



Prince William Conservation Alliance

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February 5, 2016

Mr. Ryan Sawyers, Chairman
Prince William County School Board
14715 Bristow Road
Manassas, VA 20112

Dear Chairman Sawyers,

Prince William County Schools' proposal to build a new elementary school at Chinn Park would replace forested parkland, wetlands, and walking trails with parking lots and buildings in an area that is under-served by parks. We urge you to withdraw your Public Facilities Review Application now.

Prince William County needs more schools. We are a growing community.

We also need more parks. Parks are good for our health, reduce crime, and help bring neighborhoods together. They are economic engines that improve our quality of life. Parks create communities that are desirable for businesses and homeowners. Studies find that homes adjacent to natural-area parks are valued 8% to 20% higher than comparable properties. Parks are an essential part of healthy communities.

Small company owners say parks and open space are the highest priority in choosing a new location for their business. Corporate CEOs indicate that employee quality of life is a primary factor in locating a new business. Converting parkland into a school, when other options are available, diminishes the County's capacity to meet our economic development goals.

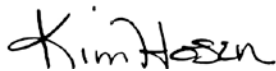
The proposed Chinn Park school is located in the Occoquan District, where there are approximately five acres of parkland per 1,000 population. This is not even close to Prince William County's standard of 15 acres per 1,000 population. And there is little opportunity to acquire additional parkland. Prince William's Capital Improvement Program shows a deficit of 4,324 acres of parkland as an "Unfunded Need."

Why should we sacrifice an irreplaceable asset when there are better opportunities for a new school? Re-purposing underused commercial space is the best option, such as the Fairfax County office building that became Bailey's Elementary School. Co-locating a school at the GarField High School site is another option. And isn't it time to start building up instead of out?

We hope you will also ensure that your future development proposals are complete and correct. Your application for the Chinn Park school does not accurately represent existing conditions, including the Resource Preservation Area. It also fails to identify slopes 15% or greater, utility easements, limits of clearing and grading, and specimen trees, at least five have been identified and tagged by your staff. VDOT has expressed serious concerns about outstanding issues regarding access to the site and rejected your Transportation Impact Analysis.

Parkland is not an acceptable option for new school sites. We look to our schools to instill character in our children, teach them problem-solving, and help them learn to be good citizens. These same skills we are asking you, as a school board member, to use. Preserving parkland and green open spaces helps forward-thinking communities create a bright future and sets a good example for Prince William County students. We urge you to withdraw your Public Facilities Review application for a school at Chinn Park now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Hosen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kim Hosen
Executive Director

cc: Lillie Jessie
William Deutsch
Diane Raulston
Alyson Satterwhite
Gil Trenum
Justin Wilk
Loree Williams