

Testimony to the Montgomery County Board of Education

Re: Agenda Item 4.2.5 Lease Agreement – Brickyard Road Site

Tuesday, March 8, 2011, 10:05 am

Speaker: Essie Burnworth

My name is Essie Burnworth, and I have been a resident of Montgomery County for 44 years.

Today you are considering whether to lease 20 acres on Brickyard Road to the County for establishment of a public/private partnership to build commercial ball fields. For the past 31 years, this site has been leased to an adjacent resident, Nick Maravell, who operates a certified organic farm on this property.

I have bought organic chicken feed and other products from Nick's Organic Farm for many years, and I oppose this change in the land use. I urge you to reconsider this proposal.

First of all, I question the need for ball fields in Potomac; established fields near me in Glen Hills Park are not being used.

Secondly, Montgomery County planning objectives clearly encourage farming and agriculture. Nick produces organic seeds for other organic farmers on this land because it is isolated from other farmland and is therefore free of genetically modified seed and other contamination. At the very time that we are trying to encourage healthy eating with locally grown crops, tearing up a certified organic field that has been carefully cultivated for over 30 years would be an irreplaceable loss.

Thirdly, I believe that the local neighbors of this site should have a say in its use, though the public has not been informed about this proposed lease change, and Nick himself was only notified last Thursday.

Please determine if there is real need for ball fields on this site; balance the provision of ball fields against the benefits of established, rich, organic farmland; and take the time to consult the community affected by this proposed change.

Thank you.