

Email to Peter Kovar

Takoma Park City Council

Ward One

January 18, 2018

Mr. Kovar:

Thank you for your email of December 19, in which you shared concerns regarding the College's math and science facilities project at the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. I appreciate your patience in my providing responses.

Below, I have addressed the issues cited in your email. The responses are appreciably based on [Dr. Pollard's letter of September 29](#), in which she proffered several directives regarding the math and science facilities project. As you know, we will take advantage of the expertise of the architects in the charrette process to address these issues.

Your original email, with the College's responses in italics, follows:

**To mitigate some of the dangers and disruption posed by Montgomery College's decision to locate its new Takoma Park laboratory and science center in a residential neighborhood, the following conditions will be met:**

**1. Laboratory facilities will only be located close to Fenton Street on the site of the current Science South building (i.e. the portion of the construction site farthest away from any residence).**

*Siting of all laboratory spaces on the Fenton Street side of the facility can be discussed during the charrette process, during which your request about the specific location of the labs will be given full and deliberate consideration. As a reminder, this facility will replace the current outdated math and science classrooms and laboratories on the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, and those classrooms and labs have operated without incident for more than 50 years. There are several comparable facilities at high schools embedded in other Montgomery County neighborhoods.*

**2. Venting and air handlers will be situated close to and facing Fenton Street.**

*Your request about the placement of venting and air handling units will be given full consideration during the charrette process. As stated in our letter of September 29, we will locate rooftop air units away from Takoma Avenue nearer the campus interior. We will apply knowledge from previous projects that may offer creative solutions to minimize the impact of the air handling equipment.*

**3. No facility noise will be audible to residential areas.**

*The College is mindful of the priority to minimize noise from operation of the buildings. You have our commitment that the facility will be designed and operated within normal noise limits for buildings of that design. The facility will conform to all local noise ordinances and we will explore creative solutions to minimize noise impacts.*

**4. Setback: The setback of the new building from Takoma Avenue and lower Fenton Street (i.e. the portion of Fenton Street that now borders Falcon Hall as far as the gymnasium) will be no less than the setback of the current Falcon Hall in those areas. The trees on Takoma Avenue and lower Fenton Street will be preserved.**

*As stated in our letter of September 29, we remain committed to keeping the current setback of Falcon Hall—no closer to Takoma Avenue than the existing Falcon Hall. The charrette process will afford the opportunity to better understand your setback concerns and take advantage of the architects' expertise to develop the best possible design in response to your concerns.*

*We share your value for natural green space that can serve as a buffer between the campus and our neighbors and, as stated in our September 29 letter, we remain committed to preserving the park-like green space along Takoma Avenue. Accordingly, we look forward to working with neighbors and the architects during the charrette process. We will also work with the urban forester to protect existing trees wherever possible.*

**5. Height: No portion of the building built on the Falcon Hall portion of the site will be any higher than the analogous portion of the current Falcon Hall. Construction height on the rest of the site will not exceed 40 feet, inclusive of any structures placed on rooftops.**

*We recognize your concerns about building heights, and we regard this as a key element of the charrette process. Strategies to address the height of the structure will be explored with the architects during the charrette process. As stated in the September 29 letter, building height along Takoma Avenue will be no more than two stories, we will maximize the building's width to lower height, and we will take advantage of topography to minimize perceived height.*

**6. Gentle use: The new facility will contain no conference facilities and have no entrance on Takoma Avenue.**

*This project will replace the existing planetarium with a 150-seat planetarium, including two adjacent 30-seat interdisciplinary classrooms for academic and community use. This is consistent with Montgomery College's academic and community support mission. Entrance/exit portals will have to meet current life safety codes, so there is a possibility of needing exit doors on the Takoma Avenue side of the facility. Please remember, as stated in our September 29 letter, we have committed to minimize windows along Takoma Avenue.*

**7. Construction impact: There will be no construction entrance on Takoma Avenue, nor will Takoma Avenue be used as a construction staging area. Fenton Street will remain open.**

*The construction entrance and construction staging will be on the Fenton Street side of the campus, as stated in Dr. Pollard's September 29 letter discussing construction mitigation techniques we will use to respect our neighbors on Takoma Avenue, Chicago Avenue, New York Avenue, and Fenton Street. The contractor's traffic control will be required to minimize disruptions on Fenton Street. The College will apply for all construction permits from Montgomery County, as required.*

With the selection of the project architects in the coming months, we look forward to having a robust and productive discussion about these issues and many more in the charrette process. We plan to announce the start of the charrette process in the near future and will keep you

apprised of our progress. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me again regarding the College's math and science facilities project.

With very best regards,

Marvin D. Mills, Jr.

VP for Facilities & Public Safety

Montgomery College