

Community Conversations
About Montgomery College's Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus
Meeting #2 – Online Comments
May 9, 2017

Note: Each block below are the comments made by one person.

1.
 1. As a general comment, the college has not provided sufficient documentation with which to provide meaningful comment.
 2. Please provide any and all information pertaining to the feasibility analyses performed by the college or its agents on the future development and use of the Burlington Avenue property.
 3. Please provide any and all information on the cost of development of the Burlington Avenue site for all considered uses.
 4. Whatever this process is, it is not consultation as required by the 2002 Agreement. The current master plan under discussion is therefore deficient and the college's most recently submitted master plan is not a proper basis for this discussion.

Lorraine Pearsall

2. This is not a "community conversation." Montgomery College -- without the input of its students, faculty or the taxpayers who provide a major part of their operating budget -- is using these meetings to tell all of us that they have decided what is best, and that we have no role in their decision-making process. The college has rejected working groups for the design process and ignores completely the Silver Spring community. It produces master plans based on a meeting with 12 people without meaningful input from the community or the student body.

The petition signed by 130 neighbors and users of Falcon Hall asking that it be saved has been completely ignored by the college as were objections voiced in meetings. The college changes its story depending on the audience. In a meeting with the East Silver Spring Civic Association, college officials actually claimed they had consulted with pool users and the students about their plans. Both of those statements were false. As we know from the May meeting, the head of the TP/SS student council was informed on the meeting that afternoon and had no idea that Falcon Hall was going to be torn down.

The college is arrogant, dishonest and opaque in its decision-making and communication with its stakeholders. It also cannot produce a credible written account of its decision-making process with documented input from a broad range of stakeholders or the alternatives it considered, and the costs of those alternatives. How can we evaluate the "fiscal prudence" of the college and whether the needs of the various stakeholders are balanced without such documents and adequate time to study them? How can those "needs" be balanced when the stakeholders are not consulted before decisions are made? On most college campuses, 39-year-old buildings are renovated and preserved, not demolished. Where are these decisions documented? Documents produced at the ESSCA meeting claiming to show the poor condition of Falcon Hall were not distributed at the May community conversation, nor were there similar documents provided about the rest of the buildings that that are scheduled to be renovated -- which are the majority of buildings on campus. In fact, Falcon Hall is the only building on campus that will be demolished and not replaced. The college renovated the commons and Pavilion 3 and plans to renovate other pavilions. All of them are approximately 39 years old. But it cannot renovate the Science Buildings without destroying Falcon Hall. Why? What is the cost of renovating those buildings? Labs are labs; they can be reconfigured. The college says the eight-year design construction plan in the previous master plan will be cut to four years with its revised plan. A close look at the plan and Dr. Pollard's statements indicate that this shorter timeframe results only because Science North is not being demolished. The current plan is that Science South will be replaced and Falcon Hall demolished in four

years. Science North is supposed to then be replaced with a fitness center. However, Dr. Pollard and other officials have admitted that there will be no public funds for a fitness center. Therefore, Science North will not be demolished and replaced with a fitness center -- or with anything. If it is, there will be another four-year design and construction phase. Ergo: eight years. Exp: The college is very cagy about the future use of the Burlington surface parking lot, except to claim that it is needed for parking instead of a science building. However, 70 parking spaces will be lost in the new Science South/planetarium building. There are fewer spaces in the Burlington lot, and empty spaces in the covered parking lot behind the health science building will easily replace them. Previous proposed plans had been to use the lot for a mixed retail/residential building. Surely with all of the construction in Silver Spring and the lack of building space for this campus would torpedo that plan. The college claims that it would need an eight-story math and science building on the parking lot to replace Science South and North, and that labs should not be in such a high building. But the college is not replacing Science North so a four-story building is all that is needed. A building at that location would be especially useful to the health sciences students --which are the focus of the campus. It is even unclear if the college needs additional classrooms. The college claims in the master plan an increase of 2,600 students at the TP/SS campus by 2023, or a 31 percent increase over the current enrollment of 7,500. But at a meeting of East Silver Spring Civic Association, Susan Madden said enrollment was projected to increase only by 1-2 percent, or 150 students. Which is true? And what about the 85 percent enrollment rule in the new master academic plan that would increase the use of existing classrooms? The college presents no credible information about its need for a new bigger planetarium and a conference center. In fact, it is not even mentioned in the master plan, but now has become a major reason for demolishing Falcon Hall. The focus of the TP/SS campus is health sciences, not astronomy. A recent article in the Washington Post listing resources to observe Jupiter and Saturn events this summer did not even mention the TP/SS planetarium, and it appears that no activities are planned? (Jupiter and Saturn light up the night sky . . ." WP, C6, 5/28/17) Occasional visits by Boy Scouts -- as mentioned as justification for a new planetarium at the May meeting -- are not sufficient to justify tearing down a fitness center used on a daily basis, especially when there is a planetarium in Rock Creek Park and an actual observatory at the University of Maryland. (How much of the cost of the new Science South is for the planetarium and conference center, and what is its footprint? Is it a money-making project of the Montgomery Foundation? What is the actual purpose of a conference center? The performing arts center has a large, frequently unused auditorium. I could go on and on. I live 1/2 block from the college and have always thought that it was an honor to be so close. This experience has completely changed my mind. For the first time, I understand why residents choose to fight the college. The college brought this dispute on to itself by acting like an autocracy. I am sure that the college expects to wear all of us down by its arrogance and refusal to actually have a conversation. Perhaps they will, but the bad taste they leave in everyone's mouth will only rebound back on it over many years. Why should the students suffer for this?

Edith Holleman

3. STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF MONTGOMERY PRESERVATION INC. My comments are on behalf of Montgomery Preservation Inc. (MPI), the county's non-profit preservation advocacy organization. Having attended the second round of conversations and the recent meeting of the East Silver Spring Citizens Association (ESSCA) devoted to discussion of the Montgomery College Facilities Master Plan, I wish to reiterate the major concerns of our organization. MPI opposes construction of any buildings in historic Jesup Blair Park, and we urge the college to retain the historic and aesthetic character of the Takoma Park Historic District. We are aware that the college has the status of a quasi-state/local entity, immune to the provisions of the Preservation Ordinance that affects historic districts as well as sites like Jesup Blair Park and Moorings Mansion that are listed on the County's Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Nevertheless, we understand that the college has stated that it would respect County preservation law in the Takoma Park area. If Montgomery College is to be a good neighbor in the County, it will honor our County's well-crafted preservation law and agree to local control administered

by our Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). We're concerned that at the May 15 ESSCA meeting, college officials stated that their Facilities Master Plan would continue to consider building a potential new health and fitness center in Jesup Blair Park to replace Falcon Hall. This would contradict any stated assurance to respect preservation law as well as to protect trees – there are numerous trees in the area of the park where a new building would conceivably be located. The park and mansion, in addition to their indisputable historic value, are an asset to the adjacent campus, providing a pleasant setting and welcome green space for the college's students, faculty, staff, and community residents to enjoy, without the incursion of new buildings that would dwarf and intrude upon the existing landscape. College officials have also stated that they wish to protect the historic character of Takoma Park's Historic District, although the inclusion of words like "as much as possible" is cause for concern. Dense new buildings adjacent to the Historic District could undoubtedly erode the character without impeccably careful design. The preferred option in our opinion would be to locate the Math/Science building on the Burlington Foundation parking site. There, density would not be a concern, and this option would avoid the disruption (and expense) of demolishing college buildings in Takoma Park. We urge the college to consider the numerous comments from conversation participants offering advantages and ideas for utilizing the Burlington site, including parking options. Moreover, and importantly, we would urge the college to clearly disclose the comparative costs of building on the Burlington site vs. replacing current structures in Takoma Park, so that the public has access to this information. Because of the complexities of density, siting, design, traffic, parking, and other issues, we believe it's important to have a Working Group that can take the time to discuss these issues. Of course, a practical Working Group cannot include every individual stakeholder, but the group should be as balanced and representative as possible and include members from the community (both Takoma Park and Silver Spring), the college, the city of Takoma Park, and the County Parks Department and Planning Department. The group should include Historic Takoma Inc., and also the Silver Spring Historical Society (as college officials have emphatically welcomed input from Silver Spring); these two organizations offer expertise and ideas on architectural value and harmony for the group to consider. MPI believes that Montgomery College can continue to prosper and to meet the needs of its students, faculty, and staff - goals we all share - while preserving the physical integrity of the Takoma Park Historic District and historic Jesup Blair Park.

Mary Reardon Vice President, Montgomery Preservation Inc.

4. I fully support the renovation of the TPSS Montgomery College campus. Having seen the plans, I don't believe it will have a negative effect on the neighbors. Instead the old buildings, which appear to be on their last legs, will be rebuilt and actually enhance the look of the surrounding neighborhood. Our community deserves first-rate classrooms and we are very fortunate that MC wants to invest in the future of down county families.

Therese Gibson

5. Please see our previous Comments from 3/21/17.

Historic Preservation: Under the Heading from Frequently Asked Questions, from MC's 3/21/17 Community Event: "Will the College Honor Historic Preservation Regulations?" MC answers they will do so in the City of Takoma Park, as well as City tree preservation and storm water regulations. We are well aware that MC has agreed to follow County preservation law in the City of Takoma Park Historic District. That is not the issue: They now must agree to follow County preservation law in Silver Spring especially since they are leaving their option open to someday build in Master Plan Historic Jesup Blair Park. MC is being evasive when they say they will follow all applicable historic preservation regulations. In 2002, The City of Takoma Park "persuaded" the College to agree to follow the County preservation code. MC is required to honor the preservation ordinance in the Takoma Park Historic District but they refused to

obey the code in historic Jesup Blair Park, and elsewhere in the County. To avoid local regulation, MC convinced the Courts that they are a quasi-State/County entity, and thus not subject to local historic preservation control outside the City of TP. This is an inequitable treatment and application of County law. Other quasi-State/County entities have agreed to honor the County Preservation Code, e.g., M-NCPPC. Why not MC? MC is not being a good neighbor. They seem to consider historic regulations in Silver Spring and the rest of the County a burden to be avoided and rolled back. MC should view the regulation and input from the HPC as a way to arrive at a better project. Another example of how detrimental this inequitable policy is: If MC purchases the historic 1927 North Washington Realty Building [on the Locational Atlas of Historic Sites & Structures], it could modify or even demolish the building without regulation from our HPC, and without input from the general public. One would think MC would see the problems deregulation causes in financial, environmental, ethical, and historical realms, and realize the historic preservation ordinance is there for a good purpose, to be followed by all for the benefit of all County residents. Since its inception in the late 1970s, it's shown to serve our community extremely well; it's a positive force and law. Inconceivably, MC has declared it should not be regulated by both State and County historic preservation agency and Commission in the rest of the County as MC agreed to and is required in TP. The State agency they are referencing is the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) administering Section 106 Review, however, this is advisory, not regulatory. MHT Section 106 review process states "Ultimately the historic preservation review process does not proscribe an outcome. It is a consultative and deliberative process.... Agencies should be aware that certain local jurisdictions [Montgomery County in this case] administer their own historic preservation review process. Local reviews are handled independently from the Section 106 process; they may generate helpful information that informs Section 106 consultation." Continuing from the Q&A, "Will the College honor Historic Preservation Regulations?" MC mentions... "– the Mandatory Referral process – will ensure compliance with applicable regulations..." Only the HPC Staff and not the County HPC Commissioners will have input into the Planning Board Mandatory Referral Process which is only advisory in any case. At the ESSCA meeting on May 15, 2017, College officials were adamant they would not remove building in J.B. Park from the FMP for the "preferred" siting of a potential new Health & Fitness Center building to replace Falcon Hall. (This scenario is reinforced in Frequently Asked Questions, 3/21/17.) They said they want to keep their options open. Leaving open the possible siting of a College building in historic J.B. Park is all the more reason for MC to agree to abide by the County Preservation Ordinance Chapter 24-A. Park is on the Mo Co Historic Preservation Master Plan and the Park and Mansion are National Register eligible. Contrary to what MC says in their Q&A, one does not activate ". . . the Park to maximize its recreational value . . ." by filling Parkland up with buildings. The Park is so well utilized that the Parks Dept. is pressed to keep the popular soccer field grassy; and the Park trash free. It's a great Park for running, walking, tennis, basketball, throwing a ball, picnicking, exercising, events, and communing with Nature in a magnificent lush bucolic setting! See our Comments from March 21 for how thousands of new residents will be flocking to Silver Spring and the D.C./Georgia Ave. corridor; and will cherish Parkland which is sadly scarce in Downtown S.S. Falcon Hall: From MC Frequently Asked Questions: "How is Falcon Hall (including the swimming pool) affected by the College's plans?" If MC continues with its proposed plans to demolish Falcon Hall, MC students will be without a building for physical education for at least 6 years, and most likely several more years. MC mentions some swimming pool initiatives, but does not mention when the "under consideration" Adventist Hospital site pool, will, if ever, be built. MC underestimates the completion time for the other pool initiative in Downtown Silver Spring; the Elizabeth Square Project. Planning Dept. says pool opening would be Spring 2020 at the earliest, not Fall 2019 when MC says Falcon Hall will be demolished and possibly closed much sooner. Please have MC provide how much renovation reinvestment has been made in Falcon Hall recently since the basketball court floor was replaced, AC added, and roof repaired. This appears not to be reflected in the VFA "performed facilities condition assessment" of 2013. What are the upgrade life expectancies? These restorative costs, will be lost if Falcon Hall is demolished. Working Group. Design Charrettes are very important, but the Working Group we are meaning is for major issues: Siting, Density, Parking, and other major concerns. A Working Group can be inclusive and

balanced based on how it's designed. Tree Preservation. It is easy for MC to declare that "...any project would have to protect the trees..." [p. 4, Q&A] and even have a tree preservation plan if enforcement is non-existent. MC needs to explain how compliance will be achieved if the public notices violations of the agreement. In their past projects on campus, there have been no mechanism for bringing violations to MC's attention, or MC has refused to acknowledge their violations. Also, Forest Conservation Requirements for MC are riddled with exemptions, and an outdated 2009 amendment. It should be pointed out that the area of J.B. Park where MC has labeled "potential expansion opportunity" on the FMP, there are 25 trees in various stages of growth, including 3 historic old growth trees. Tree preservation is meaningless for those trees within the footprint of any College Building. Even those trees adjacent to a construction project cannot be guaranteed survival. The pedestrian bridge into the Park killed all the surrounding Old Growth Oaks even with "State of the Art" tree preservation techniques employed. All trees are in jeopardy wherever a building is constructed and placed, whether in the Park, or for the proposed area for the new Math Sciences Bldg. at Fenton & Takoma. However, there are no existing trees on the Burlington MC Foundation Parking Lot Site! Utilizing the Burlington Ave. MC Foundation Site: MC Foundation Property on Burlington now contains an 84-space surface Parking Lot. Many of us consider it prudent to use this lot for the next College Bldg., the Math/Science Building. Reasons: no buildings to demolish; thus avoiding all the environmental contamination that accompanies demolition; no student physical education component lost for many years; no massive building constructed adjacent to the Takoma Park Historic District residential neighborhood; and no intrusive building constructed in quality, historic, scarce, precious Parkland. On Burlington, stick with the necessary use at hand; the Math/Science & Labs Bldg. There are an infinite number of designs (test fits) for this facility, not just the four offered as examples. Reject residential, retail, office building types in the Test Fits scenarios. • Fill up the large square parking lot area with a Labs and Classroom building. Have Parking Lot Underneath building at ground level or build Parking below ground. • Build Labs on first floor without Parking; see other Parking ideas as described below. • Go up Maximum Height allowed; 120 feet of 8 to 10 stories. • Leave some floors unfinished if enrollment is down; complete interior finishes later. • Put on a Green Roof or Photo-Voltaic Grid • Place stormwater management under access road, King Street. MC states: "Science buildings with labs are expensive and tall science buildings are more expensive." But MC does not give figures for how much more, compared with building on the location of a demolished Falcon and Science South. Please include demolition costs. If expense is a major consideration, develop designs that feature Labs and classrooms, and eliminate retail, large lobbies, residential, and office buildings, as depicted in the "test fits." This would keep the building lower, and less expensive, but design should allow for adding more future levels up to 120 foot tall maximum height. Parking. One of the reasons floated by MC on why they would rather not utilize the Foundation Parking Lot on Burlington Ave. for the new Math/Science Bldg. is that they need the 84 spaces for the Cultural Arts Center, and other classrooms on the Silver Spring side, e.g., Health & Science Center, in addition to the 372 spaces in the West Garage, 46 spaces under Cafritz Bldg., and 10 spaces at Health Sciences Bldg. However, other options are available: At the ESSCA Mtg., the College did acknowledge that it might look into running a Shuttle Bus from the under utilized County parking garages in an arrangement with the Mo Co government. For instance, the College could pay the County for Student Parking in the underutilized Sarbanes Transit Center Garages. Besides an MC Shuttle idea, there is the Van Go every 7 minutes which runs by the edge of the Silver Spring side of the Campus from Sarbanes , or other buses to the College, Ride-On # 17 & # 18, and Metro Bus F4, 70 and 79 right to the Campus. Additional Parking: We noticed 185 spaces were available in the West Garage on Wednesday., 5/3/17, at 2 p.m. This figure does not include the spaces designated for Park patrons, nor for handicapped parking. We looked across the tracks at the East Garage, only 15 spaces were occupied on the whole top level, including the parkable ramp up to the top level. Clearly, on this day, parking was not a problem. Interesting parking facts from MC FMP: "Building an oversupply of parking would be costly and encourage more driving and less use of transit." "TP/SS Campus provides more than the minimum number of ADA spaces." "Parking Usage Surveys conducted annually by the College indicate that approximately 50 % of the West Campus is available in the evening." Mo College completed its

annual survey of Parking Occupancy in Sept. 2014, over 2 and-a-half years ago. "Parking deficit in 2023 using modified MHEC standards is [only] 375 spaces." There are many years to arrive at a solution for parking needs. If underground or under-building parking will be utilized for the proposed Math/Science Bldg. at Fenton & Takoma, why not also utilize these concepts for Math/Science Bldg at Burlington site.

George French
Marcie Stickle, Silver Spring Historical Society

5. Please let us hear from some students. Please wrap up community concerns into a manageable list (or encourage the protesting neighbors to do so) and provide those to the college and to all the neighbors. Ask for the college to respond by committing in writing to include in their upcoming RFP to the architect/planners the ones they agree with/can accommodate. And make that commitment public. If neighbors have any other concerns, they should voice them directly.

Amy Kincaid