

May 5, 2004

Testimony regarding proposed use of the Bowie Mill Road Site

My name is Mark Adelman. I am a long term resident of Kensington Heights and am speaking as a concerned individual; however it is probably relevant to note that that I am active in a number of groups focused on Public Education in Montgomery County and am currently Chair of the Education Committee of Montgomery County Civic Federation.

I wish to echo the comments of those who have already spoken and urge that no action be taken with respect to the Bowie Mill Road site until revision of the Olney Master Plan is completed. As to what ought to be done with respect to the site in question, let me offer the following perspectives:

1. I believe the Board of Education erred in its previous decision to turn this land over to the County and am exceedingly concerned about the apparent pressure to convince the BoE to turn over other "un-needed" sites to the County, be it for "affordable housing" or any other purpose except for educational facilities.
2. The notion that MCPS has land it does not need for schools is preposterous, given the massive overcrowding of our current schools and the relentless growth of our population. MCPS projections of future needs are, at best, of questionable credibility. If a specific site is not needed now, it should be held in reserve against future needs. If a site is deemed inappropriate for school construction it should be evaluated for other MCPS uses, such as for support services or as "coin of the realm" to be used in trade to acquire other - more suitable - property.
3. I most strenuously object to the notion that any MCPS sites should be used for affordable housing. While we may all agree that our County needs such housing, we have NOT had an appropriate public dialogue about the relative urgency of such housing needs as compared with, for example, the need for more schools and parks. Furthermore, the appallingly inept performance of our government with regard to MPDUs - and here I criticize not just the Executive branch but also the County Council and our Planning Board - convinces me that we should be extremely circumspect about turning over ANY land to our elected leaders in the name of increasing affordable housing.
4. Lastly, I find it extremely troubling that the Olney community has been given so little chance to be "at the table" in discussions of what is the best use of this site in terms of the needs of, and constraints on, the community. It appears questionable whether the Bowie Mill Road site is an appropriate location for the kind of housing project DHCA is contemplating; a detailed evaluation of this plan MUST involve extensive citizen input.

For all these reasons, I urge that NO action be taken on the use of this site at this time.

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