

6607 Dalkeith St.
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-4167
September 2, 2020

Greg Ossant, Deputy Director
Department of General Services
101 Monroe St.
Montgomery County
Rockville, MD 20850

Anita Vassalo, Director
Montgomery County Public Libraries
21 Maryland Ave., Suite 310
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Chevy Chase Library

Dear Mr. Ossant:

I am writing you concerning your office's publication, "Request for Developer Expression of Interest in the Chevy Chase Library Site" (hereafter "the Request").

I am a resident of Section 5 of the Village of Chevy Chase and have been so for almost 50 years. I am a very frequent user of the Chevy Chase Library and a very satisfied one. While I am a member of the Friends of the Chevy Chase Library, a supporter of The Committee on the Future of the Chevy Chase Library, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Chevy Chase Fire Department, I write this letter in my name and for only myself.

I have read the April 1, 2020 Request issued by your office, as well as the correspondence between you and the Committee on the Future of the Chevy Chase Library. I write now to suggest a different course for Montgomery County, a course that may save the County some money and at the same time assure that library services for Chevy Chase residents are not disrupted by redevelopment of the site. I have no doubt that any public-private redevelopment along the lines similar to any of the examples given in the Request will mean at least three years of no library service in Chevy Chase. Given the traditional delays and cost overruns that accompany construction today, the actual development time may even be much longer.

Some years ago, Chevy Chase Library was closed for renovations for some time. Patrons could, of course, use Bethesda, Silver Spring, or Kensington libraries during the renovation. While this assured us access to library services, it was very inconvenient, and I do not want to see this again, if it can be avoided.

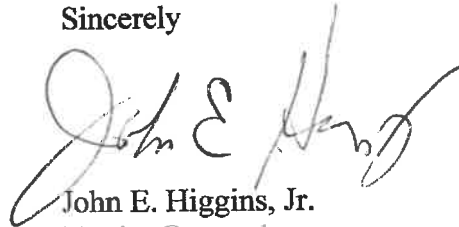
Similarly, I want to see us avoid any additional residential development in the Chevy Chase Lake area, at least until the project on the east side of Connecticut Avenue at Chevy Chase Lake is completed and all of us have a chance to see whether the traffic estimates for this project are accurate. I do not believe they are, and I fully expect that, when completed, the traffic on Connecticut Avenue will be so extraordinarily bad that it will be scandalous. Adding even more development in the area before we know what the results of the project at Chevy Chase Lake would be "a serious planning mistake.

What I suggest now is that Montgomery County reconsider whether redeveloping the site is what Chevy Chase and Montgomery County need. The Overview section of the Request says that the County "recently underwent a facility assessment that recommended significant capital improvements." I do not know what those "capital improvements" are, and I doubt that many of the Chevy Chase Library patrons do either. It may be that they, like me, think the current building is more than adequate, particularly when the proposed redevelopment will mean no library services in Chevy Chase for, if we are lucky, the two to three years that will be consumed by razing the current site and building a new one.

We are all quite familiar with the delays and cost overruns on the Purple Line. Like the public-private partnership that is occasioning the Purple line problems, I think we can all expect similar problems in the suggested public-private partnership redevelopment of the Chevy Chase Library. While I certainly endorse the cost saving goals that come with such a partnership, I do so only if the project is needed and wanted. A community discussion of what caused the County to conclude that "significant capital improvements" should take place.

All of the above is to urge the County to go back to "square one" on this idea and tell the Chevy Chase Library patrons and the various Chevy Chase municipalities what the "recommended significant capital improvements" are that prompted the Request and, importantly, what the alternatives are. It may be that, like me, the patrons and their municipalities have other ideas on what will serve them best.

Sincerely



John E. Higgins, Jr.

higgins@cua.edu

cell: 301.655.7227

cc. Marc Elrich, County Executive
Andrew Friedson, Councilmember
Paul Weller, Secretary, Chevy Chase Fire Board