

Ms. Kathleen E. Byrne  
Director/Hearing Examiner  
Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings  
Montgomery County, MD  
100 Maryland Avenue, Room 200  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Ms. Byrne,

We are writing to oppose special exception request CBA-1174-E submitted by the Holton-Arms School (“*Holton*”) that seeks to increase academic year and summer camp enrollment, expand the use of rental facilities to outside groups, construct a dedicated left-hand turn lane on the Al Marah side of Royal Dominion Drive, and utilize overflow parking at Primary Day School (“*PDS*”).

Our neighborhood sits directly across River Road from Holton and is a closed neighborhood (i.e., there are only two access points into the neighborhood, both off River Road). For years, parents dropping off students at both Holton and PDS have used our neighborhood to bypass traffic on River Road during the morning rush hour. This has created persistent safety concern as drivers frequently speed and drive aggressively, all while public school students are waiting for buses and neighbors are outside on their morning walks. Despite repeated complaints and efforts by residents to work collaboratively with both schools to address the issues, they have largely ignored our concerns and actually encourage parents to cut through our neighborhood.

We have lived at the intersection of Burdette and Royal Dominion Drive for 12 years –our house sits in the middle of the affected cut-through route. During that time, we have personally observed and experienced numerous incidents involving Holton and PDS traffic (such persons being identified by observing the occupants school uniforms and school stickers on cars), including:

- Vehicles speeding, not coming to a complete stop at intersections, and driving over the centerline of both Burdette and Royal Dominion Drive.
- Hostile behavior (i.e., being honked at, yelled at, cursed at, and obscene hand gestures) for blocking Royal Dominion Drive for 5 seconds while I back my car into my own driveway. On one occasion the parent sped behind me while I was backing up and drove across my driveway apron because they were in such a rush and so angry.
- On multiple occasions, I have narrowly avoided being struck by distracted/speeding vehicles. In one instance, a minivan turning onto Burdette at a high rate of speed crossed into the opposing lane and failed to see me walking my dog. I had to shout to alert the driver, who braked abruptly and stopped within a few feet of us. A similar incident occurred this past winter, when another driver making the same turn did not see me walking along the road, near the curb and nearly struck me. Neither driver stopped to apologize or to check on my well-being following these frightening incidents.
- Cars parked near the intersection of Royal Dominion and the PDS entrance, narrowing the roadway to the point that Montgomery County Public Schools buses and waste management trucks cannot navigate the tight curve along the road. The result being that they have to back out onto River Road to turn around and enter the neighborhood from Burdette (and thereby not picking up at designated bus stops).

- Near-collisions between vehicles, often accompanied by erratic driving and verbal confrontations.
- Dangerous conditions for children waiting for school buses, particularly given the lack of sidewalks and limited visibility due to the morning sunrise at certain times of day.

The bottom line is that increased enrollment, additional summer programming, expanded third-party use, and shared parking arrangements will generate more neighborhood traffic – a fact Holton acknowledges and is encouraging by requesting a dedicated turn lane at River Road and Royal Dominion Drive. Given that the current parent cut-through situation is already a serious safety problem in the neighborhood, allowing Holton's expansion is going to make things much worse for Al-Marah by further compromising pedestrian safety and straining infrastructure that is already under pressure. Hence, we respectfully urge you to deny CBA-1174-E and not exacerbate an existing dangerous situation.

Sincerely,



Mo Smith



Melissa Smith