

January 14, 2016

Dear Mayor Silberberg, Vice Mayor Wilson, and Members of City Council:

The Board of Directors of the Seminary Hill Association, Inc., (SHA), with the participation of SHA members and neighbors, strongly recommends that the following requirements be part of any DSUP for the proposed new recreation center attached to an expanded Patrick Henry School:

1. The proposed recreation center should be attached to the school, as at present. To allow a free-standing structure would greatly increase the structural footprint and reduce precious green space.
2. Park amenities that would be eliminated by the current plan—namely the tennis courts and the basketball court—should be replaced on other parts of the Patrick Henry tract. They provide important outdoor recreational opportunities in Seminary Hill and the West End that must not be lost.
3. Neighborhood access to the remaining green space on the tract should be maximized. There should be no fenced or lighted artificial turfed fields that limit recreational use by neighbors and other West End residents.
4. Automobile entrances and parking lots for the school and recreation center should be off Taney Avenue, as is presently the case; and there should be no curb cuts on Latham Street to ensure safety.
5. A neighborhood advisory group, made up of surrounding homeowners and other residents should be mandated, to be created immediately upon the approval of the DSUP, through the period of construction and during the active use of the facility.

The present configuration of green space around Patrick Henry School has been an important element in the lives of many in Seminary Hill, Strawberry Hill, Seminary Valley, and other area neighborhoods. The Parks and Recreation Department survey of Alexandria residents has demonstrated that a principal interest in the city is for accessible green space for informal outdoor recreation. In addition, the joint ACPS and City of Alexandria Long Range Education Facilities Plan states that “*school sites shall avoid any net loss of open space on the property and seek to improve the quality of the open space on existing sites.*” Ironically, this new recreation center has the effect of reducing prime green space for outdoor recreation. Every effort must be made to preserve and protect the land that remains.

We look to the Mayor and Council to require that the DSUP for this project as brought forth from the Planning Office contains the five provisions outlined above.

Sincerely,



Nancy R. Jennings, President
Seminary Hill Association, Inc.

Cc: City Manager Mark Jinks
Deputy City Manager Emily Baker
Department of Planning and Zoning Karl Moritz Planning
Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities James Spengler
Members of the Alexandria School Board
Superintendent ACPS Alvin L. Crawley