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Fairfax County School Board Public Hearing, Thursday, November 30, 2023

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- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRanQKf03g0
- Official School Board page (FCPS): https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/leadership/school-board

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-02. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:06:07] Board members, if you can take your seats, we'd like to get started. We're already a little bit late.

[00:06:42] Mr. Foster, let me just clarify, we have six board members since we're in a public hearing. We have one board member on the way, but we have six at the table.

[00:06:58] We can get started, correct? Correct. Okay, thank you very much. The November 30th, 2023 public hearing on McLean Elementary School's capacity boundary issues is now called to order.

[00:07:17] Good evening and welcome to the public hearing on the McLean Elementary School's capacity boundary issues. On behalf of the entire school board, I would like to thank you for sharing your comments with us. This hearing is being broadcast on Channel 99 and live streamed at fcps.edu slash tv slash channel 99.

[00:07:41] We have 17 registered speakers who will address the board at this public hearing. Speakers are allotted two minutes and we ask that you stay within that time limit. the timer will start when you begin to speak and the timer will sound after two minutes please ensure that your remarks are limited to the McLean elementary schools capacity boundary issues if you have not registered to speak but would like to address the board please see the clerk or deputy clerk to sign up for one of the five extra reserved speaker slots madam clerk please call our first

[00:08:17] speaker Carl von Schultz good evening thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Kent Gardens boundary adjustment recommendation. My name is Carl von Schiltz and I live in the Brookhaven neighborhood with an easy walking distance of Franklin Sherman Elementary School. We are proud Franklin we are proud Franklin Sherman family with a son Otto who graduated last year and a daughter Muse who is currently a second grader there. I'm here to express

[00:08:54] my continued strong opposition to scenario B, the recommended scenario. To To alleviate overcrowding at Kent Gardens and preserve the French immersion program, students will have to be moved from Kent Gardens to other schools with the capacity to accept them.

[00:09:11] With three nearby elementary schools with the capacity to accept these students, not counting Churchill, there is absolutely no reason to also move nearly half of the current students at Franklin Sherman to Chesterbrook to make room for them. Yet Scenario B does just that.

[00:09:29] At the boundary study community meeting on September 27th, I presented a letter from the Brookhaven Forest Villa Civic Association, which represents most of the families with students that would be moved from Franklin Sherman to Chesterbrook, explaining our opposition to scenarios A through D and supporting scenario E as the only scenario that would solve overcrowding at Kent Gardens while keeping the Franklin Sherman community intact.

[00:09:56] Our views are nowhere reflected in the current recommendation. compromise remains possible. I propose that the 190 students that would be moved from Kent Gardens to Franklin Sherman under scenario B instead be divided so that half go to Franklin Sherman and half go to Chesterbrook. Although the new neighborhoods that would send students to Chesterbrook would not be contiguous with other neighborhoods sending students to Chesterbrook, they would be no further from the school than other neighborhoods that feed Chesterbrook to the east of the school. Most importantly the overcrowding

[00:10:32] Jennifer Gorski Rebecca Newman thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today my name is Rebecca Newman my child attends Kent Gardens we are not in the

[00:11:09] French immersion program I'm here in support of the portion of the FCPS staff recommendation for generous phasing for all rising second through rising sixth grade students to allow these students to remain at their prior assigned school for the 2024 to 25 school year and until they matriculate to middle school this is a critical aspect of the FCPS staff recommendation that I urge you to adopt in order to support the social and emotional well-being of our children especially after covid the phasing set forth in the recommendation gives families some say in the timing and roll out for their children the recommended phasing would also help families who might have special circumstances

[00:11:44] like those who may need sac who may have children with learning differences or who may be changing schools in a year such as military families or those who will be moving into non-local aap moreover and just as importantly the fcps staff recommendation on phasing would also be more consistent with the analogous recommendation to grandfather in all current French immersion program students who are by definition also rising second through through rising sixth grade students children who are not in the French immersion program should not be moved out of Kent gardens when they're similarly situated French immersion peers and neighbors in the same level grade levels are permitted to remain all of our children French immersion

[00:12:22] and non French immersion deserve to be treated equally and I hereby ask that you approve the FCPS staff recommendations on phasing in addition to the phasing aspect of the recommendation i would urge you not to support scenarios d or e because they would begin to bus walkers to either franklin sherman d or chesterbrook e d is uniquely terrible because it would create an incongruous attendance island along westmoreland near kirby bussing current kent gardens walkers to franklin sherman i understand fcps staff and the school board consider a boundary change necessary to confront the overcrowding at kent gardens approving the phasing recommended by fcps staff is appropriate given the choice to take any material changes to the french immersion program off the

[00:13:01] table and the choice not to reinvest in the kent gardens facilities thank you for your time doug taylor michael berry good evening and thank you to the board members and county staff for the opportunity to discuss this issue and recommendation my name is michael berry and i'm a representative of the dylan weaver avenues community spa 3021 and my family is part of the kent gardens elementary

[00:13:37] school with both current and future students. We are glad that the county has taken this step to resolve the capacity issues at Kent Gardens Elementary School. We are strongly in support of Scenario B as the best option for addressing the capacity issues at Kent Gardens. The county has weighed many options and challenges and we think this represents the best option to move forward. It reduces the current levels of utilization at Kent Gardens while minimizing the impact on the surrounding communities. Maintaining neighborhood cohesiveness and walkability is very important for this school and we agree with the county's recommendation for

[00:14:10] scenario b to balance those needs thank you very much amanda whitman who i believe is virtual is she here she's hello you may begin um my name is amanda whitman and my children attend kent garden elementary school i live in the kent gardens neighborhood which is next to the kent gardens greenway and kent gardens park my neighborhood sba is assigned as walkable to kent gardens elementary school and my children walk to and from school each day along with our

[00:14:49] Street which consists of 30 households and over 40 elementary aged and younger children. I fully support FCPS's Facilities and Planning's recommendation to proceed with Scenario B. Approving Scenario B ensures that current families that are zoned as walkers to Kent Gardens Elementary School remain walkers, therefore eliminating the need for additional bus routes.

[00:15:09] FCPS is under the strain of a bus driver shortage. If the school board were to rezone our neighborhood to another elementary school such as Franklin Sherman or Chesterbrook, our neighborhood would require additional school bus routes to attend elementary school. Scenario B ensures that there are no attendance islands unlike other proposed scenarios. Additionally, Scenario B eliminates the split theater program currently in place at Franklin Sherman. I understand that FCPS considers a boundary change necessary to confront the overcrowding at Kent Gardens and I truly appreciate the time and consideration that has gone into planning the five proposed solutions up to this point. Scenario B alleviates the current strain on the student

[00:15:47] population at kent gardens and contains future population strain at area elementary schools i believe that scenario b is the most logical of the proposed scenarios and should be fully

[00:15:57] supported and approved by the fcps school board thank you siri tazen she's virtual as well siri

[00:16:29] tazen hi yes do you see me i can't see myself i unmute oh start video here hi yes um thank you the board for inviting me to um to you know to public hearing today and allow me to talk so um my daughter goes to frenton german elementary school and she's in first grade um and the reason i'm here is to um to you know i'm opposed to the change of the school re-zoning of the kids

[00:17:07] the problem from one school um kent garden that became a bigger problem um today um you know we're all here today because we love our children we like to see our children thrive and excel in school during covet pandemic our children went through significant disruption mentally socially and academically for the past year our children have been learning to integrate back from social distancing, online learning, to finally in-person social interaction and in-person learning

[00:17:44] with their peers and teachers. By moving children to different schools, our children will be separated from their friends, teachers, and familiar environment. This will negatively impact our children both mentally and academically. Studies have shown that changing school can both mentally can can have a variety of study have sorry study have shown that changing school can

[00:18:15] have a variety of mental health effects on our on children including depression anxiety self-doubt and low self-extreme or self-esteem thus it is imperative for us to create stability in our children's life by maintaining the same group of friends, teachers, and familiar environment. One option, you know, I think of these or not, I think...

[00:18:55] Ms. Taysen, Ms. Taysen, your time has elapsed. Caroline Smith: Good evening. Thank you for this opportunity to welcome those who

[00:19:31] wish to share their experience, emotions, impact on families and neighborhoods with you this evening. My name is Caroline Smith. I am a mother of two daughters at Franklin Sherman but currently in kindergarten in third grade I'm also a Girl Scout Daisy co-troop leader so that impacts kindergarteners and first grade as well Franklin Sherman has a wonderful heart of a school I'm sure that's why we're so excited to open our arms and welcome kindergarten students in I thought it was a fabulous idea let's be helpers we have 25% capacity let them play let them come let them see a beautiful school I didn't

[00:20:10] realized it was going to come with 45 percent of our school leaving and breaking up the community that we have there. I live on Linway Terrace and the only scenario that would not personally impact me would have been scenario E. I understand the need to bring children out of the Kent Gardens and into a more supportive atmosphere where they're not learning in trailers and they can have, you know, more room to learn to grow. What I'm just asking is that we just take time, grace, and thoughtfulness with the decision. I like the phasing plan. Unfortunately, what it

[00:20:48] doesn't include is siblings. So that would allow for us to preserve my oldest daughter staying, but then also not my youngest. So I just, I'm kind of just asking that we don't just rip off band-aid here and try to just do like what is most streamlined of course we're going to need more buses it might take more staffing more tax dollars but let's just you know these children have been through a lot already they've worked hard to build their community at the schools that they're in i see it firsthand as a daisy troop leader i'd love to preserve that as much as we can and invite

[00:21:22] others in so thank you for your time zahara koreshi good evening perfect county school board thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you tonight and bring something to board's

attention about two years ago fcbs had a consulting firm evaluate a school and their surveys and their boundaries many parents responded to the consulting company provided an overview of

[00:22:02] the results of the survey during that meeting there was a strong emphasis on advanced placement linked immersion but no mention about school special education or split fitter schools currently my child attends a split theater school rolling valley elementary my son has autism adhd and anxiety he's limited verbally and has a hard time making friends naturally after years of speaking with peers about autism my son has formed relationships with his peers and they accept him and even advocate for him when he can't advocate for himself he's currently in sixth grade and over 90% of his peers are going to a different middle school then he will be and he will be the only special education

[00:22:36] student assigned to the different school and all those split feeders seem to be a great short-term solution to overcrowding it's a long-term impact on students it affects the students mental social well-being neurotypical or not We have learned for after COVID that the effects of mental health due to isolation split feeders inadvertently do the same Additionally in our pyramid. We're the only elementary school with a split feeder Therefore, it doesn't make sense to how it doesn't make sense How these 10 to 15 students make a huge impact on overcrowding classrooms for my son to be pulled from his community of middle and high School will be certainly detrimental to his mental health social well-being and an easy target for bullying

[00:23:14] Not to mention the loss of meaningful friendships. I've taken years to develop I asked the board to consider how split feeders affect students if the school student if the school split 50 50 that makes sense But not when it's 90/10 Additionally, the school board needs to evaluate boundaries get rid of small split feeders and provide some leniency or exceptions to people placement process for students with disabilities Please think about the split feeder from split feeders from all angles and not just within boundary lines

[00:23:39] I appreciate your time Katie O'Brien. She is not here with us and she was supposed to be virtual so Michael Apicelli

[00:23:59] Thanks so much. So good evening, school board. Thanks for affording me the chance to speak with with you tonight. I'm really kind of humbled by the the strong feelings and the great preparation from so many folks today. I'm afraid I don't I can't lay claim to either. I think, you know, I'm not really here to speak one way or the other in favor of any of the particular plans. I am a Kent Gardens dad who has two lovely daughters, one of whom will be impacted.

[00:24:39] by the redistricting plan the other who will not and so I heard you know earlier a really eloquent plea about siblings and I think you know my family is going to find ourselves in very much the same position we came we moved to McLean from from Paris because our two daughters had a strong backing and grounding in the French language and French culture they enjoy an extremely close relationship we have one fourth grader and one kindergartner and the fact that our fourth grader will be grandfathered or phased you know into and stay in

[00:25:17] Kent Gardens which we are so so happy for and she's so pleased about but it's going to be very hard for us to explain and share with our younger daughter why her circumstances would be so different and so I hear the pleas for stability I hear the pleas for you know emotional development and community development I I can only say that our two girls have really flourished from being in the same school this year and it would be very sad for us indeed to have to break them uh break them up and to explain to one

why she's moving on but the other one is staying and so I guess I would just say that you know well of course we will enroll our younger daughter in the French language lottery since she was again

[00:25:56] born born and and saw her first days in Paris we would ask that the school board consider uh that particular dimension and uh you know in in not wanting to divide families and specifically siblings up uh thanks so much for your time tonight mutha vinca to spramarine sorry mispronunciation that's okay i have a long name um my name is mutu

[00:26:31] and i'm a father of two daughters i'm a resident of mclean i'm a professor at in the computer science department at georgetown university i moved here from university of of Rochester during the pandemic. If you haven't moved during the pandemic, you don't know how it is to buy a house over Zoom.

[00:26:52] We moved, we chose the McLean area for its exceptional educational opportunities, notably the Kent Gardens Elementary and McLean High School. My family's decision to settle in Hallcrest Heights was driven by both the exceptional curriculum and the French immersion program at Kent Gardens, and crucially, the affordability.

[00:27:13] Today, I'm here to express my concern regarding the proposed zoning changes under scenario B. These scenarios involve moving zones SPA 3014 and 3015 from Kent Gardens to Franklin Sherman.

[00:27:28] This change concerns me deeply as it involves the two largest multifamily and townhouse communities within our current school boundaries, Stone Lay and Hallcrest Heights. Stripping Kent Gardens of these zones would not only diminish our school's cultural richness but also contravene the principles of the one Fairfax policy, which advocates for equitable opportunities for all.

[00:27:57] It is imperative to consider the long-term implications of these zoning changes. The diversity within Kent Gardens enhances the educational experience, preparing students for a globalized world. Maintaining these zones within the Kent Gardens boundary is not just a matter of logistics.

[00:28:15] It's about upholding a community's commitment to inclusivity and educational excellence. Thank you for considering my perspective on this issue. I urge giving scenario E a strong consideration as it would preserve the rich diverse educational environment at Kent God that Kent garden offers.

[00:28:36] Thank you Patrick weed. Good evening.

[00:28:52] Thank you for the opportunity. My name is Patrick Whitey the father of two daughters who are in Franklin Sherman one a kindergartner one in second grade. We have that sibling dynamic, also a young son who would be impacted by this. And so that is absolutely a big concern for us.

[00:29:09] And that's been mentioned here on a couple times. A few other points I'd like to make. Number one, the overcapacity issue, at least from the documents that were presented in all of, you know, those public websites, this is dating back to 2014.

[00:29:24] So almost 10 years, perhaps that goes back even longer. And then this rush starting in April 2023 to solve the issue through through reboundary changes. It's feeling very rushed. The communications on all of this did not suggest that other schools would be disrupted by way of children coming out.

[00:29:45] And so many of us were caught off guard by that. You heard that earlier. And that's been a frustrating element of all of this. Second point's already been noted. The overcapacity issue. can only be solved by removing students from Kent Gardens if we're going to do it through boundaries and not facilities and that's where we are right now.

[00:30:09] None of the scenarios presented they all impacted the other schools they all are taking students out of those to make way for that and as Mr. Carl noted based off the numbers both current and future there's absorption capacity without removing any of the other students from the other schools and so that was very surprising. The benefits described in Scenario B, they don't appear to be unique at all. They come from any of the scenarios that were presented. Those same benefits are there.

[00:30:43] The only thing that I saw that might be unique is that it is easier on the Transportation Department. I would urge the school board, given all of this, to at least consider the unintended CONSEQUENCES AND HAVING THE ALTERNATIVE.

[00:31:00] SARAH BLOOM. I'M A PARENT AT FRANKLIN SHERMAN AND I'M NOT AFFECTED BY THE BOUNDARY CHANGE IN SO MUCH THAT MY KIDS WILL STILL GO TO FRANKLIN SHERMAN.

[00:31:28] I AM AFFECTED IN THAT MY CHILDREN WILL LOSE SOME OF THEIR FRIENDS IF THOSE FRIENDS EITHER CHOOSE OR ARE FORCED TO GO TO THE OTHER SCHOOLS DUE TO THE SIBLING PROBLEM BECAUSE I COULD see some parents having to move both the children even if one has the option to stay so I would again urge considering an exception for siblings so that families are not broken up and can be maintained at the same school the other point I was interested in that didn't seem to be addressed so far is

[00:32:07] transportation in that it wasn't clear from what was posted whether people who choose to stay at the school that they're at and not get moved would still have transportation provided to them i don't know if that's something you could clarify at this meeting or if that's something to be decided later but um i would be interested in knowing what's happening on behalf

[00:32:28] of other people obviously my children are not affected directly thank you christina urich um good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak my name is christina urich and i'm a proud parent of four kids at franklin chairman elementary we're in second through fifth and we love our school and I just want to address one area of concern with you guys about the upcoming boundary change and I realize that option B makes a lot of sense from

[00:33:07] budgetary perspective because we'd only be netting about 38 students however I think you guys really know that we're being asked to hold her a disproportionate share of the load and I'm concerned that we're not going to be getting the resources that we need to help our kids make new friends so I think you've seen that of the 337 students at Franklin Sherman about half would have to move and then next year about half would be new and so I'm not aware of any other schools in the county that had to make this big a sacrifice on behalf of another school.

[00:33:34] So at a Franklin Sherman we have some programs in place and teachers who help kids make new friends and my four kids have benefited from these programs. We have an awesome guidance counselor by the way but anyway so we mean we might need more resources to help the new kids make more friends because one person doesn't just doesn't cut it and I'm sure our staff and parents would appreciate some additional resources to preserve everyone's sanity so um and I don't know about any new resources right now so if you decide to go to option b would you please reach out to our leadership team and see what kinds of resources they need to help make a successful transition and we have a wonderful school and we love our teachers and staff and I can imagine they would really really really appreciate a hand if we

[00:34:14] choose to go this route thank you Sarah Nearing so thank you very much uh for taking the time to LISTEN TO OUR THOUGHTS ON THIS MATTER FORGIVING ME FOR JUST A MOMENT I AM A PARENT OF TWO CHILDREN AT KENT GARDENS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL I AM ALSO A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF THE MCLEAN BROIHILL ESTATES OUR NEIGHBORHOOD WAS IS

[00:34:51] ALREADY SPLIT ABOUT A THIRD OF IT GOES TO FRANKLIN SHERMAN NOW AND TWO THIRDS OF IT GOES TO KENT GARDENS SO NOW OUR ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD WILL GO TO FRANKLIN SHERMAN WE THINK THAT THAT WILL MAKE FOR MORE CONTINUITY FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOOD and we agree with option B. However, by definition of our neighborhood moving to Franklin Sherman, like one of the reasons is because we're really far. And given the like the way that McLean is laid out, part of part of the nature of us being far means that we're also beyond several major roadways. So the reason I'm here tonight is to ask for transportation for the students who are

[00:35:26] getting phased. In particular, there are three to four major roadways between our home and Kent gardens so for our kids who are going to get phased in and stay it would be treacherous for them if their parents can't pick them up for kiss and ride in morning and afternoon to have to bike or walk from Kent Gardens to our neighborhood we already are surrounded by Great Falls Street Westmoreland Street Old Chesterbrook as well as Cambridge Cambridge is so closely connected to major arteries that when the beltway or toll road is backed up Cambridge becomes parking lot. So it would be incredibly treacherous for our kids to have to go get from school to

[00:36:05] neighborhood. And so we're strongly encouraging that you provide transportation through busing. And I'd like to remind everyone here that there are two kids who were killed in Prince George's County on November 20th while they were walking to school. Thank you very much. We encourage busing.

[00:36:21] Thanks Katie Zimmerman good evening thank you for having us I am a mom to three Kent Garden kids I am the president for my neighbor Sarah's the the McLean Broyhill Estates Civic Association we represent 270 households in McLean and I also spent a year substitute teaching at

[00:36:58] Kent Garden so I deeply understand the overcrowding issue at that school I love that school so much I would do anything for Holly McGuigan the principal given that I do understand that the overcrowding is an issue and we need to we support option B even though it affects our neighborhood and my children in particular it's I wanted to thank you for the process that's led up to this decision we felt we were heard included the community had lots of opportunities to be

[00:37:34] involved and have input so thank you for the process that came to this decision I do want to reiterate what Sarah just said about providing busing options for students who are going to be phased out of Kent Gardens just maintaining continuity for the families who currently go there the bell schedules between Franklin Sherman and Kent Gardens are vastly different so those already in the swing of how their mornings go um are going to have to consider having their children

[00:38:12] bike or walk to school uh and that's it's going to be frogger it's the the roads that divide us between um our neighborhood south of lewinsville park and kent gardens elementary is there's like four major roads uh it's kind of scary so um but thank you for the process thank you for um having

[00:38:33] us be involved throughout this whole decision-making process so thank you jennifer gorski thank you for having this meeting today i'm a parent of three boys at franklin sherman a kindergartner a

second grader and a fourth grader and i just want to implore the board to think really think about phasing and siblings it would be a really tough decision for our family to make our fifth grader

[00:39:11] leave all of his friends at franklin sherman because our rising first grader can't go to franklin sherman anymore with his two older brothers in addition his last person mentioned chesterbrook school starts a half an hour earlier than franklin sherman does so now we're having our youngest child come home a half an hour prior to his older brothers walking home from the bus through our neighborhood by himself where right now he can walk with his older brothers i know it's convenient for you guys to have a five-year plan which rising kindergarteners and

[00:39:51] rising first graders you know kind of get the shaft but i implore you guys to think about common sense so that the first day of school next year my six five-year-old is not asking me questions like mom why am i not riding on the same bus as my brothers why am i leaving a half an hour early why am i going to a different school i'm a panda why am i now you know a lancer i just really implore you guys to think about the questions that families are going to get if you're separating siblings especially already attending franklin sherman and if you decide to

[00:40:30] go ahead with the five-year plan then I invite all of you to come the first day of school to my neighborhood to answer those questions for my rising first grader who will be forced into a different school so that I don't have to make my fifth grader leave all of his friends so really please think about siblings and especially kindergartners who are already at a school that

[00:40:54] That's their school already. Thank you very much. Doug Taylor Katie O'Brien. Madam Chair that was the last public speaker. Thank you. I just I do want to mention that we have some frequently asked questions and some quite a bit of materials on the web page regarding the boundary adjustment. And so please take a look at that. And the vote will be on Monday where we will know at that point in time which scenario.

[00:41:40] option we're going with and what the phasing plan will be I will mention generally with phasing transportation is included so that may at least some fears that people have had that have spoken tonight but that will all be finalized you know after the vote on Monday so with that thank you so much for all of you for coming out on this chilly evening really appreciate all of your comments as I mentioned the board is scheduled to vote on this at a regular meeting this coming Monday, December 4th.

[00:42:13] So at this point, the public hearing is adjourned. Thank you for coming.

