



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

July 22, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Don Cochran, Deputy Director
Department of Park and Planning

FROM: Khalid Afzal, Team Leader (301/495-4650)
Community-Based Planning Division

John A. Carter, Chief JAC
Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Study of Alternatives for a Combined Facility
Layhill Village Local Park, Recreation Center and Elementary School Site

RECOMMENDATION:

Proceed with a study of alternatives for co-locating a new elementary school, a local park and a community recreation center on the combined site of the Layhill Village Local Park and recreation center subject to the guidelines included in this memorandum.

DISCUSSION

In a letter dated May 6, 2004, Superintendent of Schools, Jerry Weast, requested that the Planning Board be briefed about the intention of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to study the feasibility of using a portion of the Layhill Village Local Park, and possibly a portion of the Matthew Henson State Park, for a combined campus to include a County community recreation center, a new elementary school and a redesigned Layhill Village Local Park. The purpose of this briefing is two-fold: to seek the Planning Board's consent in proceeding with a study of conceptual alternatives that may use a portion of parkland for school and recreation center purposes; and to seek the Planning Board's comments and guidelines about the use of the parkland before proceeding with the concept of a combined school, park and recreation center at this location.

Development has generated a need for another elementary school in the John F. Kennedy Cluster. The MCPS is studying the possibility of locating a new elementary school in conjunction with a recreation center and Layhill Village Local Park on two public properties: a County-owned site currently targeted for a community recreation center, and the Layhill Village Local Park on Queensguard Road. Both properties are located adjacent to and north of the Matthew Henson State Park. The MCPS should also consider the purchase of the adjacent church property to expand the site.

Staff has participated in preliminary meetings with the MCPS and the Recreation Department to examine the possibility of co-locating these facilities at this location. Staff recommends that the feasibility of locating these facilities in a combined layout with shared access and parking be explored. Staff recommends that the following guidelines be followed in the study of the potential alternatives for this concept:

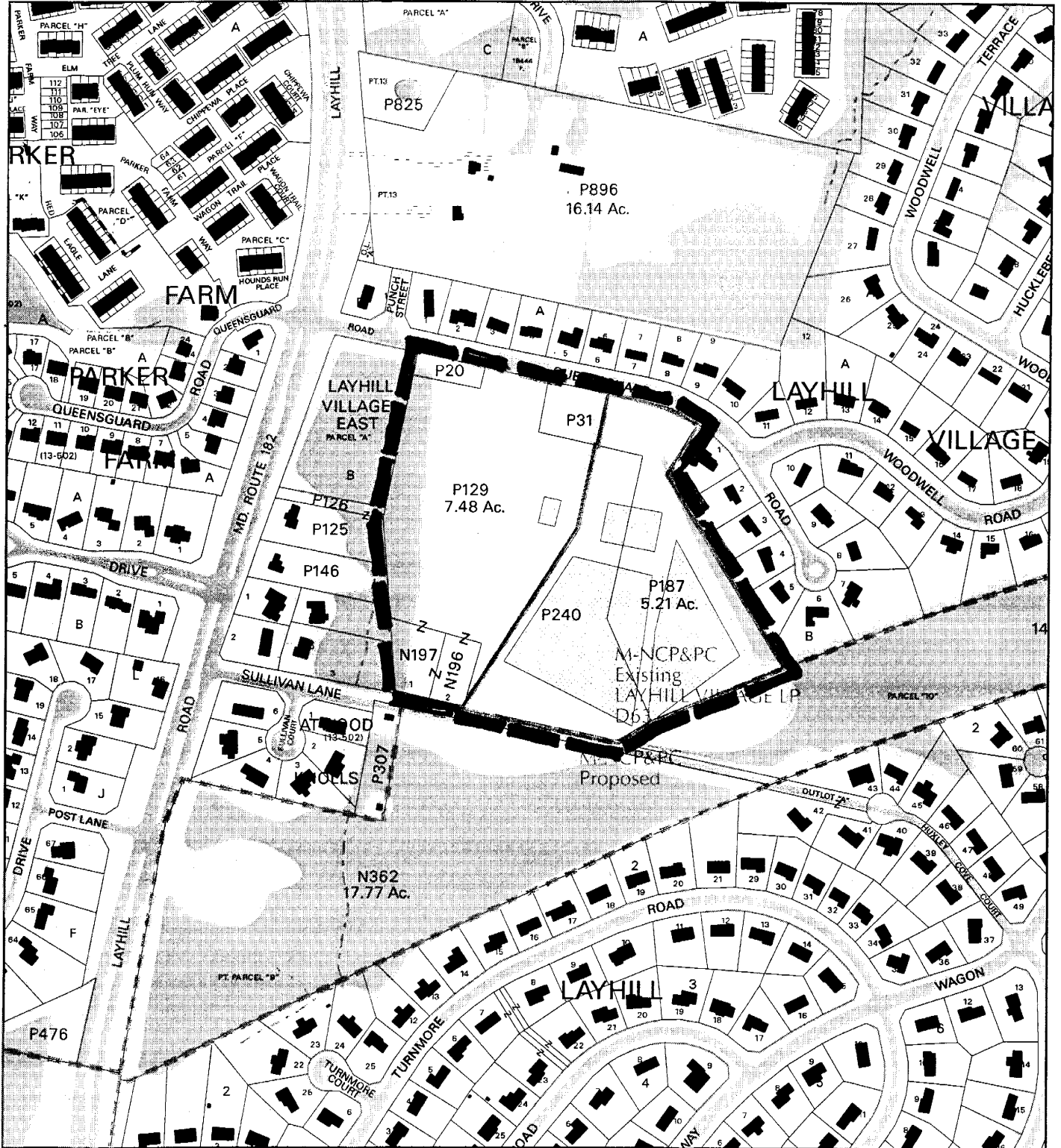
1. The main east-west corridor of the Matthew Henson State Park should not be encroached upon in any way
2. Every effort should be made to avoid the loss of park amenities (ballfields, tennis courts, playground, and parking) at this location
3. Sensitive areas should be protected
4. Planning Board consent to proceed with this study does not in any way indicate the approval of the concept at this time
5. MCPS should continue to explore other options for the school site and replacement parkland in the immediate vicinity including the purchase of the adjacent church property

KA:JAC:ha: j:\staff reports\team 5\Layhill Village park site

Attachments

- Layhill Village Park Site
- Letter from Derick P. Berlage
- Letters from Jerry Weast (May 6 and April 14, 2004)

LAYHILL VILLAGE PARK SITE



Map compiled on July 20, 2004 at 3:50 PM | Site located on base sheet no - 218NW02

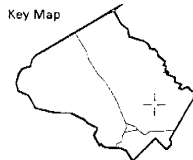
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Key Map



Research & Technology Center



1 inch = 400 feet
1:4800



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Office of the Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board

June 15, 2004

Jerry D. Weast
Superintendent of Schools
Montgomery County Public Schools
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850-1747

SUBJECT: Combined Elementary School, Community Center and Park
Aspen Hill

Dear Mr. ~~Weast~~ ^{Jerry}:

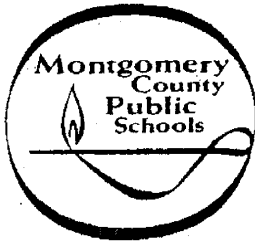
This letter responds to your letter of May 6, 2004, regarding the current study of a combined elementary school, community center, and park in the Layhill area.

I would be delighted to schedule a briefing for the Planning Board. I have instructed staff from the M-NCPPC to work with MCPS and the Recreation Department to schedule a briefing as soon as possible. Don Cochran is the lead coordinator from the M-NCPPC on this study and can be reached at 301-495-4534.

Sincerely,

Derick P. Berlage
Chairman

DPB:KA:ha



850 Hungerford Drive * Rockville, Maryland * 20850-1747
Telephone (301) 279-3381

May 6, 2004

Mr. Derick Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
Maryland-National Capital Park
and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

RECEIVED
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OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Dear Mr. Berlage:

A copy of a letter to Mr. Douglas Duncan, county executive, dated April 14, 2004, in which I requested that the county temporarily delay the design and construction of the Mid-county Community Recreation Center adjacent to Layhill Village Local Park, is enclosed. The delay would give staffs with the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), the Montgomery County Department of Recreation (MCDRec), and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) time to evaluate the feasibility of constructing a park/community center/elementary school campus on the combined sites of Layhill Village Local Park, former East Layhill Elementary School site (now the site for the Mid-county Community Center), and a portion of the Matthew Henson Greenway.

Our enrollment projections indicate that elementary school utilization levels in the John F. Kennedy Cluster are projected to be at, or over, capacity in the coming years. Over the past several months, MCPS staff has been working with Winchester Homes, the preliminary plan applicant for redevelopment of the Indian Spring Country Club, to address the need for a future elementary school site. On March 5, 2004, the Montgomery County Planning Board approved their Pre-preliminary Plan application (No. 7-03058) with the condition that Winchester Homes "continue working with M-NCPPC and MCPS to complete a site search for a needed elementary school site, as defined by MCPS. Suitable site to be deemed acceptable to MCPS prior to preliminary plan approval."

I am requesting that an administrative item be included in the next available Montgomery County Planning Board agenda so that staffs with MCPS, MCDRec, and M-NCPPC can present a briefing to the Planning Board on the concept of constructing a park/community center/elementary school campus on the Layhill Road sites. At that time, we would seek guidance from the Board to determine if it is appropriate to proceed with this concept.

Mr. Derick Berlage

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May 6, 2004

If your staff has questions or needs additional information, please have them contact Ms. Janice Turpin, real estate management leader, Department of Facilities Management, at 301-279-3131.

Respectfully,



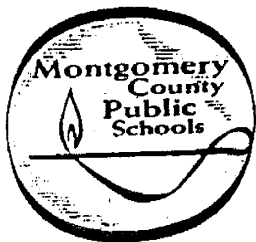
Jerry D. Weast, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JDW:vnb

Enclosure

Copy to:

Mr. Bowers
Mr. Hawes
Mr. Lavorgna
Ms. Turpin
Mr. Bourne
Mr. Gries
Mr. Omidvar



850 Hungerford Drive • Rockville, Maryland • 20850-1747
Telephone (301) 279-3381

April 14, 2004

The Honorable Douglas M. Duncan
Montgomery County Executive
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Duncan:

I am writing to alert you to a future school issue in the North Wheaton/East Layhill area of the county. Our staff has been involved in discussions with Winchester Homes about the potential student yield from their proposed plans for the Indian Spring Country Club property and the need for another elementary school to serve the John F. Kennedy High School service area in the Downcounty Consortium. While the proposed development for Indian Spring will not create sufficient numbers of new students to justify a new school site dedication, there are current utilization issues in the John F. Kennedy Cluster that any new development will exacerbate.

Utilization levels at all of the elementary schools in the John F. Kennedy High School service area are projected to be at or over capacity in the coming years. In spite of the scheduled reopening in August 2006 of the former Arcola Elementary School to serve the John F. Kennedy and Albert Einstein clusters, full utilization of the John F. Kennedy Cluster elementary schools will continue due to class-size reductions in Grades 1 and 2 (staffed at 17:1) and full-day kindergarten (staffed at 15:1). The Downcounty Consortium arrangement will not provide relief for the Kennedy Cluster schools because the large majority of the elementary schools in the consortium have received the same class size reduction and full-day kindergarten programs. Currently there are 162 relocatable classrooms in use at the consortium elementary schools. While the number of relocatable classrooms will go down with the reopening of Arcola and Connecticut Park elementary schools in August 2006, there will continue to be substantial elementary school space deficits in the Downcounty Consortium.

In parts of the county like the service area for the Downcounty Consortium, new school site options are limited, and it is important that we identify potential sites for future needs in these areas when opportunities arise. One opportunity available for a future school site would be in the proposed development for Indian Spring Country Club. This development proposes 561 residential lots. However, student yields calculated from the development are insufficient to warrant dedication of an elementary school site (see enclosures). In several meetings with representatives from Winchester Homes, they have indicated a willingness to work with us, but stressed that any land coming from their development must be purchased. Recognizing the need for adequate public facilities to allow their preliminary plan to move forward, they offered the services of their land-planning consultant to identify any publicly owned sites in the vicinity that could serve future school system needs.

Three undeveloped sites were identified; however, after further evaluation, only one had the minimum characteristics needed to serve as an elementary school site. The undeveloped site is a portion of the Matthew Henson Greenway Trail property that lies on the east side of Layhill Road between Sullivan Lane and Middlevale Lane. While this site is adequate in terms of size, there are environmental and access concerns.

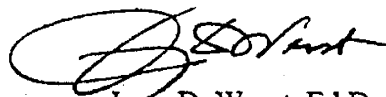
A second option identified by the consultant within the John F. Kennedy service area was to reclaim, when needed for school purposes, the former Saddlebrook Elementary School, now serving as the Park Police Headquarters, or the former East Layhill Elementary School site, now funded for development of the Mid-county Community Recreation Center.

A third option would be to look at the combined county-owned landholdings comprised of the former East Layhill Elementary School site, the Layhill Village Local Park, and the Matthew Henson Greenway Trail land parcel. It appears that a portion of Atwood Road could be abandoned to provide one large county-owned land parcel for which a campus-like setting could be designed to accommodate the existing park, a new recreation center, and an elementary school. School site acreage requirements could be diminished due to the proximity to park recreation elements. No new land would need to be purchased for either the school or the long-awaited Mid-county Community Recreation Center. The approved 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan contemplated this arrangement when it suggested several potential locations for a future community center.

Based on the recommendation for a combined school/park/community center site design, I am requesting that further design and construction of the Mid-county Community Recreation Center be put temporarily on hold until the three agencies—the Montgomery County Public Schools, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the Montgomery County Recreation Department—can evaluate the viability of creating a campus at this location and, if acceptable, develop the community center design for the future master-planned use. This would provide a cost-effective solution to the potential need for a future school. My staff has contacted the other two agencies to begin a dialogue about this concept; however, your support of this exploratory effort is needed to facilitate the discussion.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. If your staff has questions or needs additional information, please contact Mr. Larry A. Bowers, chief operating officer, at 301-279-3626, or me.

Respectfully,



Jerry D. Weast, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JDW:vnb

Enclosures

Copy to:

Mr. Bowers
Mr. Hawes
Mr. Lavorgna
Mr. Crispell
Ms. Turpin
Mr. Bourne