

**FOX
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BOROUGH**

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Fox Chapel Borough Park Commission
May 5, 2025

Mr. Bartley Griffith, Jr., President (and)
Shady Side Academy Board of Trustees
Shady Side Academy
423 Fox Chapel Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15238

Re: Proposed West Gate to Shady Side Academy Campus

Dear Mr. Griffith and Trustees,

Since 1922, Fox Chapel Borough and its Residents have welcomed Shady Side Academy as a good friend and neighbor. As members of the Fox Chapel Borough Park Commission, we are grateful for the school's strong support of our Community and natural spaces.

Thanks to the partnership with Shady Side Academy, trails were connected from Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve all the way to the Allegheny River. Shady Side Academy wisely markets its location "Ensclosed in the Forest" as enhancing students' life experience and education. We know that regular experiences within these natural systems provide an effective nurturing context for the maturation of our youth towards greater psychological/social maturity, wisdom, and responsible civic involvement. Certainly, the Borough's Parks and Trails serve as powerful outdoor, living classrooms, ideal for students of Biology—especially Botany and Zoology, but also Earth and Environmental Sciences, and numerous related scientific subjects. What a wonderful learning and growing experience!

Happily, the school's student body gives back: Each year, we are grateful for the many students who have helped us plant trees, clear new trails, and perform other volunteer work in Borough Parks.

The result is that Shady Side Academy and the Park Commission have both much common history and shared future interests: Indeed, a significant portion of our current and past Park Commission members are Shady Side Academy Alumni/ae.

Given this wonderful history together and shared love of our Community, we are surprised to learn the details of Shady Side Academy's proposed plan to create a "West Gate," entailing the removal of an astonishing 350+ trees in more than 6 pristine acres along Riding Meadow Road, 8+ acres if you include the upper segments. As part of this plan, three Retention Ponds will be constructed to collect runoff from the impermeable surface of the new road, ironically replacing the natural capability of these hundreds of trees in collecting rain and stormwater runoff.

We are writing to express our objection to this plan. Numerous trees that Shady Side Academy plans to cut are many decades old. These trees provide habitat for native birds and other wildlife. Their roots are an integral component of hillside slope stability. As you are likely aware, trees—especially mature trees—play an increasingly critical role in modern water and stormwater management. These mature trees are not easily replaceable. Indeed, it would take decades for younger trees to grow to a size that creates this kind of positive environmental benefit. And the storms of April 29 only reinforce the fragility of our neighborhood trees, our local forests, our Community's canopy, and our Region's Greenways. Our trees—on every scale—are to be protected as a valued Community Asset, not freely removed in the false name of progress!

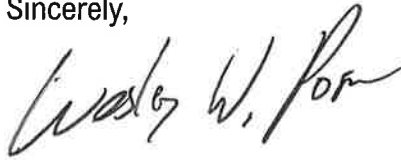
The current plan also has negative impacts on the Health and Safety of our Community. It impairs the trail route from Beechwood Farms to the Allegheny River, enjoyed by many residents and visitors for healthy, outdoor exercise. Further and importantly, adding a new point of campus access in the proposed location will create additional traffic and potential pedestrian safety issues.

As we understand it, all this destruction of forest, increased traffic, and diminished safety has been proposed as an unavoidable consequence to create an additional point of access to and from the school's campus. We don't question the school's perceived need to provide additional access, but we do question the choice of location. Wouldn't a Riding Meadow Road access to the east of Glade Run Lane been a better, safer, and more environmentally-friendly choice? There are already several road cuts from Shady Side Academy's property along that stretch of Riding Meadow Road, including from a parking lot; were these considered for your second campus gate? Couldn't they be (re)considered now as a desirable "North Gate" in lieu of the undesirable "West Gate?"

We share Shady Side Academy's mission to "think expansively, act ethically and lead responsibly". It is our view that the current "West Gate" plan does not align with that mission. Accordingly, we hope you will reconsider the West Gate plan in favor of an alternative location.

We believe in your ability to devise solutions that meet the needs of your growing school but also that will not irreparably damage the natural beauty and assets of our Community. We stand ready to partner with you to find, enhance, and implement such solutions!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wesley W. Posvar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Wesley" and last name "Posvar" clearly distinguishable.

Wesley W. Posvar
Chair, Fox Chapel Borough Park Commission,
On Behalf of the Full Commission

cc: Our Community