

Board of Education and Unneeded MCPS Parcels: The Need for A Second MCCF Resolution

by Mark R. Adelman, Chair, MCCF Education Committee

The battle to protect MCPS properties from ill-advised transfer to the County's development maw continues and the Education Committee requests you support yet another resolution. My article in the May newsletter indicated why Dr. Weast and the Board of Education (BoE) were considering some "unused" parcels of MCPS-owned land as "unneeded" and recommending they be transferred to the County, presumably for use in increasing the stock of affordable housing in Montgomery County. Based on that article and discussion at the May delegates meeting, MCCF adopted (and sent to the BoE) the following resolution:

"The Montgomery County Civic Federation urges that no real estate properties owned by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) shall be transferred to any other entity, either governmental or other, unless such transfer is in exchange for land of equivalent (or greater) value that is within Montgomery County and is suitable for use in fulfilling MCPS missions."

We waited for a response. And waited... And sent a follow up... And waited. And then we began to get a response, by action first, then by letter. [My editorial on the MCCF page of the November 18 issue of the **Sentinel** newspaper pretty much tells the story.] Dr. Weast finally sent a letter thanking us for our concerns, assuring us that the BoE was following relevant laws and policies and soforth. Contact me if you'd like a copy of the letter. More to the point, in Supplement D to the Long Range CIP (2005-2010), Dr. Weast recommended that the BoE declare the Edson Lane parcel surplus (see my Sentinel article of 11/18 for details). On November 10 and 11, at hearings before the BoE regarding the CIP, numerous individuals testified in opposition to declaring the Edson Lane parcel unneeded. The BoE listened patiently and then (on 11/18) voted to declare the parcel unneeded; see the posting on their website at <http://coldfusion.mcps.k12.md.us/> (look for the section on the vote taken on the CIP).

Dr. Weast and the BoE need some remedial education. Some homework is in order. The MCCF Education Committee proposes the following Resolution for your consideration:

"The delegates to the Montgomery County Civic Federation hereby resolve that The Montgomery County Board of Education (BoE) should adopt the following policy:

Before the BoE declares as "unneeded" any properties owned by the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) system, a series of public hearings shall be held to allow ample time for community input on the proposed action.

- 1. There shall be several hearings on the matter, one in each of the MCPS**

districts. The hearings shall be widely publicized, well in advance, to encourage broad citizen participation.

2. At each such hearing there shall be a brief presentation by the BoE explaining the main arguments for/against declaring the site unneeded. Public testimony shall follow, to bring into consideration the full range of purposes to which the site might be put, as well as to develop consensus as to the priority that the community assigns to each such possible use.

3. The BoE shall then evaluate the opinions expressed by the community and shall announce its decision as to the disposition of the site in question by means of a statement (posted to the BoE website), including its reasons for accepting and/or rejecting recommendations made at the hearings."

Yes it is long and painfully detailed. For a reason. The people who serve us are confused and are not paying attention. We need to help them focus on the opinions of their constituency. The Education Committee asks you to consider this resolution carefully, and come to the December delegates meeting prepared to discuss, revise and - hopefully - pass it. With the understanding that it will be sent to Dr. Weast and the BoE. And that we will push for a response. And that we will disseminate it widely.

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