

**Kerry Richard**  
**Chair, Meadowbrook Board of Directors**  
**In Support of Modification of General Development Plan, Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion**  
**National Capital Planning Commission File # MP100**  
**May 7, 2020**

Good afternoon. My name is Kerry Richard. I've been a rider at Meadowbrook for over 25 years, and have served as Chair of Meadowbrook's Board of Directors since 2007. Prior to that, I served as Meadowbrook's legal counsel during the Phase I renovations to the Meadowbrook property, from 1998-2003. So I am deeply familiar with Meadowbrook's history, and with the process and thinking involved in both the Phase I and 2 renovations.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today, and urge you to vote in favor of this proposal to build a covered riding ring at Meadowbrook. Simply put, a covered riding ring is essential to Meadowbrook's ability to ensure high quality, safe and consistent programming for our riders and horses, and to steward this historic public facility in the decades to come

To understand why this project is so important to Meadowbrook, it's helpful to understand our unique non-profit mission. This includes:

- Teaching excellence in equestrian skills, including both riding and horsemanship;
- Promoting horse welfare through a lifelong commitment to our animals;
- Modeling green, sustainable horse keeping practices;
- Making horses and riding accessible to a diverse group of riders and the public; and
- Stewarding our historic, 85-year-old property as a community resource for future generations.

The Board and staff are deeply committed to this mission. And this project will further each aspect of that mission by enhancing the quality of Meadowbrook's programming. It will:

- Improve our ability to give our riders reliable, safe, year-round instruction, that is not dependent on good weather;
- Ensure that the horses get the consistent, daily exercise and training that they need to stay healthy, in footing conditions that do not jeopardize their soundness;
- Reduce the risk of lost income due to cancelled lessons and horse shows; and
- Benefit the environment, by allowing us to better manage stormwater runoff, use less fresh water for dust control, reduce ambient light from the property, and add a significant solar energy installation.

In short, a covered ring will bring Meadowbrook up to generally accepted, 21<sup>st</sup> century standards in the equine industry, while retaining the essential character of this historic facility.

This project will not change the nature of Meadowbrook's programs, nor will it result in any increase in the size or number of lessons. Our lease with MNCPPC limits us to 50 horses, and these horses can only

teach so many lessons. As a result, we have had roughly the same number of riders in programs for the last 15 years or so: about 300 riders in our School Year Group Lesson Program, and about 150 summer campers. This number cannot and will not increase and, therefore, this project will not impact traffic, parking, or noise in the surrounding neighborhood.

I would like to briefly address the choice of Ring C as the site for this project, over the site that we contemplated back in 2001, which was Ring D. The new Ring C site was chosen for environmental and operational reasons.

As our partner David Tobin, from Montgomery Parks, will explain, Montgomery Parks' floodplain construction and stormwater management standards have evolved since 2001. So when Meadowbrook approached the Parks Department about moving forward with this Phase 2 project, Parks suggested that Ring C would be a preferable location for the covered pavilion, as Ring C is at the very outer edge of the floodplain and further from Rock Creek.

After studying the idea, Meadowbrook agreed that Ring C was a far preferable location, for operational reasons as well.

- First, Ring C's larger size will allow for a 115 x 225 square foot riding area – more than 30% larger than Ring D. This larger area means that in bad weather, Meadowbrook can run two group lessons together indoors. Thus, siting this project in Ring C will benefit the maximum number of riders and give Meadowbrook maximum flexibility.
- Second, covering Ring C for lessons will allow us to maintain our current horse keeping practices, during and after construction. That is, Ring C will continue to be reserved for riding, and Rings A, B and D will continue to be used for a combination of daily horse turnout and riding. The horses need two to three hours of free, unstructured turn-out time each day, and three outdoor rings are required to turn out all of Meadowbrook's 50 horses. Rings A, B, and D work well for turnout, because they are closest to the barn so the staff can see the horses and get to them quickly if there's ever a problem. By covering Ring C, we can maintain the horses' regular turn-out routine during and after construction.

Maryland's Department of the Environment concurs with the finding of Meadowbrook's engineers, that construction in Ring C will have no impact on the flood plain. By contrast, if this project were built in Ring D, significant grading and fill would be needed to create the necessary rideable surface area. For all of these reasons, Ring D is not an appropriate site for this project.

In closing, I'm extremely proud of the design you have before you today! I'm very pleased that around 90 percent of the over 350 public comments that have been submitted on line about this project are positive, recognizing its benefits to riders, horses, the community and the environment.

And I'm especially proud, and gratified, that the funds for this project – nearly \$1.5 million – have been raised entirely from 140 current and former Meadowbrook riders and families. I believe that this is a

testament both to the need for this covered arena, and to the impact that Meadowbrook has had on so many lives.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, and urge the Commission to vote to approve this project.

**Dr. Kaela Schraer, DVM**  
**Erskine Equine Associates, Mt. Airy, MD**  
**Testimony In Support of Modification of General Development Plan,**  
**Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion**  
**National Capital Planning Commission File # MP100**  
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- Good afternoon. I'm Dr. Kaela Schraer. I'm an equine veterinarian with Erskine and Associates, based in Mt. Airy, MD. I'm pleased to testify today in support of Meadowbrook Stables proposed covered riding pavilion.
- Our clinic's veterinarians have cared for Meadowbrook's horses for over 8 years. During this time, we have worked closely with Meadowbrook's staff to develop and implement a wellness program for the horses. And we have treated the horses for injuries, lameness or illness, as needed.
- We typically visit Meadowbrook on a weekly basis, year-round. So we're intimately familiar with the grounds of the stables, with the facilities, and with Meadowbrook's programs.
- The Meadowbrook staff are dedicated to providing the best possible care for their horses, and they do an excellent job of ensuring that the horses have the best nutrition, exercise, and preventative care available.
- But the single most important thing that the stables needs to promote its horses' soundness and fitness, and reduce the incidence of lameness, is a covered, all-weather riding arena.
- Here's why: The quality of the sand surface on which horses are ridden has a major impact on the soft tissue, bones and joints of their feet and legs. If this riding surface, or "footing," as we call it, becomes too deep or shallow, too wet or dry, or uneven, this can contribute to equine orthopedic injuries. Acute and/or chronic orthopedic injuries clearly compromise the horse's welfare and quality of life, both in the short- and long-term. In extreme cases, they can be career-ending or even life-ending.
- It's therefore essential to ensure that the footing remains homogenous, even, and of high quality – that it is deep enough to absorb impact and minimize concussion, but not too deep as to become slippery or create instability.
- And the only way to ensure that footing remains of a consistent, reliable, even quality, is to protect it from the elements. This is the single most important purpose for a covered riding arena. It's not to protect horses from the rain, but to protect the footing surface that they're being ridden in.

- As I said earlier, I visit Meadowbrook almost every week, on a year-round basis. So I have personally seen the condition of the riding rings' footing in the winter, or after heavy rains in the summer, when they're saturated with water. At such times, the horses cannot safely be ridden, much less jumped, without risk to themselves and their riders. These conditions limit their opportunities for regular exercise and undermine their fitness.
- This is why most stables in this region of a comparable size and program to Meadowbrook's have a covered or indoor riding arena. In the course of my work, I travel to many riding facilities in this region and most of them – including even private riding facilities – have an indoor riding arena. It is the only way to guarantee that horses get the daily exercise that they need to stay fit and healthy, to maximize their chances of remaining sound, and enjoy a long, high quality of life.
- In short, the importance of safe, consistent footing to an equine operation cannot be overstated, and Meadowbrook cannot achieve this without a covered riding arena.

**For all of these reasons, I urge you to support the proposal to build a covered riding ring at Meadowbrook Stables.**

**Dr. Peter Glassman, DVM**  
**Testimony In Support of Modification of General Development Plan,**  
**Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion**  
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Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Peter Glassman. I've been a veterinarian for over 40 years, and am the Director of Friendship Hospital for Animals in Washington DC.

I'm also a lifelong horseman. I live in Chevy Chase, MD, and rode at Meadowbrook Stables in the 1970s. I became interested in veterinary medicine because I loved to ride horses, and I showed throughout Virginia and the east coast as a junior.

I strongly support Meadowbrook's proposal to build a covered riding pavilion. In fact, I believe that the addition of a covered riding ring on the Meadowbrook property is long overdue.

A covered riding arena is essential for Meadowbrook to be able to provide safe, consistent lessons for its riders, and training and exercise for its horses, on a year-round basis. Like a gymnasium for human athletes, a covered riding arena provides riders, trainers, and horses the assurance of consistent, controlled conditions. This is essential for their fitness and training, and for their safety.

Most importantly, a covered riding ring ensures that the footing of the riding ring will not become slippery and saturated during heavy rains, frozen, overly deep and soft, or overly compacted and hard. All of these conditions can contribute to soft tissue, joint and bone injuries in horses, and undermine their long-term soundness and health.

It's very much like the effect of running on concrete versus deep sand for a human runner. If you run on a hard, compacted surface like concrete, over time the concussion will hurt your bones and joints. At the other extreme, if you run in deep sand at the beach, your muscles will get tired out quickly and you're more like to pull something or stumble. By contrast, a running track is designed to provide optimal footing for runners and avoid these potential problems. A covered arena creates the same opportunity for horses to have the optimal footing they need.

I'm aware that some of the opponents of this project have said, "Well, Meadowbrook has survived just fine for 85 years without a covered riding ring. Why does it need one now?"

Honestly, it's just foolish to suggest that what was considered "best practices" or "state of the art" in 1934 remains so today. This is true in any field I can think of – science, human medicine, sports, or virtually anything else. Risk management and standards of safety have evolved as well. Most of what was considered "best practices" in the stables of the 1930s would not be considered that today.

As a direct result of the improvements in veterinary medicine and care, today's horses can live productive lives for about twice as long as horses in the 1930s, or even the 1960s.

One key development in equine science in just the last 20 years is in our understanding of the critical importance of good footing to equine health. A recent article in the leading industry publication, *The Chronicle of the Horse*, stated that "Safe, consistent footing is the number one factor in horse safety and welfare."

The importance of safe, consistent footing to an equine operation cannot be overstated. Significant research has been done into footing surfaces since the 2004 Athens Olympics, when poor footing directly resulted in two horses being euthanized – one from the US team - for soft tissue injuries. Since then, we've learned that a safe, consistent footing surface is absolutely critical to horses' long-term soundness.

As a practical matter, in the mid-Atlantic, this means having a controlled environment – which can only be offered by a covered or enclosed riding arena – that is protected from excessive rain, snow or freezing temperatures.

Which is precisely why covered rings are standard features at riding facilities throughout the mid-Atlantic – and have been for several decades.

**For all of these reasons, I urge you to support this proposal.**

**Ross Peddicord**  
**Executive Director, Maryland Horse Industry Board**  
**Testimony In Support of Modification of General Development Plan,**  
**Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion**  
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- Good afternoon. My name is Ross Peddicord, Executive Director of the Maryland Horse Industry Board. The Horse Industry Board serves a regulatory and advisory role within the MD Department of Agriculture on issues regarding the MD horse industry.
- I'm pleased to testify today on behalf of the Horse Industry Board, in support of Meadowbrook Stables covered riding pavilion.

**On behalf of the Maryland Horse Industry Board, I urge you to approve Meadowbrook's proposal for a covered riding ring.**

- I've known Meadowbrook Stables for most of my 50 years of being involved in the state's equine industry. It is considered an icon in the equestrian community. Of the nearly 700 stables that our board licenses and regulates, Meadowbrook is in the very top tier.
- Most recently, last fall, I was at Meadowbrook's 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary open house, which treated about 800 visitors from the surrounding community to an afternoon of barn tours, hands-on pony grooming, an amazing mounted police demonstration by Montgomery Parks Police, and an historic display of archival photos.
- This event made me reflect on the fact that in 1934 – the year Meadowbrook was built – this region was very different than today. Meadowbrook was surrounded by woods and fields. None of the houses in the surrounding Rock Creek Forest neighborhood had even been built yet. It was still a rural area.
- At the time Meadowbrook was built, it was considered one of the premier riding facilities in the US. In the pre-war years, it hosted international horse shows with teams competing from Europe and South America and was the forerunner of what is today's Washington International Horse Show. Eleanor Roosevelt, General Patton, Jackie Kennedy and many others rode there, and it was a gathering place for the community.
- Despite this special history, however, Meadowbrook today is not a museum or a "living history" museum, or a petting zoo. It's a working modern stable, that teaches a wide variety of riders from beginners on up through those competing on the regional and national level. It's a vibrant, active, on-going organization that needs to evolve with the times. Like any organization, it needs to operate in accordance with contemporary business, training, education and safety standards.

- So what does this mean, in practical terms? A modern stable needs to maintain health standards for its horses that never existed 85 years ago, vaccinate for diseases that didn't exist 85 years ago. Just as veterinary science has evolved, nutritional science has also evolved, with changes in feed, hay and supplements, as has farrier science, and a myriad of other horse husbandry details.
- One example of how complex the equine industry has become is that universities now award bachelors and even advanced degrees in Equine Studies.
- And this brings me back to Meadowbrook's need for a covered riding ring. A key development of the last two decades has been our understanding of the critical importance of good footing to equine health. A recent article in the leading industry publication, *The Chronicle of the Horse*, stated that "Safe, consistent footing is the number one factor in horse safety and welfare."
- The importance of safe, consistent footing to an equine operation cannot be overstated. As the two veterinarians here today will state, a safe, consistent footing surface is absolutely critical to horses' long-term soundness.
- As a practical matter, in the mid-Atlantic, this requires a controlled environment – which can only be offered by a covered or enclosed riding arena – that is protected from excessive rain, snow or freezing temperatures.
- Which is precisely why covered rings are standard features at riding facilities throughout the mid-Atlantic – and have been for several decades. In fact, Meadowbrook is quite literally one of the only stables of its size that I can think of in the State of Maryland that lacks a covered riding ring.
- Meadowbrook has brought together a top team, and they have put together a beautiful project. Their builder – B&D Builders – are the best in the business. Their indoor arenas are breathtakingly beautiful, such as the one they built in Chesapeake City for the dressage operation of John Malone, the world's so-called "Cable King" and largest US landowner, and at Promise Landing Farm in Upper Marlboro. They are also of the highest structural integrity. When the indoor arena of the Worthmore Equestrian Center that was built by another company was obliterated by a tornado on the Eastern Shore last summer, the farm owners called on B & D to build a new arena that could withstand the fiercest natural disaster.
- I want to close by saying that this evolution in standards of horse care has directly resulted in better quality of life for horses, in lengthening their careers, and in longer lifespans overall. Today, horses live well into their mid-20s, often remaining healthy and happy right up to the very end.

- Stables like Meadowbrook, who prioritize horse welfare and have that built that into their very mission, are to be commended. It takes knowledge, skill, planning, commitment of resources, and daily hard work to run an operation like Meadowbrook and to do so successfully, to all of our benefit. We all need to do whatever we can to support these kinds of efforts, including approving the building of a covered ring.
- **The addition of a covered riding ring at Meadowbrook is not only essential but, if anything, overdue. I urge you to support this proposal.**

**Amy Fleishman, CPA**  
**Testimony In Support of Modification of General Development Plan,**  
**Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion**  
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- Good afternoon. My name is Amy Fleishman. I've been a Certified Public Accountant with a focus on non-profits for over 35 years. Among other things, I served as Chief Financial Officer for National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), before becoming an outsourced accountant for small non-profits.
- I have been the accountant for Meadowbrook Foundation for 15 years. As such, I'm thoroughly familiar with Meadowbrook's business. Because of my family's long-time involvement with horses, I'm also familiar with standard business practices in the equine industry generally, and in this region in particular.
- I'm pleased to testify today in support of Meadowbrook Stables' proposed covered riding pavilion. It's impossible to overstate the importance of a covered riding arena to Meadowbrook's programs, and its horses, riders and trainers, and to its long-term viability.
- Meadowbrook today is financially strong. Thanks to a talented and committed staff and Board, the last three years have been its strongest ever. Although it has not raised lesson fees in 3 years or boarding fees in over 5 years, we have managed to trim expenses and diversify programming to increase income and place Meadowbrook on solid financial footing.
- But this can only be done by maximizing the use of every inch of space available on the Meadowbrook property. The budget is based on the assumption that all four rings will be used for lessons, six days per week, four-five hours per day; and that Meadowbrook will host horse shows three times per year.
- This is done by integrating a variety of instructional programs, to appeal to all ages and levels of riders. The first of these programs – the foundation for all of Meadowbrook's lesson programs, and the bread and butter of its business - is its 32-week "School Year Group Lesson" program. This program is prepaid and lessons are not cancelled due to bad weather except when Montgomery Schools are cancelled. Rather, on the many days, especially between early November and late March, that students in the group lessons cannot ride due to inclement weather, Meadowbrook teaches students a structured, indoor horsemanship lesson.
- Second, Meadowbrook runs a competitive, Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) team program for middle and high school students. And, third, it offers private lessons. Both IEA team practices and private lessons are not prepaid and they are always cancelled in bad weather. Not only do these riders lose their lesson time but also, because these programs aren't prepaid, Meadowbrook loses this revenue.
- I'm aware that a few opponents of this project have questioned Meadowbrook's claim that it has lost significant income in recent years due to weather-related cancellations of a horse show and many lessons. I will tell you, unequivocally, it is a fact that these weather-related cancellations resulted in well over \$70,000 of lost income in 2019. And this happens every year – 2019 was not unusual.

- This figure includes well over \$50,000 in lost income due to cancelled lessons. In the six months between September 2019 and February 2020 alone, Meadowbrook had to cancel 179 private lessons and 219 IEA team practices, resulting in over \$36,000 of lost income. This amounts to well over \$50,000 in a typical year.
- Similarly, in April, 2019, Meadowbrook canceled one of its three yearly horse shows because a forecast of heavy rain for the day prior to the show would have saturated the rings and made them slippery and unsafe for riding and jumping. If Meadowbrook had had a covered riding arena at that time, the horse show classes could have been consolidated in one ring and the show would not have been cancelled. This cost Meadowbrook \$20,000 in lost income.
- But this project will have an enormous, positive impact on Meadowbrook's programs, well beyond the financial benefits.
  - You've heard the Executive Director, Katrina Weinig, talk about the significance of Meadowbrook's mission. As someone who has worked in various non-profit settings for decades, I can tell you that Meadowbrook's Board and staff are as committed to the educational, horse welfare, environmental, community and stewardship aspects of their mission as any non-profit I've seen.
  - When they say that this mission "informs all of their programs," and that a covered riding ring is essential to the quality of these programs, and therefore their mission, it is not hyperbole.
  - A covered riding ring is the only way that an equestrian facility in this climate can ensure that its riders receive safe, consistent training – and its horses get the daily exercise they need – on a year-round basis, regardless of the weather.
  - This is why virtually every other comparable riding facility in this region has invested in a covered riding ring – because it is essential to instruction and training.
  - In short, a covered riding ring will enable Meadowbrook to improve the quality, safety and consistency of the educational programming it provides; take better care of its horses and reduce vet bills; and be better stewards of this historic public facility.

**For all of these reasons, I urge you to approve Meadowbrook's proposal for a covered riding ring.**

**Susan Lyle**  
**Meadowbrook Parent and Local Resident**  
**Testimony in Support of Meadowbrook Stables' Proposal to Build a Covered Riding Pavilion**  
**National Capital Planning Commission File # MP100**  
**May 7, 2020**

Good afternoon. My name is Susan Lyle. My husband Mike and our four children have lived in the Rock Creek Forest neighborhood for 20 years and my two daughters have ridden at Meadowbrook Stables for 13 years, since 2006.

I'm pleased to testify today in support of Meadowbrook Stables' proposed covered riding pavilion. It's impossible to overstate the importance of a covered riding arena to Meadowbrook's programs, and its horses, riders and trainers.

Meadowbrook, and the experience of riding and working around horses, has had an enormous impact on my family and our two daughters.

- Like many local families, one of our favorite activities when my kids were little was to visit the horses at Meadowbrook. My oldest daughter couldn't wait to turn six so she could ride. Watching young children taking care of huge animals is amazing.
- One of my favorite things about the Meadowbrook community is the inter-generational friendships between riders. Our daughters, like the other kids, had the chance to develop friendships with adults, and to have positive adult role models. It's a safe place for them to be emotionally.

Riding and caring for horses has also taught my girls and many others that I've known over the years important life skills and values: How to set goals and work towards them, and the importance of putting an animal's needs ahead of their own. It's given them a work ethic and sense of responsibility; instilled a healthy self-confidence in their own personal potential; and maybe most importantly, it's taught them resilience and how to keep going after a setback.

But it's not just our family – Meadowbrook has had a huge, positive impact on the Rock Creek Forest community. Meadowbrook was here long before any of us – when the Stables was built in 1934, it was surrounded by woods and fields.

- Our community grew up around Meadowbrook and families like mine – whether they ride or not - have benefited for decades from the chance to take their children to watch and pat the horses, visit and picnic at the Stables. Every weekend, and many days during the week, there are dozens of children in the barn and on the grounds taking advantage of this amazing place.

- And the Stables' staff – as well as riders - are friendly, open and welcoming, answering questions and chatting with visitors. They view this as part of their educational mission.

Finally, it's impossible to overstate the positive impact that a covered riding ring will have on Meadowbrook's programs, as well as its horses, riders and staff.

- Meadowbrook riders regularly ride in drizzle, snow, cold, wind and darkness. Riders in general are a pretty tough and hardy group, and Meadowbrook riders are no exception.
- But these conditions obviously compromise the quality and range of riders' training, as well as the quality of the horses' exercise.
- There are many days, especially between November and March, when riders cannot ride at all or – if they do – are limited to walking and trotting their horses just to get them out of their stalls. But they certainly can't jump.
- For riders with competitive goals, this puts them at a disadvantage relative to their peers who can train on a daily basis, year-round, regardless of the weather. Some of these kids are hoping to ride competitively in college, or for college scholarships. They need to be able to compete with their peers.
- Some would say, as I understand the opponents have done, that those serious riders should simply transfer to another stable with an indoor ring – say, in Potomac or Poolesville. But for any busy working family, that 2-hour round trip commute is simply not an option.

I know many of my neighbors feel exactly as my husband and I do. They value and support Meadowbrook, and they support the current project, which will be beautiful and appropriate to the historic setting of this property. Dozens of them have submitted their comments on line.

**For all of these reasons, I urge you to approve Meadowbrook's proposal for a covered riding ring.**

**Ryan Bradley**  
**Meadowbrook Rider and Working Student**  
**Testimony In Support of Modification of General Development Plan,**  
**Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion**  
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- Hello, my name is Ryan Bradley. I'm a senior at Washington Latin Public Charter School. My sister, Maya, and I have ridden and worked at Meadowbrook Stables since 2017.
- I am speaking today not only for myself, but also on behalf of all of Meadowbrook's 300 current riders, as well as its thousands of future riders. We encourage the Commission to approve Meadowbrook Stables' proposed covered riding pavilion. Although I will not personally benefit from this project since I will be going away to college next year, I believe that it is critical to Meadowbrook, its horses and its riders.
- I'd like to start by telling you bit about my experience riding and working at Meadowbrook, and the impact it's had on my life. My experience reflects that of many riders.
- For the last three years, I have taken lessons and have also been an active member of Meadowbrook's Interscholastic Equestrian Association, or IEA, Team.
  - The IEA is a national organization with over 14,000 members that promotes team competition for high school and middle school riders. The great thing about IEA competition is that you don't have to have your own horse to compete. Instead, riders compete on horses provided by the competition hosts.
  - Meadowbrook's team has been Regional Champion and qualified for National Finals several years.
  - The great thing about this program is that it gives riders like me, who don't own their own horse the chance to compete at horse shows. I also love the opportunity to bond with my teammates and create lasting friendships with people who share similar interests to me.
- For the last two years, I've also worked at Meadowbrook on weekends during the school year and daily during the summer. As a Working Student, under the Barn Manager's supervision, I've been responsible for feed, administering medication, wound and lameness care, exercise, grooming, and many other aspects of horse care.
  - This is hard work, and it's sometimes been a challenge to juggle with my school schedule. But I've learned valuable skills, and have had the chance to work with veterinarians and other equine professionals. I have learned that it is hard but, rewarding work to care for our horses. It's taught me the importance of responsibility, perseverance, and, most

importantly, it has shaped both my career and college choice. The work experience directly led to my getting into a top Equine Studies program at the University of Findlay on a full tuition scholarship. I will be majoring in Equestrian Studies and Biology. After college, I plan to pursue a career in the equine industry.

- This job also helped me pay for IEA shows, buy the clothing and equipment I needed, and pay for lessons.
- With all of this as background, I'd like to address a claim that Meadowbrook's opponents have made - that Meadowbrook is elitist – and that the covered riding ring shouldn't be built because it would only benefit the elite. I find this claim both untrue and, frankly, offensive. I don't dispute that riding can be expensive. But respectfully, what I would like them, as well as you, the Commissioners, to know is this:
  - Meadowbrook's staff and Board are committed to making riding affordable, and opportunities available, to riders who are passionate about this sport but whose family cannot afford to buy them a horse. My family has benefitted from that commitment, and I know others have as well. Meadowbrook offers riders the chance not only to ride, but also to work. Barn work, while rewarding and very enjoyable, is far from elitist.
  - Not all riders at Meadowbrook come from wealthy families. Many of us are middle class, and we work hard to pursue our goals and make riding possible. And I know Meadowbrook works with many families and riders to make riding affordable for them.
  - And I would ask Meadowbrook's opponents this: Why shouldn't kids at Meadowbrook, who work hard to do what they love, and to pursue career-related riding goals, have the same up-to-date facilities that their competitors have?
  - The opponents say that Meadowbrook has been fine without a covered riding ring for 85 years – why do we need one now? This just seems silly to me. Obviously, training methods and facilities for both horses and riders have evolved in 85 years, just as they have in every other sport. Don't they realize that the effect of this argument would be to hold us back, and limit our chance to compete with our peers who have access to daily, year-round riding and training? If we can't ride for days at a time from November to March, we're clearly at a disadvantage relative to our peers.
  - These opponents have also said that if riders want a covered ring, they can go elsewhere. This shows no sensitivity to riders who have two working parents. Even if my sister and I had wanted to ride at another barn with an indoor ring – say in Poolesville or Potomac – our travel time would be almost tripled which would make it impossible to go to the barn five days a week while still being full time students. One of the great things about Meadowbrook's location is that it can be reached using public transportation. I know this is really helpful for many riders.

**For all of these reasons, and on behalf of all of Meadowbrook's riders, I urge you to approve Meadowbrook's proposal for a covered riding ring.**

**Allison Fultz**  
**Parent, Rider and Member of Meadowbrook's Board of Directors**  
**Architect and Environmental Lawyer**  
**Testimony In Support of Modification of General Development Plan, Meadowbrook Stables**  
**Riding Ring Pavilion**  
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- Good afternoon. My name is Allison Fultz. I've been involved with Meadowbrook in many capacities for over seven years: (a) as the parent of a rider, who rode on Meadowbrook's Interscholastic Equestrian team and who has also worked part-time at Meadowbrook as part of its youth employment program; (b) as a rider myself; and (c) as a member of the Board since 2018.
- I thank the Commission for the opportunity to testify today in support of Meadowbrook Stables' proposed covered riding pavilion.
- A covered, all-weather riding arena is critical to Meadowbrook's instructional programs, and to the welfare of its horses. It will improve the safety, consistency, and quality of Meadowbrook's lessons, reduce lesson cancellations, and allow us to better serve our riders now and in the decades to come. It's a much needed and, in fact, long overdue addition to what is in every other respect a top-notch and highly-regarded riding facility.
- I'll address an issue which is of particular personal and professional interest to me: the minimization of the impact of this project on the environment. An important element of Meadowbrook's mission is to model green and sustainable horse keeping practices, and this is something the Board and staff take very seriously. Meadowbrook has been named an environmental steward by Montgomery County for its exemplary practices to protect the public land it occupies.
- I am both an environmental lawyer and registered architect, and so I'm familiar with the regulatory and technical issues surrounding building in a flood plain. And I want to say, unequivocally, that this project will be an improvement over the status quo and a net plus for the environment. I acknowledge that Hyon Rah will also be commenting later, and that the map that witness submitted is entirely consistent with the materials Meadowbrook used in its submittals for the floodplain permits it has already obtained.
- As you can see from the design and site plans, the arena will be a passive, floodplain tolerant structure. The design incorporates both garage doors and a system of passive vents that would allow water to pass through, unimpeded, in the event of a flood, even if the garage doors are down. In other words, flood water would not harm the building, nor would the building impede the flow of water. The net effect of this structure is little different than if Meadowbrook were to replace the split-rail fence that currently encircles the ring where the arena will be built.

- Beyond this, the project calls for replacing over 30,000 square feet of what is currently exposed sand in Ring C with bioswales and native planting. These features are part of the project's stormwater management system, which will be explained in greater detail by Montgomery Parks' representative, David Tobin. However, replanting this area will also serve the purpose of reducing erosion and sediment runoff – again, a net plus for the environment.
- In addition, the project calls for eliminating twenty 40' tall arena lights – nearly half of what's currently on the property. This will significantly reduce ambient light intrusions to the community and Rock Creek Park.
- The project will also significantly reduce Meadowbrook's fresh water usage. Currently, Meadowbrook uses around 1 million gallons of water each year to control dust in its riding rings. Covering the largest of these rings will save about 1/3, or 300,000 gallons, of water.
- And finally, the project includes a 118 kW solar installation on the south side of the building. This installation will not be visible from the barn or Rock Creek Forest neighborhood, and will be virtually invisible to passers-by due to its positioning. But the impact of this installation in generating clean energy both for Meadowbrook and for the grid will be significant, and will help Montgomery County meet its clean energy goals.
- Although I haven't personally been part of the design team, I know the team has given these environmental features a great deal of thought, and has been very intentional about including them, at no small cost. And the combined impact of these features is significant – as I said, the project is a net plus for the environment.
- Lastly, as an architect, I commend the project design as a whole to the Commission. I'm extremely impressed with what the design team has accomplished. They've put together a project that is aesthetically rich, and in keeping with the historic nature of the Meadowbrook property. The various design elements – a stone skirt, the choice of window and door trim, the gable window and cupolas – reference the existing historic barn and the more recent maintenance building. The design more than satisfies the many competing historic, environmental, community, and operational demands of this site – it is also beautiful. I believe that it is a project that Meadowbrook, Montgomery Parks, and the community will be proud of for years to come.

**For all of these reasons, I urge you to approve Meadowbrook's proposal for a covered riding ring.**

## Remarks of Pam Holland in regard to Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion General Development Plan Modification before the NCPC – Thursday, May 7, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Commission this afternoon. I would like to thank your staff, including Michael Weil, Diane Sullivan, and Anne Schuyler for their hard work and transparency during this process. It is greatly appreciated.

Given the brief time limit on remarks, I will limit my remarks to the appropriateness – or more accurately the inappropriateness -- of the proposed indoor riding ring in this particular park setting.

- **Over 200 immediate neighbors of the stables and rock creek park have signed a petition opposing the construction of the facility.** I have provided the latest petition with my written comments. Open space in this section of Rock Creek Park and Montgomery County is a valuable and shrinking resource and should not be converted to a private use. This ring is gigantic and would span nearly half of the width of the park at the proposed spot.
- **Meadowbrook is an elite equestrian facility.** The annual lesson fees of more than \$3,000 are prohibitive to so many. Despite its Chevy Chase address, Rock Creek Forest, the elementary school district in which Meadowbrook is located, has a high farms rate of nearly 30%. These children may occasionally have the opportunity to visit Meadowbrook's horses on 'field trips' but they will never have the opportunity to ride a horse at their neighborhood stable.
- **Given the dire economic condition of our area due to Covid-19, many of our neighbors are struggling to put food on the table and pay their rent.** It is unconscionable to allow our limited resources to be further restricted to horses and their wealthy riders.
- **Meadowbrook and Montgomery County Parks department have repeatedly misled NCPC and the neighborhood about the proposed development.** Truth and accountability should matter in this process much more than it has. Perhaps the most notable misleading statement lead Michael Weil to conclude in his December staff report that the proposed riding ring would not sit within the 100-year flood plain. This erroneous conclusion stood – uncorrected by Meadowbrook or Montgomery County Parks – until concerned citizens brought it to the attention of NCPC staff. Concerned neighbors have since spent an inordinate amount of time correcting dozens of misstatements in Meadowbrook's materials. And of course, NCPC staff has had to devote an extraordinary amount of time to this as well.
- **Meadowbrook asserted that an indoor riding ring would have prevented cancellation of an April, 2019 horse show. This is simply not true.** The severe storms of that weekend involved heavy winds, described by the Washington Post as "cyclone like". The storm was predicted to arrive on Friday – the day before the horse show - which made travel with horse trailers in the predicted heavy winds very dangerous. An indoor riding ring would have made zero difference. In fact, Meadowbrook regularly conducts classes and horseshows in the rain. After all, horseback riding is an outdoor sport

In conclusion, I urge the Commission to deny project approval. Thank you for your time today.

We, the undersigned concerned citizens are opposed to the construction of a 225 ft. by 125 ft building in Rock Creek Park/Meadowbrook for the limited and exclusive use of Meadowbrook's customers.

We urge the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPCC) and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPCC) to deny approval of this building.

The negative impact of this massive building, in a flood plain, and destruction of the view scape would be felt by the many thousands who seek the enjoyment of open space in Rock Creek Park.

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Laura A. Govoni  
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lgovsib@comcast.net

Good afternoon. My name is Laura Govoni. I am a 25- year resident of Abilene Drive, living directly adjacent to Meadowbrook Stables. I took riding lessons at Meadowbrook many years ago. It was having the view of open sky, woodlands, and in particular-horses, outside our window that led us to purchase our home.

While this Commission has an important independent role, it lacks the resources to fully vet claims of a biased applicant. The public private partnership between Montgomery County Parks and Meadowbrook results in Parks being the self- described advocate of Meadowbrook,\* leaving the community to fend for itself. Approval of this project would ignore the large number of park and trail users, neighbors, and community whose open space and view sheds would be impeded upon, in the service of 300-450 riders. The community has done much of the due diligence regarding this project which has included the need to continually correct inaccuracies.

As this pandemic exemplifies, our parks and open spaces are necessary for our physical and mental health as evidenced by the daily heavy use of the Rock Creek Trail, adjacent to Meadowbrook Stables and Ring C. The public seeks solace in nature and, thus, our parklands, *especially in urban areas*, need to remain open and accessible. Encroaching on such space with a building that would benefit so few ought to be unthinkable now or in the future. The exercise lost for the horses on some days of inclement weather pales in comparison to horse exercise lost during this pandemic. While Meadowbrook's horses are currently being turned out (and always have been turned out, despite the report's impression otherwise,) certainly not *all* horses have been *exercised* or ridden *daily* since March.

While Meadowbrook's doors are normally open for visitors (pre-COVID-19,) the pavilion is not being sought for such visitors, but for the riders and to exercise the horses on the few days a year that riding may be impaired by soggy footings. It is the poor storm water drainage that results in soggy footing. Why not fix the drainage issue?

Safe footings for horse *turn out* was one rationale for the previous proposed Pavilion location, Ring D. Protected footings as well as direct view from the barn was Meadowbrook's argument. Meadowbrook now contradicts itself stating that it would be preferred to turn out horses in an unsheltered Ring D, reserving a covered Ring C for exercise. *If a ring was to be sheltered and horse health is a priority, logic dictates that sheltered ring be used for turn out.* Should a pavilion be built, the alternate Ring D would make far more sense and be less disruptive on many levels. Contrary to Meadowbrook's claims, neither the US Equestrian Federation competition requirements & standards: <https://files.usef.org/assets/rzti619Nx-c/hunter-jumper-standards-form.pdf> nor the US Hunter Jumper Association competition standards: [https://www.ushja.org/application/files/3015/3538/5117/ShowStandardsGuide2018\\_wLinks.pdf](https://www.ushja.org/application/files/3015/3538/5117/ShowStandardsGuide2018_wLinks.pdf) require a ring larger than ring D. The Certified Horsemanship Association describes that a 100 ft. x 200 ft. competition arena (size of Ring D) is large enough for full jump courses and other uses. <http://cha-ahse.org/store/pages/148/APPROPRIATE-ARENA-SIZE.html>

Meadowbrook Stables is in a public park yet the majority of its programming is run like a private club leading to an issue of equity. While part of Meadowbrook's mission states "Meadowbrook seeks to make the joy of engaging with horses available to children and youth from all walks of life" there continues to be no information on their website about "need-based scholarships." Realistically, Meadowbrook would not be able to increase its access to programming without increasing the use of the facility, posing further operational issues including traffic, parking etc. (which is once again being kicked down the road with the current report).

NCPC is guided in its reviews by the Open Space Element which frequently refers to protecting scenic viewsheds, context of landscape and adjacent land use, visual characteristics, and a site's character-defining elements/views/viewsheds. Executive Order 11988 also informs NCPC's reviews requiring federal agencies to, whenever possible, avoid occupancy and modification of floodplains as well as direct or indirect support of floodplain development. I believe to approve this pavilion, NCPC would be acting in contradiction of its own guidelines and the executive order on all accounts.

I implore you to dig deep during your review and weigh the cost on park character, viewscapes, natural resources, and equity of the proposal before you. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Govoni, May 7, 2020\*\*

\*October 4, 2018 Memo to Montgomery County Planning Board and Parks Commission

See page 4, first paragraph (p. 4 also copied below)

<http://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/October-4-item-3-staff-memo.pdf>

The success of our public-private partners often relies on the active support of the Department. The PACP Manager of Community Partnerships is the primary liaison between the partner and the Department and Commission. He is their advocate and sometime mentor and helps them navigate the "public process" – sometimes a challenging and frustrating experience. Whether it's a matter of amending a legal agreement to accommodate growth or changing other agreement terms in reaction to market changes, or simply applying for a special permit – the Manager of Community Partnerships is usually the first stop on the road to progress. The partnership begins with a land lease or other legal agreement, but it only succeeds if we vigilantly support them in their work year after year.

We encourage all members of the Planning Board to visit our partners. They will be happy to show you around. They are proud of what they do, and appreciative of the fact that it is our partnership that makes it possible.

2) Park Property Under Lease: Program Administration and Revenue

The Property Management (PM) program, as part of the Facilities Management Division (FM), administers 130 leases for the use of Montgomery Parks property: rental homes, buildings, agricultural, telecommunications (cell towers, fiber optic), tennis bubbles, equestrian facilities, among others.

Revenue from PM leases (\$1.4 MIL) is used to pay for the PM administrative staff of 4 and covers approximately 2-3 maintenance staff and materials as expenses of the FM associated with maintaining leased properties.

The typical agreement is no longer limited to a 'lease' and the Inventory now reflects a diverse range of leases, licenses, development agreements, permits, operating agreements, MOU's, etc. Which type of legal agreement is guided by the nature of the arrangements and the use. Third party use of Park property such as the MD Soccer, or Meadowbrook, include a development agreement and a lease agreement. More recently, shared use agreements are on the increase such as the Blair High School's use of the athletic fields at Blair Local Park or the collocation of the M-NCPPC and MCPS maintenance depots at the new facility in the Multi-Agency Service Park (MASP). All the legal agreements for use of Park property fall under the purview of the PM.

The PM also administers certain leases on behalf of the Enterprise Division. We are collecting the lease revenue (\$800,000) and managing the day-to-day tenant compliance and lease activities. The scope of lease oversight for private telecom leases and their applications for siting on Park property has significantly increased over the last 2 years due to changes in technology (5G) and the zoning code in Montgomery County (small cell). The PM receives reimbursement (chargeback) from the Enterprise budget to cover staff costs associated with the administration of telecom leases and Jack Schora Tennis and Miracle League agreements at the South Germantown Recreational Park.

**February 14, 2020 9:35 am** Comments from Concerned Neighbors of Meadowbrook Stables ( 1. A point by point response to the Executive Directors' report in question that points out errors, inconsistencies, and reflects concerns and sentiments of the Concerned Neighbors of Meadowbrook Stables. 2. Attachment A, a point by point response to *excerpts* from the Draft Environment Assessment for Meadowbrook Stables Proposed Covered Riding Ring in question which points out errors, misrepresentations, and inconsistencies along with concerns and sentiments of the Concerned Neighbors of Meadowbrook Stables. 3. Attachment B, a sampling of photos from homes adjacent to Meadowbrook Stables. 4. Photographs of the most recent flooding of Meadowbrook's Storm Water Management pond.)

**February 14, 2020 9:58 am** Copy of Statement from January 16, 2020 Montgomery parks meeting

**March 10, 2020 8:26 pm** Concerned Neighbors of Meadowbrook Stable comments re: MFI's Frequently Asked Questions (re: covered arena proposal), along with video clips 1 and 2 sent at 8:26 pm

**March 17,2020 8:05 pm** Responses to March 2020 Environmental Assessment for Meadowbrook Stables

**Mary Kennedy**  
**Meadowbrook Board of Directors and Rider**  
**Testimony In Support of Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion**  
**National Capital Planning Commission File # MP100**  
**May 7, 2020**

- My name is Mary Kennedy. I've been a rider at Meadowbrook for over 20 years, and have served on the Board of Directors since 2010. I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today about a place that has been close to my heart for many years.
- Meadowbrook Stables is a true gem – for the Rock Creek Forest neighborhood, for Montgomery County, and for the National Capital region. Over the years, I've watched so many kids grow up there and have seen the impact of riding and working around horses on their lives. It's a welcoming, supportive community, and a place where both kids and adults form friendships and learn life lessons that they carry with them into the world.
- Beyond this, Meadowbrook is known in Maryland and the mid-Atlantic as a top-notch and highly-regarded riding facility. It's a place that caters to and welcomes riders of all levels, all ages, all backgrounds, and all levels of commitment. Like just about any sport, some of our riders come once a week for pleasure and recreation, and some of them get bitten by the horse bug and ride every day. Some have competitive goals, and show at the local and national level, and some of our riders have gone on to collegiate and even international competition.
- But I want to emphasize, the Board has always believed that Meadowbrook is not fundamentally a "show stable." Our mission, as Kerry Richard and others have said so well today, is much, much broader: We want to make the experience and benefits and joy of riding and interacting with horses available to people from all walks of life, and to the non-riding public.
- I know the opponents of this project have charged, just as they did 15 years ago, that Meadowbrook is somehow elitist or exclusive. But as Ryan Bradley, one of our young riders and working students, has also said, this couldn't be further from the truth.
- The hundreds of riders and families that make up Meadowbrook's community come from diverse backgrounds, throughout the DMV region. The Board and staff regularly look for ways to support and encourage all riders – particularly kids – for whom lesson or show fees are a stretch. We do this in multiple ways.
- For example, we hire about 25 young people each year as working students, riding lesson assistants, and summer camp counselors. We give need-based financial assistance to several riders each year. We've done work-exchange programs with families. And we've partnered with schools, such as the KIPP DC Charter School, to offer riding, as well as transportation and meals, to interested students.
- We also make competitive opportunities available to many of our riders who can't afford their own horses through, for example, our Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) team, which gives kids the chance to compete at the local, regional and national level.

- And we've worked with various local youth organizations, including the Ohr Kodesh Day Care Center, which has submitted a letter on the importance of Meadowbrook to their programs, as well as multiple Girl Scout Troops and Jubilee House, to create unmounted programs for kids to interact with and learn about horses.
- Beyond this, we're open to the public every day of the year, from dawn to dusk. Literally dozens of parents and grandparents bring their kids every week. Many of these kids get to know the horses by name, and have their favorites. And we know them!
- I invite any of you to stop by and visit our barn and horses any day; we'd be thrilled to show you around! And I think you'll feel right at home.
- Returning to the proposal you have before you today: It's impossible to overstate the positive impact that this project will have on Meadowbrook's programs, as well as its horses, riders and staff. As I said earlier, Meadowbrook is well respected in the horse world. We're known for turning out good riders, and for teaching our riders how to take care of their horses from day one. We're also known for good sportsmanship, and our head trainer Diane Rogers was chosen by her peer as Maryland Trainer of the Year in 2018.
- But there is no question that Meadowbrook's programs are hindered by the lack of an all-weather riding ring. Without that, our most serious and committed riders can't get the consistent training they need. Our youngest riders – the 6 to 10-year-olds, just starting out – don't get the consistent riding they need to progress, either. And our horses can't get the daily exercise they need to stay physically and mentally healthy.
- Simply put, a covered riding ring is essential to Meadowbrook's ability to ensure high quality, safe and consistent programming for our riders and horses. It will also allow us to offer more frequent unmounted programming to youth groups and the general public. It will help us to steward this historic public facility in the decades to come. And it will be better for the environment.
- I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today, and urge you to vote in favor of this proposal to build a covered riding ring at Meadowbrook.

Dear NCPD Commissioners,

As a contiguous neighbor of Meadowbrook stables I am against the construction of the proposed riding ring. Meadowbrook is one of the reasons we moved to this area. There was an appeal to the historic nature of the barn and we often took our children to see the horses. The riding pavilion will detract from that vista.

The reasons I oppose it:

- 1) **The environment around Meadowbrook stables is stressed.** The proposed facility is being built totally within the 100 year flood plain. No matter how many drainage ponds are built, they will backflow when Rock Creek's water rises. Flooding results affecting Candy Cane Park and the hiker biker path; this will only get worse with more "sediment ponds". Maryland's Section 303(d) list of impaired waters included Rock Creek for E. Coli pollution. Currently poorly constructed sediment ponds collect and distribute E. Coli when they backflow.
- 2) **It conflicts with the historical barn.** The riding ring originally proposed in the paddock behind the barn would have conflicted with the historic nature of the barn. This resulted in a new location further away from the barn.
- 3) **NIMBY.** The stables does not want it in their "backyard" why should we?
- 4) **Rock Creek Park is fragmented.** Meadowbrook stables building "another" structure will only make the GREENWAY worse by constricting Rock Creek Park's animal through way. Deer, Fox, and Raccoons are often seen in the neighborhood abutting the stables.
- 5) **The parks Open Space program is being ignored.** I moved to this area to be next to the open space of Rock Creek park. The design and size of the proposed facility is more like that of an "Industrial park"!
- 6) **The proposed project is the type of development that the spirit of the Capper-Crampton Act sought to prevent.** That is the spirit of preserving the natural stream valley parkland for the pleasure and enjoyment of future generations of park users.
- 7) I understand why Meadowbrook wants the covered riding-arena but the long-term environmental effects do not justify it.

Owen Powers

2810 Abilene Drive

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

**NCPC TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL SIBARIUM  
REGARDING MEADOWBROOK STABLES PROPOSAL**

**May 7, 2020**

(Revised Spoken Version)

Good afternoon Commissioners. My name is Michael Sibarium. I am a fan of the horses, but join the 200 petitioners who oppose this project. The application to build a covered arena in Ring C should be rejected for at least four reasons.

**1. First, under Capper-Cramptom** the Commission must take into account a site's "views, or viewsheds" and "adjacent land-use and demographics" in its review of any project. [NCPC Parks and Open Space Element, p. 17.]

Meadowbrook Lane is a main entry point to our neighborhood, with dramatic views of green parkland rising beyond the contrasting paddocks as one passes the barn. If this project goes forward, that view will be replaced by a building  $\frac{3}{4}$  the size of a football field reaching 41 feet at its highest point. When the stables were built they were in the country; there is no legacy to protect as an urban facility. Much of the community surrounding it was built in the 1950s, decades before Meadowbrook Foundation assumed control. Erecting the arena in Ring C would ravage the viewshed and be inconsistent with the adjacent land use and demographics of today.

[https://www.ncpc.gov/docs/Parks\\_and\\_Open\\_Space\\_Element\\_December2018.pdf](https://www.ncpc.gov/docs/Parks_and_Open_Space_Element_December2018.pdf)

**2. Second, the arena may advance Meadowbrook Stables as a functional private school, but not as a public park facility, as its use would be primarily available only to those who can pay nearly \$3,000 a year-for lessons.** A vote to approve the application will barter unique open space and views enjoyed by thousands in favor of 450 riders per year, a third of them ride only in the summer. These riders will only benefit from the arena on those few days when weather is severe enough to seriously impair riding, but not so severe as to require cancellation of schools and other activities in the area. In a neighborhood served by a Title I elementary school, building the arena next to the trail will cast a long shadow of wealth and privilege over all passers by – the very antithesis of a public park.

**3. Third , Executive Order 11998 permits development in a flood plain only in if the agency head concludes there is no practical alternative to the proposal, and Meadowbrook has failed to produce evidence sufficient to show that the no-action plan or Ring D proposals are not practical alternatives.** The staff

relies upon many uncorroborated assertions of the applicant, which has been anything but forthcoming in this process, and these do not warrant approval. For instance:

-- The report accepts Meadowbrook's claim that the arena is necessary for horse health and safety. But Meadowbrook offers no evidence *that its horses* have suffered adverse health effects *because* they missed some lessons due to inclement weather.

-- Meadowbrook makes vague references to studies about horse health, but not one is cited to permit public review and critique.

-- Meadowbrook asserts that Ring D alternative would not be sufficient because it would be too small for jumping. But I refer you to citations in Ms. Govoni's testimony that notes national horse associations would find the dimensions of the Alternative Ring D sufficient.

-- Staff accepts without challenge a new assertion that more grading will be required to build a smaller arena in Ring D than a larger one in Ring C, but provides no explanation of the magnitude of this difference or why it is even a material consideration to this Commission.

.  
4. **Finally**, If Meadowbrook should leave this site for any reason whatsoever, the Ring C Arena will be left as a scar across the face of the landscape. Please ask yourselves now the question you will need to ask yourselves then, is what is to be gained by erecting this building in Ring C worth what will be surrendered.

Thank you for your time.

Meadowbrook Stables Riding Ring Pavilion's General Development Plan Testimony  
May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020

By Hyon K. Rah  
Principal, RAH Solutions  
Adjunct Professor, University of the District of Columbia and Goucher College

Good afternoon. My name is Hyon Rah, and I am here today to share some concerns I have about the development plan for the Meadowbrook Stables Ring Pavilion. I am a trained architect and water resources manager, and teach courses on sustainable development and climate resilience at two local universities. I often work with developers to provide guidance on sustainable buildings and energy and water management strategies that are in line with their financial goals. In short, based on the current information, I think the proposed plan is a bad idea.

As the FEMA flood risk map I provided to you in advance indicates, most of the current facility and the proposed addition fall within the 100-year floodplain (which means the area has a 1% chance of flooding per year), designated as "high risk" by FEMA. I should add that the 1% figure may be underestimating the current risk. For example, Houston has seen two 1000-year floods in just two years, and increased incidence of flooding is a trend across the whole country, including our region. At a time when efforts are being made at the federal, regional, and local levels to mitigate this risk, including updated floodplain regulations and relocation of people and assets from known high-risk flood zones, a proposal to add more assets to such a zone does not seem sensible, either from a financial or a resilience perspective.

Potential water pollution is another concern, especially considering the nature of the facility (i.e. animal waste) and its obvious risk to floods. The proposal does not mention if there is a wastewater and flood risk management plan in place for the existing asset and the proposed expansion.

Erosion management, during and after construction, is another factor the proposed plan does not currently address. This has water quality and public safety implications.

The proposal mentions the use of floodlights, which can increase light pollution and have negative impact on the park's ecosystem. The plan is silent on this, too.

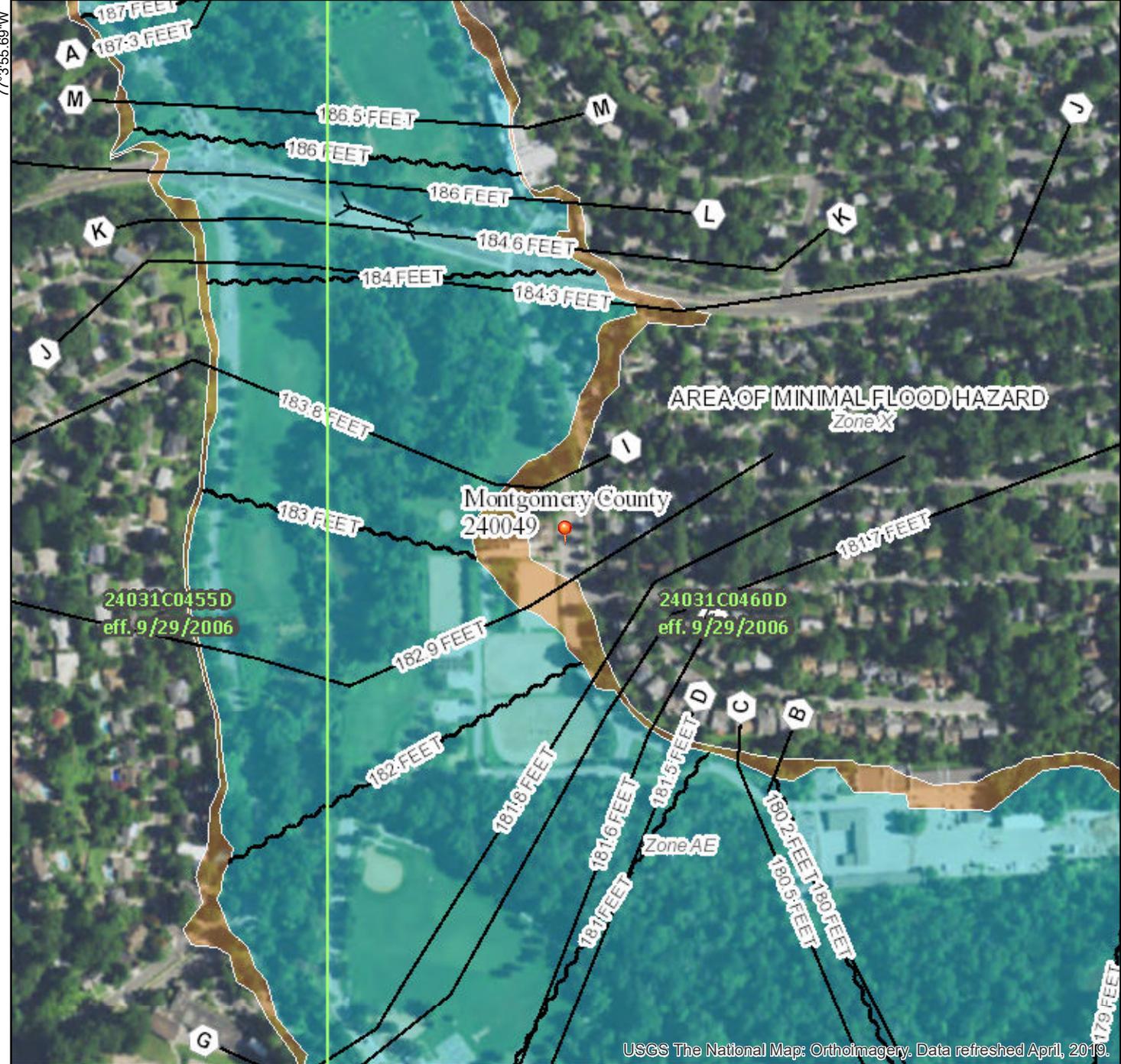
Lastly, for all the risks the project poses, its "purpose and need" for the public is unclear. The proposal mentions public access as a benefit, but simply having the facility open to the public for passive observation of riding lessons does not seem to be a fair exchange for the public to take on the risks I have outlined.

Thank you.

# National Flood Hazard Layer FIRMette



38°59'40.14"N



## Legend

SEE FIS REPORT FOR DETAILED LEGEND AND INDEX MAP FOR FIRM PANEL LAYOUT

SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS	Without Base Flood Elevation (BFE) Zone A, V, A99	With BFE or Depth Zone AE, AO, AH, VE, AR
	Regulatory Floodway	

		0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard, Areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depth less than one foot or with drainage areas of less than one square mile Zone X
		Future Conditions 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard Zone X
		Area with Reduced Flood Risk due to Levee. See Notes. Zone X
		Area with Flood Risk due to Levee Zone D

OTHER AREAS OF FLOOD HAZARD

		NO SCREEN Area of Minimal Flood Hazard Zone X
		Effective LOMRs
		Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard Zone D

OTHER AREAS

GENERAL STRUCTURES		Channel, Culvert, or Storm Sewer
		Levee, Dike, or Floodwall
OTHER FEATURES		Cross Sections with 1% Annual Chance Water Surface Elevation
		Coastal Transect
		Base Flood Elevation Line (BFE)
		Limit of Study
		Jurisdiction Boundary
		Coastal Transect Baseline
		Profile Baseline
		Hydrographic Feature

DIGITAL DATA		Digital Data Available
		No Digital Data Available
MAP PANELS		Unmapped

The pin displayed on the map is an approximate point selected by the user and does not represent an authoritative property location.

This map complies with FEMA's standards for the use of digital flood maps if it is not void as described below. The basemap shown complies with FEMA's basemap accuracy standards

The flood hazard information is derived directly from the authoritative NFHL web services provided by FEMA. This map was exported on 3/11/2020 at 3:01:07 PM and does not reflect changes or amendments subsequent to this date and time. The NFHL and effective information may change or become superseded by new data over time.

This map image is void if the one or more of the following map elements do not appear: basemap imagery, flood zone labels, legend, scale bar, map creation date, community identifiers, FIRM panel number, and FIRM effective date. Map images for unmapped and unmodernized areas cannot be used for regulatory purposes.

CON:

Meadowbrook Stables operates pursuant to a lease under which M-NCPPC is its landlord. The lease states expressly that "Lessee may not make any changes, alterations, installations, additions or improvements to the Premises without [M-NCPPC's] consent. Lessee shall not ... place fill within the 100-year floodplain ... excavate or build any improvement on the Premises without express prior written consent from [M-NCPPC]." (Lease § 6.8) And the lease provides further that "Whenever a permit or license is required for a new use of the Premises, Lessee shall obtain M-NCPPC's review and express written approval of the use *prior* to applying for the license or permit." (Lease § 6.3).

Rather than enforcing the lease as written, M-NCPPC has acceded to its lessee's request without conducting the due diligence – including obtaining neighborhood and park users' input – that a responsible public body should conduct. Meadowbrook Stables doesn't even propose to pay additional rent to compensate the county for the permanent loss of the view scape of a major area of the park. Meadowbrook Stables proposes to continue operating under its existing lease as though no concession had occurred. Yet construction and operation of the proposed facility – ostensibly to allow Meadowbrook to compete with commercial equestrian facilities - would NEVER be permitted under a commercial lease.

Occupancy of the park and operation of an exclusive facility there is a privilege. The stables are abusing that privilege by attempting to expand their operations beyond the scope of the rights granted under their lease. They are trying to abuse their trusted relationship with the neighbors and the public who enjoy the park by persuading the county to elevate their needs above those of everyone else. Yet they have known since they assumed occupancy in 2003 that the improvements and configuration of the facility where they operate are limited. They agreed to operate the facility using certain approved improvements. The stables have no right to expect that additional public resources will be sacrificed to expand their leasehold and shift the balance between their occupancy rights and the rights of the others who use the park, without compensating anyone for their expansion of their privilege to the detriment of others. The stables consistently attempt to obfuscate the facts by implying that the new building is a "necessity", when any examination of their operations and equestrian requirements demonstrates unequivocally that it is not.

NCPC should **NOT** approve this request and should not recommend approval by any other agency.

CON:

Most of the comments in favor of this proposal seem to focus on the potential benefit to the horses. I don't know how many horses are stabled at this facility, but I am certain that even fewer horses will benefit than the small number of human beneficiaries who own them. I like horses as much as the next person, but horses do not pay taxes. Horses do not invest in their community, and horses do not maintain property values that are in danger of being impacted negatively by expansion of this facility. The neighbors and non-horseback riding public DO. Their needs should take precedence over the comfort of a few horses.

- o CON: At last night's public meeting, most of the comments in favor of the proposal really had nothing to do with the new building. They came from people who support the stables, generally. But this isn't about whether the stables should be allowed to remain. The stables are an unusual neighbor for a residential area, but they are decent neighbors as long as they are not hosting so many people that enormous horse trailers, trucks, and cars impede neighborhood access and interfere with parking. These problems occur occasionally, but most of the time the stables co-exist peacefully with the neighborhood. The proposed new building would change that relationship, and it is impossible to imagine any way that change would be positive for anyone but the stables and their customers. This neighborhood maintains its value partly because of the adjacent parkland amenities that are within easy walking distance. This proposal would change parkland to a commercial use and therefore would change the fundamental nature of the neighborhood.
- o CON: Many of the comments last night focused on storm run-off and flooding. Flooding is a serious concern. Recent installation of permanent gates to control park access during periods of extreme flooding is tangible acknowledgement by the park service that flooding is an issue already. Flooding already interferes with neighborhood ingress and egress on a regular basis. It is astonishing and disturbing that the County and the park would even consider a proposal that could exacerbate existing problems. This proposal should have been DOA. Now that plans and elevations have been developed, the proponents should be sent back to the literal drawing board to develop a design that does NOT have an impermeable roof. In an era when environmental concerns have led to development of LEED-friendly solutions such as green roofs, it is unconscionable that anyone who claims to care about the environment would not attempt to address flood issues by including a green roof as part of the design.
- o CON: The sole justification for adding a covered arena seems to be protecting horses and riders from the elements. Although I am not particularly sympathetic to this argument (horses and riders have been braving rain and snow for millennia, so I don't understand why now, all of a sudden, an indoor riding arena is so important), but assuming for the purposes of argument that an indoor arena is worth all of the inconvenience and adverse environmental impact it will cause, no one has explained why it needs to be as tall as the current design requires. A low profile building with a green roof should be sufficient to address the stated purpose (protection from rain and snow) without creating a massive building that will change the fundamental appearance of the park. I understand that the stables are a non-profit enterprise, but if they can't afford to construct a building that will harmonize with the scale of the surrounding park and neighborhood, then they simply cannot afford to construct this arena.
- o CON: I am fortunate to live within half a mile of the stables, so I received the postcard notifying us of last night's meeting. That postcard was my first inkling that these changes were proposed. The efforts of the County and the park to solicit public comment have been unconscionably inadequate, and their refusal to acknowledge or apologize for their failure last night shows that they don't really care about the residents of this neighborhood, any more than they care about any of the other residents of neighborhoods that have been impacted adversely by recent commercial development. The references last night to the non-existent "homeowners association" were very telling. The County thinks that informing homeowners associations constitutes adequate notice and outreach, so those of us who live in areas that are not organized are effectively excluded from the County planning process. We should not be forced to organize just to have an opportunity to communicate with the public officials who purport to represent us. For some of us, not having an HOA is one of the benefits of living in this neighborhood. But apparently, the County is not interested in dealing with residents who are not organized, so perhaps we will be forced to form an association. Be careful what you wish for.
- o CON: My neighbors may have forgotten about the positions taken by the County and M-NPCC in response to the proposed widening of I-495, but I have not. Everyone should re-read the Bethesda Magazine article (November/ December 2019) about traffic congestion to find interesting quotes from County and M-NPCC officials with respect to their concern about "the impact of the Beltway widening on public preserves, such as Rock Creek Park", including: "When the land for those parks was acquired during the Depression era... there was a concern about urbanization and a lot of residential construction without environmental controls in place, and the feds wanted to protect the Potomac and Anacostia watersheds," says Carol Rubin, the [M-NPCC] official coordinating the county's response to the widening project. "Now, the urbanization has occurred and those parks serve both as conservation areas and recreational facilities for the urban areas. That's why they are such critical resources." The article also points out that "Concerned about the impact, the M-NCCP, owner and guardian of the park acreage in question, voted 9-1 in June against the ... proposal as currently designed." Where was that concern when proposed development could impact OUR local section of the park? Other interesting quotes from that article include "But the primary source of anger among elected county officials was the lack of discussion with them before the announcement. 'There was no consultation-zero,' Berliner says." And " 'Most of the impact is being borne by the locals,' [Rubin, of M-NCPPC] says. 'Shouldn't the locals also get some benefit from it?' " The apparent hypocrisy demonstrated by the County and by M-NPCC yesterday evening is mind-boggling.

Jay P. Holland  
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jholland@jgllaw.com

Good afternoon. My name is Jay Holland and I live at 2814 Abilene Drive, and my house backs directly (less than 60 feet from my fence) to Ring C, where the proposed indoor arena is planned. We have lived there for 19 years. We have been good neighbors to the Stables for that time, and we care deeply about this community. I know you have heard from several of my neighbors, and have received the petition with over 200 signatures from community members. I must note my strong opposition to this proposal. Indeed, it is inconceivable to me that upon any objective review of this project, that anyone could think this is a wise proposal.

This building is proposed at one of the narrowest sections of the Park, and this 225' by 125' by 42' height commercial structure, to be built in an area that is in the flood plain and regularly floods, will obliterate the park-like atmosphere and view-scape permanently for the benefit of a private, high priced riding club that has the good fortune (for them) to be located on public land. This section of the Park, with Rock Creek bike trail, and the ball fields, hiking trails, the Creek, and Candy Cane City, and of course the stables, is an open-space gem as intended. It is used by thousands of park patrons regularly. They come to play, relax and escape by enjoying the open space and views – at no cost to them. In contrast, Meadowbrook Stables is used by a few select patrons who can afford the \$3000 school year tuition, to be used on the few days per year that they would rather ride inside.

The stables have been there for over 85 years, with patrons riding outside in a variety of weather. I understand that they would rather ride inside when the weather is less than ideal. But at what cost to the Park, its users, and the residential neighborhood directly abutting Meadowbrook? This neighborhood, inclusive of Meadowbrook Stables, is zoned residential. The building will be a few feet from Meadowbrook Lane, and the paved bike trail. It is a highly densely populated suburban neighborhood less than one mile from the D.C. border– not rural; and the Stables are not located in the midst of a much larger park where the structure could be well-observed from residences and park users. The entire campus sits on 9.5 acres and has 50 horses. Contrast its location to the other County-owned indoor arenas. The indoor arena at Wheaton Park is in the midst of a 750 acre park, completely out of the view of the near-by residential neighborhoods, and apart from other park uses – and it is a significantly smaller arena than the one planned here. Likewise the indoor arena in Potomac is in a very rural and lightly populated setting.

I am an avid mountain biker. There are dozens of miles of very inviting dirt trails just outside my door in Rock Creek Park. But, I never ride those trails because the Parks Department has wisely decided that the trails are too heavily used by walkers and hikers, in its urban/suburban location. So, I put my bike rack on my car and drive to where mountain biking is permitted. I raise this because it is abundantly clear that not every use is appropriate in every location merely because there is park land available and it would be convenient. It would be far more convenient for me not to drive to trails – but I would never argue that mountain biking should be allowed at close-in trails. Riders and their families have other choices if riding indoors is a higher priority to them than the convenience offered by Meadowbrook. Clearly, as the Stables is booked to capacity without the indoor riding option, those patrons have deliberately chosen convenience instead. They have plenty of other indoor options if that is the priority for them.

We respectfully request that the Commission return this Report to Staff to develop a full factual record, because Staff has not provided the necessary facts for this Agency to perform its statutory responsibilities. Should the Commission decide to proceed on this record, we ask that this Commission reject the pavilion as proposed, and approve either the No Build Alternative or a smaller pavilion on Ring D. We further request that the Commission establish an impervious cap for the Meadowbrook Stables.

The community has done much of the due diligence regarding this project which has included the need to correct inaccuracies in the initial proposal and recommendation.

Unfortunately, for reasons that we don't understand, the Department of Parks and Meadowbrook Stables have acted as advocates, and were not forthcoming at different stages of this process. Parks and Meadowbrook omitted the crucial fact that the new pavilion would be built entirely on a 100 year floodplain, and Staff apparently did not make an independent check of the flood plain maps. As a result, Staff's preliminary report was incorrect. It was the community who brought the 100 year floodplain to the attention of NCPC.

The Department of Parks also affirmatively stated that there was no flooding at the stables in 2018, and that key fact, too, had to be corrected. See Dept of Parks Addendum to its Submission. From this history, the community concludes that the Department of Parks, as well as Meadowbrook Stables, are acting as advocates, and selectively submit the information most favorable to approval of the pavilion. As a result, much of the work of our submissions has been fact checking the volumes of materials submitted by the Department of Parks, and relied on by Staff.

The proposed indoor riding ring does not conform to the requirements of the Capper Cramton Act because its size and location undermine the character of the Rock Creek Stream Valley Park (Unit 1) and adjoining Rock Creek Trail, and its construction is not for a recognized public park purpose.

The Staff Report's analysis is flawed, because it provides little, if any, context for evaluating the impact of the pavilion on the character of the Rock Creek Stream Valley Park.

It is virtually impossible for you, the decision makers, to evaluate the impact of the proposed pavilion on the character of the stream valley park, because the Staff failed to provide any information about the size of Rock Creek Stream Valley Park, the nature of its facilities, the number of users, a delineation of the Rock Creek Trail with the number of its users, and a sense of the impact of the changed view shed on all users.

The size and location of the pavilion ruin the view shed of the open space and interfere with the public enjoyment of Rock Creek Stream Valley Park, and the Rock Creek Trail.

We know from our own daily experience that the size and location of the pavilion ruins the view shed not just for a few homes, but for thousands of park visitors. By spoiling the park's vistas, the pavilion will diminish the public's enjoyment of the park and the Trail. Staff minimizes this impact by saying that "the pavilion would be largely visible from the six closest residences along Abilene Drive, as well as nearby ground-level vantage points along Rock Creek Trail and Meadowbrook Lane." p. 14

Staff, however, assumed that what was good for the Stables was good for the park in general, and for all users. Staff found the proposed size and scale of the new pavilion to be appropriate because "the size can accommodate twice as many lesson groups and a broader range of activities during heavy rain and periods of saturation", and because the interior space would allow for horse jumping activities. Pg. 3-4 For the new location on Ring C instead of D, Staff again relied on the Department of Park's assertions that C was preferred because it required less grading and was further away from Rock Creek. There is no evidence that less grading would be needed.

Staff, by focusing only on the analysis of the Department of Parks, and not discussing and researching whole park impacts, failed to perform the statutory analysis required by the Capper-Cramton Act.

Staff's conclusion that the construction of the pavilion is for a recognized public park purpose is not supported by the facts. Rather, the facts suggest that Meadowbrook has no written policy with objective standards for the awarding of scholarships that is published for all to see.

In the Final Environmental Assessment (EA), May 2020, p. 2, Staff summarizes the Meadowbrook Stables Mission as having six purposes, number five being, "make horses accessible to those who could not otherwise afford to ride...." Later, in the same paragraph, "...Meadowbrook Stables uses some revenue to fund need-based scholarships for families who would otherwise not be able to participate."

In the Staff Report, p. 3, Staff States

**Notes** the revenue from the lessons, boarding, leasing, camp, and horse shows supports the stable operations and allows for the greater public benefit of learning about and viewing horses within the park, **in addition to opportunities for need-based scholarships. Emphasis added.**

No evidence was cited for this proposition. Where are the facts in the Report that support the finding of need-based scholarships? Who received them, and how many have been awarded? What is the process for the award?

The community brought forward facts that are ignored: Meadowbrook Stables had no statement or even any mention on its website about need-based scholarships. One could Google Scholarships at Meadowbrook, and find some information, but no program of scholarship. There is also reference in the record to scholarships awarded by members of the board of trustees. But was that a one off for a particular person, or was there a public process? And, in any event, Staff does not rely on any of these assertions by Meadowbrook.

The equity issue is of major importance. Meadowbrook must meet public standards for diversity, equity and transparency. It cannot not function like a private club. The community raised these issues with Staff, but none are addressed here.

I must also note that the community was excluded and misled. During the first phase of improvements, back in the early 2000's, Meadowbrook abandoned its plan to build a much smaller indoor arena in Ring D, after community objections were raised. Ring D was constructed at that time specifically for an indoor arena, and would have been set back from Meadowbrook Lane, and the community as to not destroy the view-scape or abut homes. At the time, stables board members – including David Bradley, and current chair Kerry Richards, met with community members – including myself. At the meeting they repeatedly assured us that we would be fully informed and involved if the Stables decided to revive its plan for an indoor arena.

As you are no doubt aware, that did not happen. Indeed, Meadowbrook submitted its proposals to NCPC and MNCPPC without even notifying those of us who directly abut their property. Apart from abundant errors in the proposal to NCPC, Meadowbrook noted that our house and those of several of our neighbors would be most affected by the new building. They had the audacity to say, in essence, that it is no big deal for us, and NCPC should just approve their proposal – without ever asking how it would truly affect us, or informing us during the public comment period. So – we respectfully appeal to the NCPC to keep in mind the big picture, and not the narrow interests of a select few. The wrong decision will devastate the Park. Accordingly, I ask that NCPC reject this ill-advised proposal.

Respectfully,

Jay Holland  
2814 Abilene Drive  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
240-988-4114

-----Original Message-----

From: NCPC System <info@ncpc.gov>  
Sent: Thursday, May 7, 2020 4:05 AM  
To: NCPC General Information <info@ncpc.gov>  
Subject: NCPC Website Email

From: Melissa Dutcher  
Email: [tobyjello@aol.com](mailto:tobyjello@aol.com)

As a frequent visitor to Rock creek park near the stables, I wish to submit my strong support for this project. I took riding lessons as a child and can attest to the importance of an indoor ring for riders and horses alike. This structure will not adversely impact anyone and will provide years of continuation of equestrian programming for children and adults in the local area. Without meadowbrook, you would have to travel a far distance into potomac and beyond. Please support this, I do as a local resident, frequent visitor, and beneficiary of equestrian lessons during childhood.