



MADEIRA

June 11, 2018

William Niedringhaus, President
Potomac Heritage Trail Association (PHTA)
805 N. Croydon St.
Sterling, VA 20164

Dear Bill:

The Madeira School and its Board of Trustees have reviewed your proposal of January 11, 2018. After considerable deliberation and review, we are not inclined to pursue your recommendation at this time. It is notable and appreciated that the PHTA has sought and offered a proposal that contains support for the elimination of the Fairfax County inclusion for a stream valley trail along the school's property at the Potomac River. This remains a primary issue for Madeira. However, your request for a public access easement along our western boarder to construct a public trail raises serious concerns for our school related to student safety, community tranquility, and environmental disruption similar to those raised by the Fairfax County trail plan. Finally, we feel that there are alternative trail proposals under consideration that would meet your goals of a continuous route without crossing through the private property of Madeira or its neighbors, for which the easement across the front of our property along Georgetown Pike has already been granted.

As you are aware from the well-documented history related to the Fairfax County trail plan, Madeira and its neighbors maintain that any public trail through or across our properties pose a substantial threat to safety, security, and the ecosystem. The terrain of the trail area is harsh and in many places requires more than a novice skillset to traverse. We note that Madeira is currently used many times a year as a point of coordination for rescue operations related to people injured on the rocks or by the river requiring helicopter rescue and transfer to ambulance on our fields. Inviting a larger population into the area will only increase these instances. Construction of any trail to address this issue will require costly and intrusive alterations to the landscape.

Our school and its various facilities supports children of all ages and educates girls of high school age. Many of these girls live on campus. Considering these vulnerable populations from a safety and security perspective, we feel our programs are best run with limited exposure to the open public [many of our facilities are open to non-Madeira users]. As you know, there have been incidents of crime, including a brutal and tragic murder of a Madeira student by an assailant who accessed our campus through the woods and concealed his attack in the terrain for many hours. That history serves as an important reminder when we structure how to deliver our educational and recreational programming. Currently Madeira is seeking to increase its use of the property for both Madeira and non-Madeira students for environmental education and incorporate more of our programming throughout our acreage. Opening the campus to non-mission related foot traffic around the

area is a direct threat to our ability to deliver that programming safely. It will also be a disruption to our quiet enjoyment of our natural undeveloped property. The proposed trail creates a new trail that is not along a road and is difficult to secure. While a trail that traverses the campus instead of one that runs through it is an improvement over the current Fairfax County Trail map plan, we feel our emphasis on student safety would require a fence along the proposed western trail to prevent access to the Madeira property, as well as additional personnel and equipment requirements to our security team. This fence, which would incur monetary cost for the initial installation and the continuing maintenance and repair, would also become intrusive and disruptive to both the Madeira community and to the residents whose properties abut to the school's western boundary.

We understand that the PHTA has put a significant amount of thought and study into its proposal, including coordinating and communicating with the County Supervisor's office and we are appreciative of those efforts. Madeira can only respond on its own behalf, but we feel it should be recognized and addressed that our community neighbors and property owners on both sides of our campus need to be informed about your proposal and provided an opportunity to provide you with their own feedback. We do not see this as Madeira's role nor should the school be put in a position to be seen as an advocate for either the existing trail plan map or your proposed alternative until such conversations can be successfully navigated. Our board does believe that if community support can be garnered, the school would be more favorably inclined to reconsider its position. This community support would need to be unanimous and include a provision for the needed fence between the trail and our property, indemnity for Madeira against all actions and claims related to the trail, and a guarantee of the elimination of any other trails around or through the entirety of the Madeira campus and the Potomac River shoreline.

It would be Madeira's preference and recommendation to pursue trail connectivity via the existing trail easement along Georgetown Pike. The Georgetown Pike Footpath Feasibility Study kicked off on April 3rd presents a series of options for trail connectivity along Georgetown Pike that we feel have a much greater chance of being supported, funded, and constructed than any trail that runs along the river or through the property of Madeira or the neighboring residents' lots. The existing easement along our frontage and the associated monetary escrow account that the school previously contributed to for its development is well situated to support that option. I was encouraged by the conversation at the meeting and look forward to monitoring the progress of the feasibility study.

Sincerely,

Alexander C. Heiberger
Chief Financial Officer