

Testimony by Mark R. Adelman - Board of Education, November 10, 2004

Members of the Board, Dr. Weast - My name is Mark Adelman. I am a long time resident of Kensington Heights (3206 University Blvd. W.). While you all know me in my role as Chair of the Civic Federation Education Committee, I am here testifying as an individual, a concerned citizen whose employment has been, for over 30 years, as an educator. Because my time is extremely limited, I will only read portions of this document: I leave the rest with you as a reading assignment! As part of the dialogue about capital improvements, we are discussing the fate of the Seven Locks elementary school and, necessarily, of the MCPS properties that are or may be needed to hold it. Which brings me to my main point: I am here to urge you, as forcefully as possible, to say NO to the request of the County Executive to declare unneeded the Edson Lane, Brickyard Road, and Kendale Road properties. You have already heard [and will no doubt hear more] extensive, well-reasoned, and eloquent testimony as to why these properties should be retained by MCPS. I will not attempt to add more detail. Instead, acting as an educator, I wish to ask you to consider a series of somewhat rhetorical questions.

1. Are you the Board of Education, or the Board of Housing?
2. Do you work for the County Executive and the County Council or do you work for our children? And - as a corollary - is it not your moral imperative to take only those actions designed to enhance the education of all of our children?
3. Is it your responsibility to convince us that your decisions are wise and principled, or is it your job to convince yourselves that you can justify saying yes to a request from the County Executive?
4. Do you believe that anyone in this room, or - for that matter - any resident of Montgomery County - accepts the notion that ANY MCPS properties are "unneeded"? And [another corollary], how do YOU define the terms unneeded and unused? For example, if a school is built on one portion of a multi-parcel site, and another, smaller, parcel is only used for a playing field, or as a buffer between the school and the surrounding madness of our county, is that smaller parcel unused or unneeded?
5. Do you expect any of us to believe that the County Executive's request is a one-time action? That this is only about three small MCPS properties in the Potomac and North Bethesda areas? Or do you understand - as we do - that this is just the tip of the iceberg, the first step in a long process by which every square foot of MCPS property that you are willing to cede will be fed into the maw of a machine that believes that, as our County approaches "build-out", it must focus on "build-up".
6. Do you understand the deep truth of our society: that our children are our most important resource and that we have temporarily entrusted you with managing the processes and systems by which our children are educated? And that you must -

in order to retain our trust and thus your jobs - continually re-convince us that you know what you are doing and recognize the moral obligation under which you operate: **serve our children?**

We all recognize the immense effort you put forth on our behalf, and are grateful. We recognize how often your tasks are complex and your deliberations are unappreciated. And we understand the enormous political pressure under which you operate. It is often VERY difficult to make the right decision - sometimes for lack of facts, sometimes for lack of wisdom, sometimes for lack of will. That is why we are here: to give you facts, to share our wisdom, and to strengthen your will.

Please do not err on this one. I implore you to tell the County Executive and the County Council NO. Tell them you have considered the request carefully, have listened to your constituencies, have attempted to see through a very cloudy crystal ball and have decided that these three properties are NOT unneeded and that you do NOT approve their transfer. And do an even better thing: send the clear message that, in your best judgment it is highly unlikely that your constituents will entrust you to turn over ANY MCPS property for ANY purpose other than the education of our children at ANY time in the foreseeable future.

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