

October 13, 2016

Members of the School Board:

The Seminary Hill Association, Inc. (SHA), understands the need for balancing our elementary schools in light of unexpected student growth in Alexandria. SHA appreciates the degree of citizen participation that has been built into the redistricting process; however, SHA wishes to express concern over several redistricting options currently under consideration by the redistricting review committee.

Specifically, SHA is deeply concerned with redistricting options 1, 2, and 3 and instead strongly supports options 4 and 5. Our members believe options 4 and 5 are most consistent with the redistricting criteria set by you, the School Board, while promoting neighborhood schools and keeping members of the northern sections of Seminary Hill together. In addition, we understand that there is a possible option 6, which closely resembles option 5, that we also support. While we understand that regional growth has taxed the existing school infrastructure, we see no benefits to dividing our neighborhoods and disrupting the academic and social development of a few students (only 20) for no positive benefit to the City or ACPS, at large. Like you, our goal is to promote individual student success, ensuring that each student has an opportunity for consistent, dependable relations with his/her school, teachers, facility, and student body.

In applying the Board's Fair and Sensible Boundaries Criteria, options 4 and 5 promote fair and sensible boundaries, rather than arbitrarily dividing our neighborhoods. Options 4 and 5 keep the children in Marlboro Estates and on North Early Street (Planning Blocks 64 and 66) at MacArthur Elementary, rather than separating them from the contiguous surrounding area (Planning Blocks 60, 65, and 67). Furthermore, options 4, 5, and 6 reunite Seminary Hill children from Kings Hundred (Planning Blocks 62-63), who had been sent across I-395 to John Adams School by previous redistricting and zone with students in contiguous Planning Blocks 64 and 68.

Assessing the school boards Diversity Criteria, residents of Marlboro Estates and North Early Streets—a racially, ethnically, and economically mixed community—seek to remain within and add to the diversity of the MacArthur Elementary School district. This neighborhood has been an integral part of the MacArthur community for over thirty years, dedicated to improving academic excellence, contributing through Parent Teacher Associations, and recreation leagues assigned by school district. While moving this neighborhood out of MacArthur will destroy this long-standing relationship, the move to Patrick Henry, affecting approximately a dozen children, will have minimal impact on the balance of students across schools. Furthermore, allowing the very small number of students in Kings Hundred (Planning Block 63) to join their neighbors attending MacArthur, rather than crossing a major highway into a different community will not alter the rich diversity at MacArthur.

Based on the Board's Transportation Criteria, Options 4 and 5 that unite the northwest section of the Seminary Hill neighborhood in one school streamline transportation routes and minimize bus time. With respect to Enrollment Capacity Criteria, options 4 and 5 generate only 20 current students from the affected area and bring MacArthur under its maximum capacity, rather than at overcapacity in Options 1-3.

For the reasons stated above, Seminary Hill Association, Inc., strongly urges the School Board to select option 4 or 5, or possibly a new option 6. We appreciate your attention and responsiveness to our serious concerns and hope you will take the time to meet and discuss this issue with us.

Very truly yours,



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