

RICHARD W. BOWE
7713 ZULIMA COURT
BETHESDA, MD 20817

March 26, 2026

Grace Bogdan
Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Petition of Holton Arms School, Inc.; Special Exception Case No. CBA-1174-D

Dear Ms. Bogdan:

I am a resident of Al Marah. I have seen the proposed Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) submitted to the Board of Appeals by Holton Arms in connection with the captioned matter, and I write to object to the FCP as submitted and the proposal to widen Royal Dominion Drive to add a left turn lane.

I do not believe the FCP clearly conveys the proximity of these trees to Royal Dominion Drive and the danger they face. There are four (4) trees located in a line on the northern border of Royal Dominion, plus the stump of a tree removed by the County at the end of the row closest to River Road (*see* attached picture). The current trees have diameters and curb distances as follows (listed in order from River Road):

- (1) 21" diameter (5 feet from curb)
- (2) 15.5" diameter (4.5 feet from curb)
- (3) 9.5" diameter (5.5 feet from curb)
- (4) 21" diameter (4 feet from curb)

Holton Arms states that it will remove only one tree when adding the left turn lane. However, the proposed work would almost certainly result in death of the other trees because the root zones of the remaining trees will inescapably be adversely affected. Street trees usually have limited root zones due to proximity to the road and other features such as sidewalks, such as here in Al Marah. Most sources that I have found advise that shade trees should be located at least ten (10) feet from roadway. For example, see US Forest Service publication <https://share.google/t/HFii9rVMTUzEIIGj>. The current trees are already far below this minimum and obviously any widening will reduce the distance even further. Clearly, any widened pavement will encroach upon the drip zone of these trees. Also, the closer the tree roots are to pavement, the greater the stress on the pavement and likelihood of pavement failure.

The International Society of Arboculture has concluded that trees damaged by construction had a greater mortality rate and worse overall condition five to eight years later, compared to the normal mortality and damage rates. See <https://auf.isa-arbor.com/content/20/2/94>. Obviously the County would incur additional and unnecessary replacement costs should any trees need to be replaced following construction.

Finally, it has been demonstrated that shaded pavement has lower maintenance costs than unshaded pavement. The slow death of the existing trees will discard years of growth needed to generate a useful shade canopy. As evidenced by the existing stump (*see* Exhibit), we have already recently lost a tree approximately 40 years old, and in our warming climate where each summer seems to set a new heat record, we cannot afford more canopy losses that take time to replace. Current residents would never see a shade benefit.

I urge the Planning Department not to approve the proposed left lane and widening described in the FCP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R.W. Bowe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Richard W. Bowe



4

3

2

1

R STUMP



See Stump Rings