

# Town of Upper Marlboro

14211 School Lane • Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

---

December 14, 2011

Mr. Rushern Baker  
County Executive, Prince George's County  
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Re: Demolition of the Old Marlboro Elementary School and Construction of a Family Justice Center and Sheriff Offices

Dear Mr. Baker,

The Town of Upper Marlboro requests that a thorough review be made of the County's apparent decision to demolish the Old Marlboro Elementary School (OMES) *Historic Site 79-019-52* at 14524 Elm Street in the Town of Upper Marlboro, to construct a new building on the site. Pending the review, we request that no further action be taken toward the demolition of the OMES. The Town of Upper Marlboro requests that it be part of that review to the extent it involves decisions having an impact on the Town.

There are at least three issues that need to be addressed in the review: (1) What is the best way to establish an effective, sustainable, and cost effective system to service some of our most vulnerable citizens? (2) How can we preserve and enhance our historic heritage? (3) How can we best enhance and and insure the sustainability of the Town of Upper Marlboro for its citizens?

(1) The concept of a Family Justice Center that centralizes available support services in one place is worthwhile. To be effective, best practices would dictate that the center would be located close to population centers and major transportation hubs to insure easy access. The Town of Upper Marlboro is neither close to population centers, nor major transportation hubs. Public transportation to the Town is limited.

It appears that this project is being funded by a \$54,000,000 line item under the County's FY2012 budget for transferring County offices in rental space to County owned property to save on costs. What County offices in rental space would be transferred? Has a cost benefit study been performed? What are the total costs of this project? What are the ongoing expenditures required to sustain this project?

(2) For some unexplainable reason, the County planned this project without being aware that the OMES is a Prince George's County historic site. Despite its new found knowledge, the County

appears to be proceeding with its original plan to demolish the OMES building. The County also appears not to take seriously its obligation to find ways to save this building through adaptive reuse.

As to the historic significance of the OMES site, we adopt the statement within the letter sent to you on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2011 by John Petro, President of the Prince George's County Historical Society. "This property is of great historical significance—the home property of Dr. William Beanes, the Marlboro Academy (from 1836), and later the Marlboro High school and Elementary school. It is a focal point in the Town of Upper Marlboro, and represents more than 150 years of public education in Prince George's County".

Not only would the loss of this building be significant, but also, it would have a negative impact on the adjoining historic sites and district. On the same piece of property, to the east, are the Primary School and the grave sites of William and Sara Beanes, both Prince George's historic sites. To the west, lies the Town's historic residential area currently awaiting final approval from the National Park Service as a National Register Historic District.

The Town's revitalization plan calls for an adaptive re-use study of the OMES building. The study by a contractor for Park and Planning was under contract and underway, when apparently it was thwarted by the County's decision to demolish the OMES building. The study, or one like it, needs to be done to evaluate the building for County office use or other low-impact community or civic use. If the County has, or will be conducting a study (or studies) that address the structural integrity or adaptive reuse of the OMES building, we would like to inspect a copy.

(3) The Town is small in size with a compact downtown area, and is dominated by large County and Court buildings. Despite that, it still maintains the feel of a small, historic village. The demolition of the OMES building would not only remove a major historic structure from the Town's downtown landscape, but would also introduce an incompatible modern structure at odds with the rest of downtown. The architect's rendering shows a four-to-five story building with a three story parking structure that is incompatible with the surrounding historic area and too large for the infrastructure.

In conclusion, the Town requests that the County, the Court and the Town hold a meeting to discuss an agreeable outcome on this matter. We request that the County not seek a demolition permit from the Historic Preservation Commission, since we feel that would set off an adversarial situation that could be better resolved through discussion.

/S/

/S/

/S/

**Joseph A. Hourclé**  
Commissioner

**Stephen F. Sonnett**  
Commissioner/ President

**James Storey**  
Commissioner/ Treasurer