

# Addendum 1

## Rationale and Supporting Information:

Where as it is the purpose and duty of Homeowner Associations (HOA), including the Hampshire Greens Homeowners Association (HG HOA) to protect, maintain and enhance the quality of life and property values for members of the HOA, and

Where as Reflection Park (RP) is seeking Conditional Use (CU 21-06) approval to place the green cemetery (GC), Reflection Park Green Burial Ground at 16621 New Hampshire Ave, Silver Spring, MD 20905, directly confronting the Hampshire Greens community, and

Where as the cemetery RP proposes is an exclusive green cemetery that intends to bury up to 8000+ corpses in shrouds, etc. (i.e., no embalming, traditional coffins, or vaults) in shallow graves (3.5'-4' deep with only 18" – 24" of ground cover) in the Patuxent drinking water watershed, and

Where as the Patuxent Watershed supplies the Rocky Gorge Reservoir which serves over 800,000 residents with drinking water, and

Where as the proposed cemetery property has several streams that flow downhill from the reservoir, across residential properties with 87 well water dependent homes downhill from the cemetery, and

Where as the proposed cemetery property abuts residential family properties, and a summer camp and Montgomery County playground that serve hundreds of children, and

Where as the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (PB), responsible for reviewing and giving preliminary approval for CU 21-06, has been found in recent activities to be in violation of the Maryland Open Meetings Act, Ethics requirements regarding lobbyists, abuses of the Consent Agenda following deficient in an initial Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) review (Lublin (2022a, 2022b), and

Where as these violations and abuses are believed by many to have facilitated the approval of controversial plans impacting County residents without adequate public input or knowledge, and

Where as the HG Board of Directors (BoD) and community, as well as local residents outside HG, do not believe they received adequate or accurate information regarding the CU 21-06 application and hearings,

The Hampshire Greens Cemetery Committee recommends that the Hampshire Greens BoD take a position in strong opposition to the Reflection Park Green Burial Ground proposed by RPI and write letters voicing this opposition to County Council members Tom Hucker, Gabe Albornoz, Evan Glass, Will Jawando, Hans Reimer and County Executive Marc Elrich, and to our Md State District 14 representatives Sen. Craig Zucker, Rep. Anne Kaiser, Rep. Pamela Queen, and Rep. Eric Ludtke for the following reasons:

- 1) There is compelling evidence, which the environmental group Patuxent Watershed Protective Association (PWPA), is prepared to present that:

- a. There are significant environmental and public health dangers posed by cemeteries, including green burial cemeteries, and perhaps especially green burial cemeteries such as RPI, when placed in drinking water watersheds to ground water, surface water, soil, and surrounding properties caused by necro-leachate, the proliferation and spread of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in extant organisms and other environmental and health dangers.
    - i. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the CDC, consider AMR one of the top threats facing human life and requires urgent action.
    - ii. According to the WHO (2017) “AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.”
  - b. The RPI CU 21-06 proposal is in violation of the governing Cloverly Master Plan
- 2) Further, in our opinion, RPI has made misleading, and even false, claims to the HG BoD, community groups and at the 7/30/2021 Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings (OZAH) hearing (see Addendum 2) obscuring the following:
- the fact that there is NO scientific evidence specific to green burials to support RPI’s claim that green burials will not contaminate groundwater,
  - The fact that evidence DOES exist that necro- leachate from decomposing bodies (not coffins and vaults) has been found to contaminate ground water. Necro-leachate seepage to groundwater is found in cemeteries even when encased in traditional coffins and vaults.
  - That CONTRARY to reforesting and park like environ claims, RPI under oath stated they DO NOT intend to REFOREST and DO NOT believe Montgomery County should require RPI to reforest the currently forested cemetery property following clear cutting for graves.
- 3) Current and historic reports indicate grave robbers, vandals, and carrion animals (e.g., coyote, fox) who desecrate graves and unearth body and steal body parts are a serious problem for cemeteries (Miami Herald, 2018; Stanfield, 2020). Shallow graves, in low-cost cemeteries provide easy access to vandals and carrion animals making them especially vulnerable to these disturbing and horrifying problems.
- 4) Additionally, we believe there will be significant traffic problems and pedestrian dangers created by RPI funeral traffic and that the Traffic Analysis submitted by RPI at the 7/30/2021 OZAH hearing, was seriously deficient. This opinion is based on common sense observations, knowledge of the area and the opinion of a knowledgeable person who reviewed testimony given at the 7/30/2021 OZAH hearing by an RPI witness.
- 5) Moreover, the approval by the planning board seems out of place with the master plan for this part of the county. County Executive Elrich has stated expanding the tax base through taxable businesses in the eastern portion of the county is a needed priority. One cannot help but notice the irony of the approval for a cemetery where the clients will remain - in perpetuity - as part of a nonprofit organization, occupying land also exempt from property taxes - in perpetuity - thus depriving Montgomery County – in perpetuity - from a potential source of tax revenue. Is this really what the eastern part of the county needs?

- 6) Finally, HG is an upscale community with a diverse and immigrant, majority minority POC population. Our families (often multigenerational) have labored long and hard to invest in a home and work towards building generational wealth to better the prospects, and support the advancement, of their families, future generations and to help their communities. Indeed, homeownership is the most common way for families to build generational wealth (Matteo, M., 2022) and housing and zoning have been shown to have a profound impact on economic well-being, social welfare, and can have causal effects on children's long-term outcomes. As such, we believe the environmental factors created by RPI will diminish this capacity to build generational wealth for the diverse community of HG families in the same manner the now illegal red lining did in the past and undesirable down zoning does in the present (Rouse, C., Bernstein, J., Knudsen, H., & Zhang, J., 2021), and that the placement of RPI across from HG violates Racial Equity and Social Justice initiatives in Montgomery County and will diminish the efforts of the 75% plus diverse and multinational immigrant homeowners of HG to develop better prospects for their families and communities. As noted by Dr. Cecilia Rouse, economist and Chair of President Biden's Council of Economic Advisors, and her colleagues (2021): "...if neighborhoods where Black families live are zoned into being less valuable....In the long run, this diminishes wealth not only for the generation purchasing the home, but for descendants who receive a lesser inheritance. Indeed, housing likely explains more than 30% of the Black-white racial wealth gap."

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