

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

May 26, 2011

Mr. John M. Robinson
President, Rock Creek Hills Citizens' Association
9616 Old Spring Road
Kensington, Maryland 20895

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
COUNCIL

2011 JUN -8 AM 9:46

Dear Mr. Robinson:

This letter is sent in response to your letter of May 18, 2011, regarding concern over the Board of Education's selection of the Rock Creek Hills Local Park property for the location of a new middle school in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster. This future school is temporarily referred to as Bethesda-Chevy Chase Middle School #2 (B-CC MS #2).

I understand Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff in the Department of Facilities Management presented information about the site selection and feasibility study processes at your association meeting of May 17, 2011. I am sorry to hear that following the MCPS staff presentations, your association took a formal vote to oppose the construction of a middle school on the Rock Creek Hills Local Park property and to file an appeal of the decision to the Maryland State Board of Education.

On April 28, 2011, the Board of Education took the action that selected the Rock Creek Hills Local Park property as the location for the new B-CC MS #2. Rock Creek Hills Local Park remains the only property deemed viable for use as a middle school by the Site Selection Committee, which reviewed 10 candidate sites. Because there were no other choices to consider and this project needs to move forward, it was important for the Board of Education to make the decision on the Rock Creek Hills Local Park site at the April 28, 2011, meeting.

An important consideration in the Board of Education's selection of the Rock Creek Hills Local Park site was the fact that this was the previous location of Kensington Junior High School. Kensington Junior High School was closed in 1979 and the property transferred to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for redevelopment as the park that exists today. Conditions that are laid out in the transfer agreement enable MCPS to reclaim the property for public school use, if needed. No member of the Board of Education would wish to remove a park from a community unless it was absolutely essential. However, in this instance, reclamation of this former school property is essential to the education of middle school students in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster.

While I respect the position that your community has taken on this matter, the Board of Education has a responsibility to continue to move forward on this extremely high priority middle school. The feasibility study that the Board of Education authorized with its

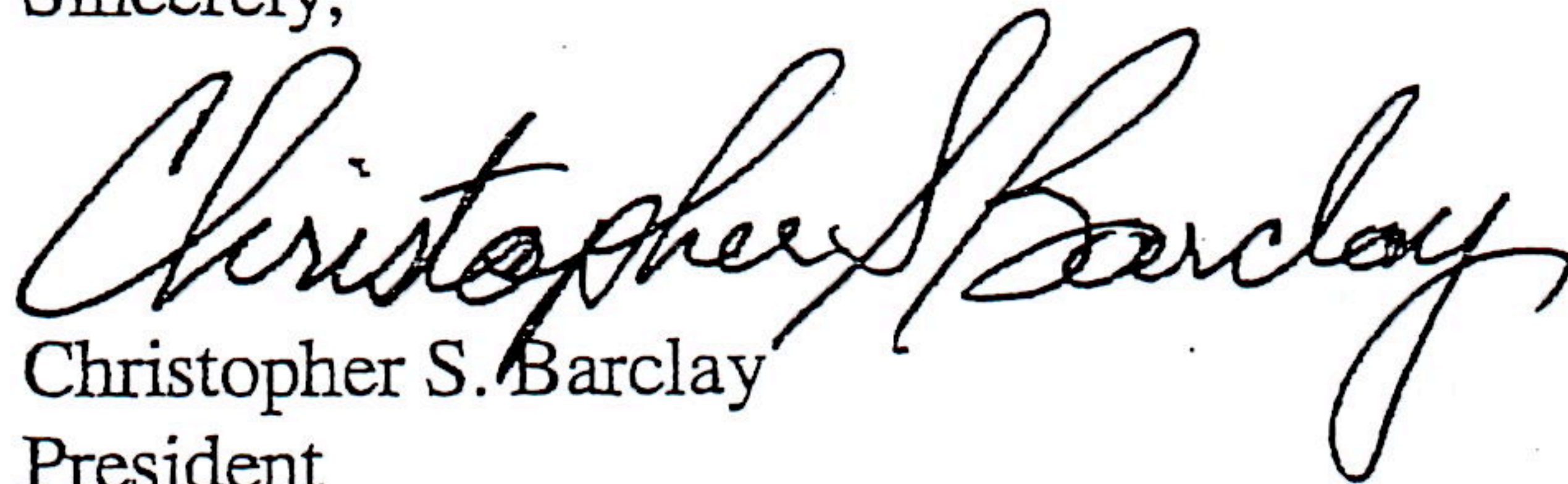
April 28, 2011, action needs to begin in the coming weeks. The appointment of an architect to conduct the study occurred at the May 23, 2011, meeting of the Board of Education. After this appointment, the feasibility study meetings will be scheduled and widely advertised so that the community can be involved in the study.

I urge your community to actively participate in the feasibility study process. Public schools are significant community assets that, in addition to educating children within their walls, include outdoor playfields and facilities that are available for broader community use after school hours. Therefore, building a middle school at Rock Creek Hills Local Park will not completely remove outdoor recreational and green spaces.

The feasibility study process will enable members of your community to become involved in the development of a range of ways to position the school on the site, have traffic concerns addressed, and find ways to limit the impact of the school on adjacent properties. I assure you that community input received during feasibility studies plays a major role in how our schools are designed and ultimately built to fit the circumstances of the site and local community.

Thank you for your understanding of the importance of this project to Montgomery County Public Schools and to the parents and students of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster.

Sincerely,


Christopher S. Barclay
President

CSB:imt

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