

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION REGARDING THE SLES
REPLACEMENT SCHOOL ISSUE**

May 1, 2006

*Mark R. Adelman, Chair, Education Committee, Montgomery County Civic
Federation*

Mark Adelman, representing the Civic Federation, and appearing before you yet again in this extended public dialogue. It is our fervent hope that we are reaching closure on this issue. Tonight we will NOT attempt to review the history of the process, nor our previous comments. Nor will we detail our reasons for disagreeing with portions of the most recent staff report (and the Superintendent's memorandum of April 20). Our recommendations are based on several elements - listed below - which I do not have time to read here. But they will be posted to our website and we hope you will evaluate them carefully as you consider what we urge you to do.

1. We are still NOT convinced (by the "final draft" staff report) that the cost estimates for the various options are complete, accurate and truly compare all options on an "apples-to-apples" basis. We believe that timelines are not compared accurately, that traffic impacts are misrepresented, and that costs of environmental impacts are inadequately addressed. Most importantly, the "cost" of lost confidence in the process and lost community support for MCPS is given far too little weight.
2. The Superintendent continues to assert that building on the Kendale site (Option 1) is the best course of action; and you appear to agree.
3. We (MCCF) continue to assert that building on the Seven Locks site (specifically Option 2A) is best.
4. No matter what action is taken, some will remain convinced that a mistake has been made. That was undoubtedly the case when the original decision (in the '50s) was made to build on the Seven Locks site. Such is the reality in any complex and contentious decision process, especially one in which the parameters of the process have changed so many times along the way.
5. After the "final" decision is made regarding the SLES replacement, time will tell what "mistakes" have (or have not) been made. We will all work together to "fix" them, hoping that the true cost (not simply in dollars) does not prove to be exceedingly high.

We recognize your authority (and responsibility) to make such decisions, while following accepted guidelines. Having had time to consider past events, you may still wish to restate YOUR conviction that building on the Kendale site is the best option. But we all know that having authority and exercising it wisely are two different things. The question here is whether it is WISE, in the broadest sense, to

insist on building on the Kendale site. We URGE you to acknowledge the many cogent arguments raised by concerned citizens who still do not agree with your interpretation of the "facts". And we therefore STRONGLY urge that you forward to the County Council a recommendation to construct the SLES replacement on the Seven Locks site (Option 2A) - as was planned several years ago. We URGE you to do so with the stated intention of working with the Council and the Community to move forward as expeditiously as possible.

It is time for all of us to move forward and focus our attention on the many matters that we must resolve if we are to approach our shared vision: providing the best possible education for each and every child in our public school system.

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