

June 5, 2009

Dr. Morton Sherman  
Superintendent, ACPS  
Members of Alexandria School Board  
2000 N. Beauregard Street  
Alexandria, VA 22311

Dear Dr. Sherman and Members of the Alexandria School Board:

We are writing to you today as neighbors of TC Williams and as representatives from the Community Construction Advisory Committee for the high school. We served on the Construction Advisory Committee for the 4 years of planning and construction. That experience was largely very positive and we felt Hensel Phelps and ACPS, especially Mark Burke, addressed our concerns in an efficient manner.

There are, unfortunately, several issues that were not resolved during the post construction phase of the project and these continue to adversely impact our neighborhood today. We have attempted on numerous occasions to work with the administration of TC Williams, but have not been able to reach a satisfactory conclusion. We are bringing these matters to your attention in the hope of advancing discussions. Our concerns center around 3 major issues.

The first issue is the sound system used at Parker Gray Stadium. As John Porter knows, this was a major source of complaints with the school in the years prior to the demolition of the old building. The sound from every athletic event spilled into our yards and our homes. Repeated calls to the school over a number of years brought no resolution, but we were assured that when the new school was constructed, a new sound system would be installed that would minimize this sound bleed into adjoining neighborhoods. It is important to note that in the Development Special Use Permit submitted with the Site Plan, the ACPS stated, "the public address system for outdoor sporting events will be adjusted to diminish the sound extending into the neighborhood."

At one of our last Construction Committee meetings, representatives from the sound system company were present and assured us that they were aware of our concerns and that the system would be set up in such a way to minimize the sound coming to us. We asked to be included in a trial of the new system so adjustments could be made before the system was actually put into service, but this never happened.

Beginning with last fall's football games, the sound coming from the new system varied wildly in volume levels. Some games are within a totally acceptable range where the sound is audible, but not intrusive. So we know it is possible to achieve this result. Other events have, however, projected a volume and clarity of sound into our neighborhood that far exceeds what the old system was capable of doing. Residents on

Quaker and Vicar Lanes have complained to us about the new level of sound. On these occasions, we can hear the commentary **inside** our homes with all our windows closed. This is totally unacceptable to all of us in the Chapel Hill neighborhood.

When we report these instances to John Porter and other school officials, we receive a courteous reply from Mr. Porter (who still appears to be our only point of contact) saying the school apologizes and will try to see that it doesn't happen again. And yet, it inevitably does. The Athletic Director at TC Williams has never responded to any of our communications regarding the sound system, yet we assume he has the actual responsibility for operating and staffing the sound system.

We have repeatedly requested that the sound company representatives come to our neighborhood for a test during a stadium event so they could be in live contact with the announcer in the press box to establish an acceptable level for the spectators and our neighborhood. The sound system could then be set at that level with a device that would not allow the many different announcers to re-adjust the sound for each event, as currently happens. This seems to be an easy problem to solve; yet the school refuses to work with us to reach a satisfactory compromise. We fully understand that we will always hear some noise from the sound system due to our proximity to the school, but there is a vast difference between hearing muffled noise from the stadium to hearing an event broadcast inside our homes and we have endured the latter long enough. We ask that you help us resolve this sound problem.

Our second issue involves the use of the Emergency Vehicle Easement from Chinquapin Drive. This was a late modification made to the EVE mandated by Code Enforcement. The Woods Avenue entrance was always contemplated and was to be secured by a locked entrance to preclude vehicular traffic, except for emergency and police vehicles (Site Plan Condition # 34). The Chinquapin Drive access point for the EVE has the same locked gate, but this entrance remains unlocked and open most of the time. This allows regular traffic to use the EVE, which violates the intent of mandating the EVE be added on this side of the property. The Woods Avenue side remains in the closed and locked position, but the Chinquapin Drive side is not secured. We have brought this situation to the attention of the TC Williams administration and were assured that the gate should be closed and would be secured. This has not happened. This road is extremely close to neighboring homes and it is for that reason that we would like to ask that the ACPS comply with the purpose of the EVE and close off access to it except in emergency situations.

Finally, we would like to ask that ACPS comply with item #69 of the staff Conditions to the SUP by creating the Community Advisory Committee "to provide a permanent forum for discussion and resolution of neighborhood issues that arise as a result of the ongoing operation of the new high school." We have repeatedly pressed for this to happen and finally several months ago a meeting was held. At that meeting, no permanent membership composition or meeting schedule was established. We believe that the issues we are concerned about today could be resolved in such a forum, but ACPS and TC Williams administration have not been willing to get this committee up and running.

At this point, no one knows who is on the committee or how to set up a meeting, so we are turning to you for direction on this matter.

We should mention that we are pleased that ACPS has put in new plantings along the rear perimeter of the school property. Fortunately, we have had a very wet spring so they are off to a good start. We do have concerns about the ongoing watering and maintenance of these plants, based on past experience. The type of plants, e.g. rhododendrons, are not well suited for high sun and potential drought conditions and we worry that they will once again die unless there is a clear understanding of their horticultural requirements and a clearly delineated responsibility for their upkeep. In the past, there has been disagreement about whether ACPS or Alexandria Parks and Rec has responsibility for the maintenance of the rear perimeter property and plants. We hope this confusion has been resolved and responsibility for the upkeep of the plantings has been clearly assigned.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns. We apologize for having to bring these matters to your attention, but we honestly feel we have exhausted all school channels and have not achieved satisfactory resolution. We look forward to hearing from you on these matters.

Sincerely,

Carter Flemming  
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Alexandria, VA 22302

Steve Harkness  
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Alexandria, VA 22302