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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

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JODY L. HOLTON, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

May 22, 2019

Mr. Christopher Leswing, Director of Building & Planning
Building & Planning Department
Township of Lower Merion
75 East Lancaster Avenue
Ardmore, PA 19003

Re: MCPC #19-0060-002
Plan Name: Lower Merion Middle School Athletic Fields
(1 lot institutional on approximately 13.36 acres)
Situate: County Line Road (N); west of Spring Mill Road
Township of Lower Merion

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced tentative sketch plan as you requested on April 25, 2019. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Lower Merion School District, proposes to consolidate two parcels to create an approximately 13.36 acre parcel. All existing structures at 1800 W. Montgomery Avenue are proposed to be demolished, however, two structures are proposed to remain at 1835 County Line Road, which is listed as a Class II Historic Resource on the Township's Historic Resource Inventory. The applicant proposes to construct several athletic fields and 52 parking spaces. Vehicular access will be provided from Stone Ridge Road and County Line Road. Additional improvements shown at this time include a bus drop off/parking area and underground stormwater management facilities. The property is located in the Township's R1 Residence zoning district.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

This area of Lower Merion Township is identified as a Suburban Residential Area in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco2040: A Shared Vision*. Suburban Residential Areas are primarily residential areas that can include institutional uses.



The Land Use Element of the 2016 Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies this parcel as Low & Medium Density Residential. Additional information related to the proposed preservation of some of the historic structures and landscaping on the site is needed to determine whether the proposed development is generally consistent with the recommendation to “preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas and historic resources.”

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant’s proposal. However, in the course of our review we identified the following issues that we feel should be addressed prior to moving forward with the land development. Our review comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

We commend the applicant for proposing to preserve two historic structures on the 1835 County Line Road property, however, we feel that future versions of the plans should include additional information about the proposed use of the two structures in order to more fully understand the impact of the proposed development on the historic structures. In general, the redevelopment of this site for athletic fields to serve a new middle school creates a valuable opportunity to make the preserved historic buildings the centerpieces of the site. One of the existing structures proposed to remain appears to be currently associated with a pool; the pool is shown to be removed, therefore, the proposed use of the structure is unclear. In addition, it appears that a proposed parking area adjacent to the main house is located so that the pavement is directly abutting the house. We encourage the applicant to consider incorporating a landscape strip between the parking area and the building.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

The current plans do not show any internal pedestrian walkways connecting the various athletic fields and parking areas on the site. Future versions of the plans should incorporate walkways, where appropriate, to provide safe pedestrian access within the site. In particular, we recommend that a clearly-marked crosswalk be added to connect the bus drop-off area with the rest of the site.

It is our understanding that the Lower Merion School District is considering constructing a new middle school building on nearby property at 1860 W. Montgomery Avenue. This property appears to be within walking distance of the proposed athletic fields’ site; however, many of the streets in the surrounding neighborhood do not currently have sidewalks. We encourage the applicant to communicate with adjacent property owners to explore the possibility of extending a sidewalk from the proposed athletic fields’ site, along Stone Ridge Road, to the proposed middle school. Overall, we feel that additional

sidewalks in the immediate vicinity of the athletic fields' site, and connecting the middle school to the proposed off-site athletic fields, would improve pedestrian access and safety.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

The majority of the proposed parking is currently shown in two, dead-end parking areas in the center of the site. We feel that an alternative parking lot layout with a one-way, loop configuration could be accommodated on the site and also provide for a more logical vehicular circulation pattern.

BUS DROP OFF/PARKING AREA

The existing wooded area is proposed to be maintained for a depth of approximately 25 feet along the majority of the western property line between County Line Road and Stone Ridge Road. However, the existing wooded area is shown to be reduced to as little as 10 feet adjacent to the proposed bus drop-off/parking area. We encourage the applicant to consider alternative layouts that could allow for preservation of more of the existing vegetated buffer area to reduce the impacts of the buses on adjacent residences.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The current plans show the placement of a number of underground stormwater management facilities; however, the proposed use of the site for athletic fields also presents an important opportunity to implement aboveground stormwater management techniques such as rain gardens and bioswales that could contribute to the visual character of the historic site.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Future versions of the plans should include a detailed landscaping plan, including wooded lot calculations, demonstrating that the applicant has made an effort to preserve as many of the existing trees on site as is feasible.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal to construct athletic fields; however, we feel that additional pedestrian connections between the proposed off-site athletic fields and middle school sites and additional information regarding the proposed preservation of some of the historic structures on the site would be beneficial.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained in this report are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Should the governing body approve a final plat of this proposal, the applicant must present the plan to our office for seal and signature prior to recording with the Recorder of Deeds office. A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files.

Sincerely,

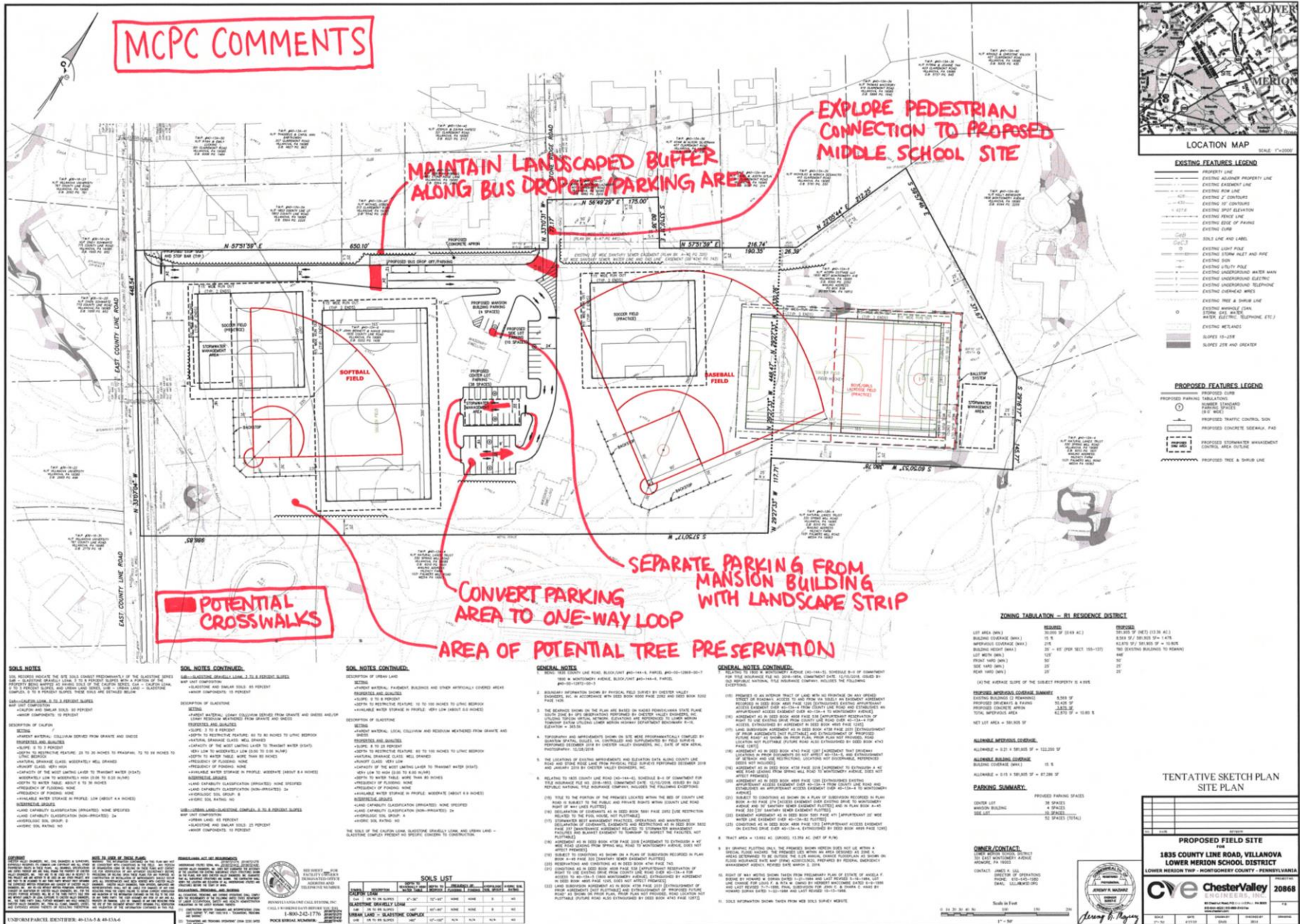
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marley B Bice". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marley Bice, AICP, Principal Planner
610-278-3740 – mbice@montcopa.org

c: Lower Merion School District, Applicant
Fred Fromhold, Applicant's Representative
Chester Valley Engineers, Inc., Applicant's Engineer
Gilbert P. High, Jr., Esq., Twp. Solicitor
Ernie B. McNeely, Twp. Manager
Edward P. Pluciennik, P.E., Twp. Engineer

Attachment A: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan
Attachment B: MCPC Comments on Applicant's Proposed Site Plan
Attachment C: Aerial Image of Site







Lower Merion Middle School
Athletic Fields
19-0060-002

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Year 2015 aerial photography provided by the
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

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