

3/26/2025

Subject: Opposition to Land Donation to the Official Piscataway Conoy Tribe

To Whom It May Concern,

As ✓ an enrolled member of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, ✓ eligible-to-be-enrolled, ✓ spouse of an enrolled member, ✓ Charles County Resident, I am strongly writing **IN OPPOSITION** to the proposed donation of the former Nike Site to *the Official Piscataway Conoy Tribe*. While I support responsible and meaningful land repatriation, I cannot support this donation due to the lack of transparency in the recipient organization's operations, the misrepresentation of tribal leadership in this process, and serious environmental concerns surrounding the property.

Concerns Regarding the Recipient Organization and Mr. Francis Gray:

It is important to emphasize that *the Official Piscataway Conoy Tribe* is **NOT** the State-Recognized Piscataway Conoy Tribe nor people. Despite its misleading name, this nonprofit organization does not represent the broader tribal community, nor does it operate with its support.

Francis Gray is **NOT** the current leader of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe. Mr. Gray's term as a tribal councilmember ended, and he was voted out by the community. Despite this, he continues to present himself as the rightful leader, blurring the lines between the state-recognized tribe and his nonprofit organization. His continued claims to leadership are **illegitimate**, and his actions in seeking this land donation serve only to strengthen his personal politics against rather than to benefit the community. Additionally, Mr. Gray's fellow former council members, all of whom were also voted out of their positions and reached term limits, have largely **disappeared** from tribal affairs; this raises concerns about whether they voluntarily distanced themselves or if Mr. Gray has unilaterally assumed control without rightful authority. His continued attempts to seek recognition and resources under false tribal pretenses only serve to divide the tribal community and the proper leadership of Chief Jesse James Swann Jr.

Adding to this concern is the lack of transparency regarding the organization's/individual's use of funding. Mr. Gray and his organization have already been granted funds for a cultural museum, community center, and other alike projects, yet no deliverables or updates have been made known to the tribal community. As this organization/individual continues to gain resources for the tribe but is nowhere to be found doing work in the community, speculations have grown that this organization/individual is seeking to exploit their respective community, the State-Recognized Piscataway Conoy Tribe. *If public funds have already been allocated without any accountability to the communities they are to support, why should more resources—especially land—be granted without a clear plan?*

Environmental and Structural Concerns:

The former Nike Site is no longer a suitable property for repatriation due to decades of documented soil and water contamination, unresolved drainage issues, and failing infrastructure.

With donating it to the organization in question, the land contains known pollutants and remnants from the Nike Site's use, posing significant **health risk** to any future occupants. Additionally, the facilities have a long history of flooding, water shortages, and sewage backup issues that have yet to be addressed. It is also worth noting that a required \$10,000 **land survey** was previously placed on the Cedarville Band of Piscataway Indians as tenants. *Before any land is donated for use, who will conduct the necessary environmental assessments to determine the true and ongoing risks posed by the site? Who will be responsible for the remediation of contaminated soil and water sources? Considering the intended community, the state-recognized Piscataway Conoy Tribe, how will environmental health risks be studied and addressed? Will the same financial burden be placed on any future tribal occupants? If the burden of these costly environmental cleanups falls on the occupants, how will they secure the necessary funding and expertise to make the land habitable? Is Charles County prepared to offer support for these concerns?*

Final Consideration:

Given the misrepresentation of leadership, lack of transparency, political maneuvering, legal concerns, and environmental risks, I am **IN OPPOSITION** of a land donation for the nonprofit organization, *the Official Piscataway Conoy Tribe*, and claimed tribal leadership of Francis Gray.

Land repatriation should be a process of restorative justice, **not** political opportunism. It should empower tribal communities in respect to sovereignty, not consolidate power into the hands of individuals or organizations with questionable intentions, financial opacity, and no demonstrated accountability. While I fully support land repatriation efforts, I am firmly opposed to a donation that strengthens tribal dictatorship, supports misaligned organizations, and emboldens community disenfranchisement.

If land is to be donated for the use of the Piscataway Conoy people, it should be done equitably, transparently, and involve the tribal community, not through backdoor tactics, false leadership claims, and legally questionable organizations. I urge Charles County decision-makers to thoroughly examine the facts, try to honorably address these questions, and ensure that any tribal effort serves the true interests of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, not a self-serving few and their immediate families.

Sincerely,

Titus Bell / Jennifer Proctor

(Legal Name)

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(Signature)

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