

Testimony by Maria Fusco

of Potomac, MD

before the Montgomery County School Board

Rockville, MD

March 8, 2011

Hello.

My name is Maria Fusco, and I'm a voter and a homeowner in Montgomery County who was shocked to hear the news of losing our local organic farm to a ball field ~ the location of which is right in my backyard.

I have 3 areas to broach:

1. The luck that we should have a certified organic, non-GMO, seed farm in our County;
2. The lack of Community involvement in this decision; and
3. The fact that Brickyard is not the ideal site for any sports field.

On Organic Farming:

As I understand it, Organic farming standards are not easily met, and Nick Marvell's Farm ~ OUR local farm ~ has met them.

When Nick Marvell started his farm 30 years ago, one might not have imagined Organic Food becoming as popular, as strong, or as needed as it is today, but it has happened.

Everywhere we look, we can see Organic demands growing.

Now ~ fluke ~ Montgomery County happens to have the perfect location for a non-GMO farm, with a Nationally recognized Farm already on it ~ miles from any other farm that may be using GMO materials, and it seems that the BOE wants to destroy that.

The BOE wants to, with a quick change of hands, undo what has taken decades to create ~ and at a time when various House Bills such as Bill 528 that requires county boards to limit the use of pesticides and to encourage the use of planting and maintaining gardens; or House Bill 759 that's working towards toxic chemical reduction, and that's crossfiled w/Bill 637 to prohibit using BPA; or House Bill 754, 659, and I'm sure more than I can mention, that all deal with making the environment, and ultimately the health of our children, and of our community, better.

Even today on the radio, I heard that Isiah Leggett will likely put the 5 cent price on grocery bags in Montgomery County next year, like DC did ~ specifically noting that this 5 cent chg is NOT for the revenue, but FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

If we undo this farm, we will be destroying decades of slow cultivation towards those very ends: our health and our environment.

On lack of Communication:

I'm surprised to have heard this news via neighborhood emails; rather than from you, our elected officials, and I don't understand how this lack of communication could have existed in the 1st place.

There are emails milling around eluding to the possibility of talks behind closed doors, a letter from Dr. Weast has him giving the "OK" to the superintendent to change lease hands ~ while, in the same letter, Dr. Weast seems to be shifting responsibility to others as far back as Nov '09; there's an email stating that last Nov. MSI was alluding to the fact that plans are underway for them to get the Brickyard lease ~ it goes on and on, and I'm sure if we were to all share our emails, we might come up with a myriad of finger pointing from one office, "staff," or elected official to another.

I want to know how this lack of communication with the Community occurred.
I want to know precisely who signed what, and where does it state that communities can be changed w/o that community's involvement?

Finally on why I don't think that Brickyard is a good site for a Ball Field:

I grew up next to a Ball field, and we had a 2-way street w/pull-off lines on both sides. When games were there, it was common to see double parked cars on BOTH sides, cars making u-turns & weaving in and out, families and teams lugging lawn chairs & sports equipment, with kids darting across the street, in both directions ~ it was crazy. Not to mention cars parking in our grass, trash left behind, our lawn chairs taken ~ even our recycling containers. These problems are all above and beyond noise, lights, artificial turf.

Perhaps my 13 yr old daughter said it best:

When I explained that the School Board was deciding to put a soccer field where the cornfield is, she cut me off:

"Do NOT put a soccer field here!

A lot of people live here because it's peaceful. It's not like it's a new neighborhood that has a soccer field and you decide to move there: This is an old neighborhood with a lot of older people living here, who have lived here all of their lives, and the traffic will be too hard for them.

What about all the kids who walk and ride bikes w/their families? All the cars would be dangerous for them too. Our neighborhood is a quiet, pleasurable-like neighborhood ~ not a place for a soccer field, and all that would come with that.

A soccer field is a 'want,' not a 'need': We've lived this long w/o it, therefore, WE CAN LIVE W/O IT! Just help them to see that Mom."

While I may choose to go the route of becoming more involved @ some point. I hope that my insights here will help to convince you to please put off taking the lease from the Marvell Farm @ this time. There are many issues @ hand that will affect us permanently, and the Community's voice has not been heard.

If changes can take place with no input from the Community ~ then why did we vote you in to begin with?

Respectfully,
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