



February 11, 2022

TO: Montgomery County Council
FROM: Friends of Sligo Creek
Kit Gage, Advocacy Committee Chair

RE: Montgomery Parks funding

Friends of Sligo Creek (FOSC) supports full funding of the Parks budget in Montgomery County. Over \$19 million in cuts will adversely affect a number of important projects. These include replacing two fields with grass at Blair High School, and acquisition of land under Legacy Open Space, not to mention critical repairs, maintenance and improvements to the parks.

FOSC is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to protecting, improving, and appreciating the ecological health of Sligo Creek Park and its surrounding watershed. For decades we have worked closely with Montgomery Parks and are in an excellent position to evaluate needs and deficits in Sligo, and to an extent extrapolating these park-wide.

It remains clear that park use is very high over the time of the pandemic, even as it ebbs and flows. The recognition that parks are critical to human health, and from that exposure to flora and fauna, are getting a greater appreciation for the wild (even limited wild like Sligo Park). This is not the time to reduce funding for Parks by 16% in general and to the particular programs targeted for reduction.

Blair High School has had a benighted experience with synturf on its field. Now that it's clear that grass will be a much better option, it's critical to finish that transition so the fields can be used.

Parks' acquisition of land, often abutting existing parks, is a remarkably important project. Much new science points to the critical nature of contiguous and deep networks of forests and wild land for bird and other wildlife to survive and

migrate. This kind of land protection and expansion by Parks is a vital piece of this puzzle. Please fully fund it.

Thanks for your concern.

Kit Gage

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