

**Chantilly Battlefield Association  
Fairfax, Virginia**

July 5, 2003

Ms. Katherine K. Hanley, Chairman  
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 530  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035

Re: Ox Hill Battlefield Park

Dear Ms. Hanley:

This letter is to inform you and all members of the Board of Supervisors that planning and design work by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) for the Ox Hill Battlefield Park has been continuously delayed since January 2001. The result is that virtually *nothing* has been accomplished in the way of planning in the past 31 months.

And not only is work continually delayed, the staff doesn't inform us why these delays are happening. After making several telephone inquiries in early May and requesting a letter of explanation, I was finally assured on May 19 that such a letter would be sent to us. It's now July and we have received no letter and no further communication.

We are aware that the present economic slump has forced cutbacks in many county services including parks, but we also know that the Park Authority has continually sidetracked Ox Hill in favor of other, newer projects and "priorities". We believe that the time has come for the Board of Supervisors to direct the Park Authority Board or the park staff, which ever is responsible, to halt these incessant delays and take action immediately to get this long neglected Civil War battlefield park completed.

The years of delay have taken a substantial toll. Funds that were acquired *sixteen* years ago for the completion of Ox Hill as well as bond funds acquired in 1998 have been diminished by a critical amount. The County Executive informed us some time ago that these funds do not earn interest for the park. The interest goes to the General Fund and the loss to the Ox Hill Battlefield Park because of repeated delays is unrecoverable.

This appears to be the situation with all parks, and in spite of the current low interest rates, we strongly urge the Board to change this dubious practice and direct that any funds on deposit or set aside for a given park, from whatever source, earn interest for that park to help offset rising costs due to inaction or delay.

To take the interest earned by funds earmarked for parks and use it elsewhere in the County budget seems to us to be patently unfair to the parks and to the Park Authority.

We would call attention to the \$50 million in bonds that the county sold in 1998 to finance a section of the Fairfax County Parkway. According to recent press accounts, this \$50 million is now worth \$57 million with interest, and this interest money stays with the road. Why does bond interest accumulate for road projects when bond interest for park projects goes to the General Fund leaving the parks with only the original, devalued amount?

As an ad hoc citizens group that formed in 1986 to stop the removal of the Kearny and Stevens monuments from their historic locations and to advocate for the preservation of some small part of the original battlefield, we have been about as patient as any group of citizens could be as the bureaucratic process for completing this park has dragged on and on.

Indeed, our correspondence file with the County and the Park Authority regarding Ox Hill now occupies more file space than the original accounts of the battle itself. And in that vein we would remind the county that in the *seventeen* years of our involvement, it was this Association that amassed and studied the hundreds of documents pertaining to the battle and handed this historical record over to the Park Authority. It was we who provided the contents and wrote the text for the Civil War Trails sign on Monument Drive. Also, we were the organizers of the effort to erect two state historical markers that stand nearby (one of which we paid for ourselves with no help from the FCPA). And importantly, in 1998, it was this Association that produced a draft concept plan for the historical interpretation of Ox Hill and presented it to the park staff. This plan may not be what finally gets approved but at least it's a serious start in that direction.

In short, while we have contributed mightily to this park, we just can't seem to get the Park Authority to move. We couldn't even get the park staff to erect a *temporary* sign within the park to inform visitors and park neighbors of what we hoped to do there (we had provided a readymade color graphic with text; all we needed was a covered bulletin board to post it on. But the staff found too many problems with this and our effort was to no avail). So we would really appreciate any effort that the Board of Supervisors might make to focus the FCPA on completing Ox Hill.

And one last point – the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum Annex is planned to open at Dulles on December 15 and a vast development of tourist hotels and restaurants is proceeding apace to handle the estimated 3.5 million annual visitors. The Annex is only 5 miles down Rte. 50 from the Ox Hill Battlefield Park. Coincidentally, a recent news article in the Northern Virginia Journal reported that a marketing campaign has been launched to boost Northern Virginia's tourism. This so-called "Pursuit of Happiness" campaign is intended to generate interest in the area's "golf courses, shopping and rich heritage". The Northern Virginia Visitors Consortium, as it is called, plans to advertise via direct mailings and print advertisements, with the historic and cultural sites campaign to be unveiled this fall.

Will the Ox Hill Battlefield Park even be listed among the County's "rich heritage" sites? The park at present is little more than a vacant lot with two monuments in it. Except for

the three signs previously mentioned out by the sidewalk, there is no interpretive material in the park itself leaving most visitors with unanswered questions. There will soon be plenty of visitors and tourists on Lee Jackson Highway. And among these fans of Air and Space and other history will be a sizable number who also study the Civil War. What are we going to do? Are we going to advertise Ox Hill when it is not completed, hard to find, and has no visitor shelter or interpretation there? Or, are we going to keep it quiet, hide it and continue to work on other "priorities"?

Please help us to light a fire under the Park Authority and get this long neglected and delayed Ox Hill Battlefield Park completed ASAP.

Sincerely,



Edward T. Wenzel  
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Enclosures:

- 1) BRCWRT newsletter article, June/July 2003 (published in May) re Ox Hill Delays
- 2) CBA Draft Concept Plan Ox Hill Battlefield Park, December 17, 1998

cc Sharon Bulova, Braddock District  
Gerald E. Connolly, Providence District  
Michael R. Frey, Sully District  
Penelope A. Gross, Mason District  
Gerald W. Hyland, Mount Vernon District  
Catherine M. Hudgins, Hunter Mills District  
Dana Kauffman, Lee District  
Elaine McConnell, Springfield District  
Stuart Mendelsohn, Dranesville District  
Mike Kane, Director, Fairfax County Park Authority