



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED
MINUTES

The Montgomery County Planning Board met on Monday, April 9, 2012, at 5:05 p.m. in the Montgomery Regional Office in Silver Spring, Maryland, and adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Present were Chair Françoise M. Carrier, Vice Chair Marye Wells-Harley, and Commissioners Casey Anderson, Norman Dreyfuss, and Amy Presley.

Item 1, Mandatory Referral 2012019: Bethesda-Chevy Chase Middle School #2 Site Selection is reported on the attached agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Planning Board will be held Thursday, April 12, 2012, in the Montgomery Regional Office in Silver Spring, Maryland.

M. Clara Moise
Technical Writer

Montgomery County Planning Board Meeting
Monday, April 9, 2012
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760
301-495-4600

1. Mandatory Referral 2012019: Bethesda-Chevy Chase Middle School #2 Site Selection

Review and discussion of public sites evaluated in the Report of the Site Selection Advisory Committee for Bethesda-Chevy Chase Middle School #2

Staff Recommendation: Approval to transmit comments to Montgomery County Public Schools

BOARD ACTION

Motion: **ANDERSON/PRESLEY**

Vote:

Yea: **4-0-1**

Nay: **DREYFUSS**

Other:

Action: **Approved staff recommendation to transmit comments to Montgomery County Public Schools, as stated in the attached transmittal letter.**

In keeping with the April 9 technical staff report, Parks Department staff offered a multi-media presentation of the Mandatory Referral request for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase (BCC) Middle School site selection submitted by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Staff noted that MCPS has selected the Rock Creek Hills Local Park as the preferred site to build a new BCC Middle School, but Parks Department staff had expressed their preference for three other sites, which would not result in the loss of ballfields and parkland, i.e., the former Lynnbrook Elementary School site and the adjacent Lynnbrook Local Park, North Chevy Chase Park, and the former site of the Montgomery Hills Junior High School, and as staff's preferred option, the purchase of 11.39 acres of land identified by MCPS at a cost of \$21.8 million. MCPS staff, the Site Selection Advisory Committee (SSAC), and the Superintendent of Schools have rejected staff's proposed sites stating that: i) the Lynnbrook and North Chevy Chase sites are too small to accommodate the BCC Middle School; ii) the former site of the Montgomery Hills Junior High School is not in the BCC school cluster boundary; and iii) the option of buying land from a private party is too costly and the land might not be available by 2017 due to a number of existing leases on the property.

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Parks Department Deputy Director Riley noted that staff's recommendations reflect a strategy of first avoiding park impacts, secondly minimizing park impacts, and third, mitigating and/or compensating for park impacts. By looking first to a private site for the future BCC Middle School site, MCPS would avoid impacts to existing park facilities. Mr. Riley noted that staff recommendation is that the Planning Board does not accept the SSAC's recommendation to construct the new BCC Middle School on the site of the current Rock Creek Hills Local Park because the park contains large areas devoted to playing fields, with two adult-sized rectangular fields for soccer. Staff believes that the SSAC members lacked important analytical tools needed to determine if extraordinary circumstances existed in this case. These tools included a more complete understanding of the consequences of reducing available playing fields in this part of the County, the costs of replacing these fields, the relative cost and complexity connected with acquiring privately owned land for parkland, and an understanding of the larger role parkland plays in community life.

At the Board's request, Mr. John Hench of the Parks Department offered comments regarding the impact on the environment and the adjacent neighborhoods for the various sites proposed.

At the Board's request, Ms. Janice Turpin and Mr. Bruce Crispell of MCPS offered comments and answered questions from Board members.

The following speakers offered testimony: Mr. John Robinson representing the Rock Creek Hills Citizens Association; Mr. James Pekar of Kingston Road; Mr. David Kaplan of Saul Road; Mr. Craig Brown representing the Montgomery County Council of Parents/Teachers Association; Mr. Fritz Hirst of Wyndale Road; Ms. Sandra Van Bochove of Oldspring Road; Mr. Rafe Peterson representing the Rosemary Hills Primary School PTA; Ms. Teddy Springer of Saul Road; Mr. Hill Carter of Kensington Park; Mr. Benjamin Sanders representing the Yeshiva of Greater Washington; Mr. Harry Eisenberg of Columbia Pike; Mr. Marti Tarkington of Second Avenue; Ms. Victoria Bell of Hill Ridge Drive; Mr. John Vittone of Lanier Drive; Ms. Ginny Barnes representing Conservation Montgomery; and Mr. Mark Mendez of Richard Street.

There followed considerable Board discussion with questions to staff and MCPS representatives.

Commissioner Dreyfuss stated that he is in agreement with the Superintendent of Schools' selection of the Rock Creek Hills Local Park site and does not see the need for MCPS to reconsider any other sites, given the fact that this site was on loan to the Parks Department with a reversal clause in the agreement between MCPS and the Parks Department.

Chair Carrier clarified the Planning Board's position regarding the role of the Board in helping the Superintendent of Schools and the School Board in the selection process.