

President Leventhal and Members of the Council;

We have been made aware of matters related to the SLES controversy that were discussed at today's work session of the ED Committee, and of Mr. Denis' request for public comment on the most recent proposal brought forward by MCPS and the BoE. We have read both President Haughey's letter (May 15) to you and the Superintendent's Memorandum (May 12) to the BoE. Given the extremely short notice that we - and the many other interested citizens - have been given to comment on this latest "solution", it was quite fortunate that we were able to convene a meeting of the Civic Federation Executive Committee last night, at which we discussed the matter (upon which we believe you are to take action later today, May 18) and to craft this response.

WE REJECT THIS LAST-MINUTE PROPOSED "SOLUTION". Briefly stated, our reasons (many of which have been presented in various testimonies) include:

1. There is no mention of the fate of the Kendale site. MCCF remains adamant that school sites should not be surplussed. We have collected NUMEROUS suggestions from the Community for possible uses of the Kendale site to satisfy MCPS needs. We maintain that the Community should thoroughly discuss these, in an appropriate time frame; that time is NOT now.

2. The fact that the current SLES is to be given only "minor maintenance" strengthens the growing concern that the Seven Locks community is being punished for its consistent and articulate opposition to the abrupt reversal of the plans for replacement of SLES at Seven Locks. The growing tide of rumors is only one sign of the hemorrhaging of public trust that is occurring.

3. The clear and long-standing need for more space in the Churchill cluster is being conflated with the EMERGENCY need for replacement of portables that constitute a health risk. Resolve that health problem IMMEDIATELY, independent of any decision on the SLES issue. And if there is concern that funds in the current budget might be wasted, then make an emergency authorization to use such funds IMMEDIATELY to replace ALL such dangerously substandard portables throughout our county school system.

4. If the desire to increase capacity as quickly as possible is the overarching issue, then building SLES-R on SLES is still the fastest. Why can it not be completed by December 2008 - as per the superintendent's memo of April 20 and the task force report on option 2A? Why should we give credence to a projected completion date of August 2009 for Kendale at Bells Mill? The superintendent's memo of April 20 started out projecting completion of SLES-R on Kendale by December 2007. It ended projecting the earliest completion as being August 2008. By the time of the BoE hearing on May 1, Ms. Cox was talking about December 2008. Then the public was told there was some confusion about the dates. INDEED!! How many "errors", how much "confusion", are we to accept before we conclude that either no

one knows what the most likely completion date is - or - worse, that the dates and the cost numbers are being deliberately juggled?

5. If ALL components of the Churchill cluster PTAs and communities could sit down at the table, have a thorough discussion, and agree that building Kendale at Bells Mill is really best for all, MCCF would NOT object. We do not claim to have the wisdom or perspective of those members of the Community who are most directly affected in this matter. But the process must be open, consistent, and transparent. And SLES must be appropriately expanded/modernized at its current location. Furthermore, the entire Community (including MCCF) MUST be assured that Kendale will NOT be surplussed.

6. The memo from President Haughey implies unanimity of the BoE. We have reason to doubt the accuracy of this statement and urge you to weigh carefully the potential consequences of taking action based on such a last minute proposal that is not indeed the result of careful deliberation by the entire BoE, based on a fully articulated plan.

7. Many would argue that we are hurtling towards the kind of train wreck that is inevitable when proper process is not followed and deadlines are reached abruptly. If you MUST make such an important decision under such immense pressure and with so little time, we maintain that the steps we advised on May 2 are the only realistic steps available to you. You have already taken a portion of one of those steps. Please complete all three NOW. We are watching this latest twist with growing concern about the long term effects of this flawed process.

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