

Public Comment Before the Montgomery County Board of Education
Tuesday, February 12, 2013

Superintendent Starr, Members of the Board - My name is Mark Adelman [1]. As a resident of our County (and an educator myself) I have had a long-standing interest in our school system and have offered Public Comment here previously. In this instance, my Public Comment is to urge you to make a Public Comment of your own.

The matter that concerns me - and many others - is the proposal by Costco to place a mega gas station in the southwest quadrant of Westfield's Wheaton Mall. I believe you are all aware of this matter; if not, you can read the footnote [2] to this testimony.

Why am I here to comment on a proposed gas station? Because it is a mega gas station and is to be sited a mere 850 feet from the Stephen Knolls School for Special Needs Children. It will dispense not simply gasoline, but also high levels of numerous air pollutants. These pollutants will be funneled downwind and downhill to the school and will expose the children and staff of Stephen Knolls to unacceptable health risks. If you wish more information on this matter, I would be happy to provide it.

I believe you owe it to the community to make Public Comment in opposition to Costco's proposal (S-2863). You owe it to the parents of our County who expect you to care for the health and safety of their kids. You owe it to the citizens who elected you to oversee MCPS and to be vigilant as to all the possible negative impacts of our society upon our schools. You owe it to the taxpayers who recognize that more than 50% of our County budget goes to MCPS and who, for the most part, agree this is a wise investment.

Whatever position you choose to take about what is surely not "just another gas station", you owe it to all of us to speak out. I urge you to speak out in opposition to the gas station; but whatever your position, please state it. Please make a Public Comment.

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2. Any gas station has negative impacts on the environment. Such impacts include those on air quality and water quality (both surface water and ground water), as well as the impacts of noise and odor. The impacts are not simply proportional; these rise steeply as the size of the station increases. Very large gas stations (ones dispensing more than about 3.6 million gallons of gas per year) have disproportionately large impacts on the environment because the way they are configured leads to elevated traffic congestion. Traffic congestion leads to especially high levels of vehicle emissions, because idling - or slow moving - vehicles burn gasoline less efficiently and thus release more toxic pollutants. These pollutants degrade air quality and thus raise the level of risk to public health in several health categories. (www.stopcostcogas.org)