

**Attachment 1**

**Letter from OMCA HOA**

# Olney Mill Community Association

---



September 29, 2011

Montgomery County Planning Board  
The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Members of the Planning Board,

The Olney Mill Community Association (OMCA) Board would like to register its position regarding plans for the reconstruction and reconfiguration of a 2-acre pond and adjacent playing fields in the Olney Family Neighborhood Park ("Family Park") under initiative proposal PR-257.

The Family Park is one of the major attractions of our community. It includes mowed playing fields, playgrounds, and asphalt hiking paths in addition to the so-called "Duck Pond" and a series of upstream storm water management ponds. The Duck Pond was built by the developer when the Olney Mill subdivision was constructed in the early 1970s. The pond is at the northeast end of the Family Park in the center of the Olney Mill, surrounded by 1,035 single-family homes that comprise our homeowners association. For almost forty years, the pond has been fed by a 15-20 foot wide creek that collects runoff from nearby sections of the community. The pond outflow leads into a creek that eventually merges with Reddy Branch.

The park has been maintained since the mid-1980s by M-NCPPC. The two grass playing fields nearest the pond are used on a regular basis by residents who walk their dogs or play soccer, softball, or lacrosse. Teams from outside Olney Mill use the fields for informal practices. Elementary and middle school students routinely traverse the fields to walk or bike to school. Residents also enjoy walking around the pond itself, which once supported fish and other aquatic life and attracted ducks, geese, and herons. Unfortunately, the pond

has become a problem for the past few years because it has not been dredged, and silt accumulation has resulted in a typical depth of only 6-12 inches. This has destroyed the fish population and allowed the pond to become overgrown with algae. Olney Mill residents have expressed their concerns about the pond to M-NCPPC, the local press, and elected officials. We have long been hoping for an effective solution to this problem.

M-NCPPC and other County agencies have finally been able to develop a comprehensive renovation plan with funding from the ICC project. We were first alerted to the issue when the pond was drained in the summer of 2010. OMCA scheduled meetings with the ICC and M-NCPPC project teams on November 10, 2010 and March 9, 2011 to hear details of the proposed renovations. During those meetings, staff presented their initial plan for constructing a stream channel through the area of the drained pond. The Board found the approach promising, but we were concerned that wide areas of the old pond would continue to be replenished with every significant storm, leaving a series of smaller ponds or marshes that would provide havens for algae and mosquito growth. Such cycles have been observed repeatedly ever since the pond was drained.

By far the major complaint of our residents, however, was the initial plan to “naturalize” the two playing fields adjacent to the pond. It seemed unthinkable that Park & Planning would allow weeds and invasive species to take over acres of valuable playing fields that comprise our community’s largest park. An interim plan presented at our September 14 Board meeting specified that only one of the two fields would be naturalized. The nearly 50 residents who came to hear the presentations were unanimously opposed to naturalization of either field. Other concerns were expressed at the meeting, including the possible removal of the playground and inability of residents along Falling Green to access the asphalt hiking paths. One request from the community was to consider installing a short asphalt pathway connecting Treadway Road to the existing network of hiker/biker paths. This would allow students walking or biking to school, or residents with strollers or wheelchairs, to have access to the other paths without having to traverse the uneven and sometimes damp grass field.

In response to the community’s input, County staff once again revised plans for the pond renovation and the nearby playing fields. Jai Cole (M-NCPPC) sent a description of the new plans and an accompanying map on September 17. In brief, the pond will be replaced by a creek channel, and adjacent areas of the former pond will be filled with dirt or other material to create a series of “benches” or steps down to the level of the creek. The benches will be planted with native species adapted to the expected moisture levels. This approach will assure that storm water drains as quickly as possible and excess moisture will be absorbed by the vegetation. The berm around the pond will be planted with new trees, i.e., “reforested”. Parks staff will mow around those trees to prevent them from being overtaken by invasive plant species. Staff will also mow an 8-foot strip behind the properties on Falling Green, which will give those residents access to the hiking path and allow parks personnel to maintain the pond outfall area. While residents are still somewhat concerned about the

eventual appearance of the area, we feel this will effectively address our prior concerns about the pond renovation itself.

The two playing fields will continue to be mowed by parks staff. A narrow strip of trees will be planted alongside the edge of the pond, which will encroach approximately 30 feet into the previously mowed portion of the field. This revised plan will allow continued use of the field and access to the bridge and playground. It will also preserve the quality and appearance of the park next to the adjacent properties. The tables, benches, and barbeques behind the playground will be removed, but the playground itself will remain.

This overall revised plan now appears to address the primary concerns of our community. It will include a comprehensive renovation of the problematic pond area (funded by the grant from the ICC project), continued mowing of both fields by M-NCPPC, and preservation of the playground. The renovation of the pond and "reforestation" to be carried out around the pond will accomplish the key environmental objectives of the project teams. The OMCA Board therefore supports the plan as outlined in the PR-257 memo to the Planning Board. A number of the residents who attended the final meeting also agree that this approach will be a fair resolution of the issues. Finally, OMCA would like to express its appreciation for the willingness of County staff to attend multiple community meetings and to adapt their plans in response to the community's input.

Sincerely,

Dennis Twombly  
President,  
Olney Mill Community Association

**Attachment 2**

**Letter from Delegate Zucker**

CRAIG J. ZUCKER  
14th Legislative District  
Montgomery County

Appropriations Committee

Transportation and the  
Environment Subcommittee

Oversight Committee  
on Pensions



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 224  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3380 · 301-858-3380  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3380  
Craig.Zucker@house.state.md.us

## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

September 27, 2011

Ms. Françoise Carrier  
Planning Board Chair  
Montgomery County Planning Board  
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chairwoman Carrier and Members of the Planning Board:

As you know, the Olney Mills Family Park was recently the subject of a proposal by Montgomery Parks to naturalize part of the park for safety and environmental reasons. The residents in that area, represented by the Olney Mills Community Association (OMCA), opposed the proposal because they felt losing the open space in the park would have a negative impact on the area. As a Maryland State Delegate for the greater Olney area, I have been following this issue very carefully.

It is my understanding that Montgomery Parks and OMCA have reached a compromise that meets the needs of Montgomery Parks and satisfies the desire of the residents to retain vital open space in the park. I applaud this decision and want to commend the diligence of the Montgomery Parks staff for their receptiveness and desire to meet the needs of the residents. This spirit of cooperation between our government and its residents has represented the best attributes of our community.

I respectfully request that the compromise reached between Montgomery Parks and OMCA be approved. Thank you for your consideration and assistance on this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "CJ Zucker", written over a horizontal line.

Craig Zucker  
State Delegate

cc: Dennis Twombly, President, Olney Mill Community Association  
Jai Cole, Unit Leader/Specialist, Montgomery Parks