

Redistricting Public Hearing
Greta Gordon
12-8-2016

Mr. Cropper -

My name is Greta Hebert Gordon and my family and I live at 507 Fontaine Street in the George Mason Elementary School District. I am writing to you to express my deep concern over the ACPS redistricting proposals that draw Fontaine Street out of the George Mason district. I know that you have received a number of letters relative to Planning Block 73, all that make valid arguments for keeping it in the George Mason district. My husband, Jim Gordon, sent one on our behalf. I will not reiterate those points here, but wanted to contact you directly and personally.

My mother and father bought the house at 507 Fontaine Street in 1975. It is the home in which I was born and raised. 35 years ago my parents began walking me the two blocks to George Mason where I attended elementary school, kindergarten through 6th grade. My siblings attended George Mason. Eight years ago, I got married and moved back into my family's house on Fontaine Street. And now, I walk my two daughters, Bailey and Brigid, the two blocks from our house to George Mason, to their kindergarten and first grade classes. My daughter, Brigid, is actually in the same kindergarten classroom that I had 35 years ago. My father is a former George Mason Elementary School PTA president and I am actively involved in the George Mason PTA, anticipating my own run for PTA President in the coming years.

George Mason Elementary School is in the Jefferson Park neighborhood, the boundary of which extends beyond Fontaine Street to include West Windsor Avenue, Malcolm Place and Lloyd's Lane. Fontaine Street is in the Jefferson Park neighborhood and should not be carved out of its neighborhood school district. My neighbors and I never imagined that Fontaine Street could be cut out of the George Mason district in any redistricting maps. I've heard anecdotally that a member of your team, when asked why the line was drawn at Woodland Terrace, a street before Fontaine, indicated that he had walked the neighborhood and said he "thought it looked like the George Mason neighborhood ended there." Quite simply, the George Mason neighborhood does not and never has ended at Woodland Terrace. The proposed boundary line, which cuts through our backyard, is unnatural. Fontaine Street is physically connected to Cameron Mills Road, on which George Mason Elementary School sits, so a more obvious and natural boundary would include Fontaine Street in the George Mason district keeping the Jefferson Park neighborhood intact.

The families I grew up with were actively engaged in the school and community and worked hard to make George Mason Elementary School a positive academic and social environment for their children. The families who live on Fontaine Street today are as committed to the school and its success as any I've known. The school is an integral part of and wonderful reflection of our neighborhood. It has

been for decades and I expect that it will continue to be.

The stated goal of the City's redistricting is to “enable students to attend their neighborhood schools”. For my family and others on Fontaine Street, George Mason Elementary School, less than 0.4 miles away, is our neighborhood school. To determine otherwise through arbitrary boundaries not only violates ACPS stated criteria, but unnecessarily disrupts the lives of and effectively ruins the elementary school experience for our children.

In all three of the maps, Fontaine Street is moved to other school districts - MacArthur being 2.4 miles away, Maury being 1.4. Neither are neighborhood schools. Neither would allow us to continue to walk our children a mere two blocks to school. In all three draft maps, other neighborhoods are added to the George Mason school district, while shifting us out, requiring us to bus our children to school miles away from us and miles away from our neighborhood school, George Mason.

I ask that among the criteria you consider, you take into account Fontaine Street's long, rich history as a part of the George Mason neighborhood. Consider that we live two blocks away, in Jefferson Park, the same neighborhood that also includes George Mason. Consider that Fontaine Street is connected to Cameron Mills. Consider that we all walk, together, each morning, collecting more neighbors along the way as we go. I urge you to reconsider; please keep Fontaine Street in the George Mason Elementary School District on all future iterations of the redistricting maps.

Sincerely,

Greta Hebert Gordon

George Mason, Class of 1989 and current George Mason parent