

Resolution Opposing the Taking of Public Park Lands for MCPS Schools

Passed by the membership at the June 13, 2011 meeting of the Montgomery County Civic Federation.

Concerning the recent site selection process for a proposed new middle school in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase cluster, and what was identified by community members, the Montgomery Planning Board Chair and Parks Director as a flawed and exclusive process employed by the Montgomery County Board of Education and Montgomery County Public Schools:

Whereas 6 out of 10 sites on a recent MCPS site selection list were county parks which have been purchased and maintained with appropriated funds and ,

Whereas the County Executive acted to recommend use of one park over another based on former occupancy of Rock Creek Hills Park by Kensington Junior High School, and,

Whereas an existing 34,000 acres of county parkland are valuable natural resources as well as treasured public spaces that should not be jeopardized by uses outside of the mission and goals of M-NCPPC, the government entity charged with Parks stewardship, and,

Whereas parks and schools are both extremely important county services that should never compete for land use, and

Whereas, parkland should not be treated as surplus or vacant property, and

Whereas other sites should be considered for redevelopment or reclamation by the Board of Education and MCPS, such as the former Montgomery Hills Middle School, and

Whereas, the Montgomery County Planning Department staff and Planning Board should meet immediately with officials from MCPS and the Board of Education to discuss alternatives to attempting to take parkland for use as school sites,

Be it resolved that the Montgomery County Civic Federation urges the State, County Executive, incoming School Superintendent Joshua Starr, Board of Education and staff in charge of school site selection at MCPS:

- to develop a transparent process for engaging and consulting with community stakeholders long before a site selection process is started for a new school building,
- to act in the future with integrity and complete transparency,
- work in consultation with professional land use planners at the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission and the Planning Director on all future land use decisions that will affect an entire community,
- refrain from attempting to take and use any parkland in Montgomery County for school sites.