cost, a risk of an inadequate educational program, and severe impacts on the County's recreational facilities and environment. These facts, coupled with the lack of critical information, even at this late date, caused the community to reject the feasibility study and oppose the construction of the school. It should be noted that as suggested by the Council and the County Executive the Rock Creek Hills Community participated extensively in all of the feasibility meetings before reaching this decision.

Sincerely yours,
/s/
John M. Robinson
President
Rock Creek Hills
Citizens Association

cc. The Honorable Montgomery Council Members