



BEACON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
10 Education Drive
Beacon, New York 12508
845-838-6900 phone
845-838-6905 fax

Dr. Matthew Landahl
Superintendent of Schools

Via Regular Mail and Email:

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Proposed Development of Downstate Correctional Facility

Dear Governor Hochul:

The Board of Education of the Beacon City School District (“Board”) submits this letter to register its concerns with the proposed development of the Downstate Correctional Facility (the “Facility”), which is located within the boundaries of the District.

A recent press release from your office states that your office has selected Conifer Realty, LLC to develop the Facility into a mixed-use development that would create up to 1,300 units of housing, including affordable housing options. While the Board supports planned, responsible development that will enhance local communities for all residents, it has significant concerns with the proposed development of the Facility.

Impact on School Enrollment

The Board’s foremost concern is the impact on school enrollment and resources that would result from the proposed development of the Facility. During the last several years, numerous residential housing developments have been constructed in the District, which leaves the district vulnerable to a potential increase in student enrollment. The corresponding increase in tax revenue from these properties has been modest, and nowhere near sufficient to offset the increase in per pupil expenditures and administrative costs resulting from the potential increase in enrollment.

The proposed development of the Facility would, in its initial phase, add 375 residential units; though this is a fraction of the planned 1,300 units, it would still dramatically increase the number of school-age children seeking enrollment in District schools. Experience also indicates that the children living in this type of housing are more likely to be of elementary age, further stressing the District’s elementary schools, which are already at or near capacity.

Impact on Tax Base

The increase in tax revenue that may result from the proposed development will offer little relief to the District, which can expect a sharp spike in pupil and administrative costs that will be particularly damaging given the significant reduction in foundation aid experienced by the District. The assessed value of the residential property will predictably be modest as compared to a commercial use of the property, and the developer will likely either routinely challenge the assessment as excessive in an effort to drive down taxes (thus further impacting the schools), or, seek benefits and incentives such as those from the Dutchess County Industrial Development Agency due to a claimed inability to construct the development without significant financial assistance. The District's taxpayers and, ultimately, its students, will bear the burden of these actions.

Impact on Traffic, Congestion

The proposed development of the Facility will require expanding or adding bus routes, which will in turn add more school busses to roadways during peak commuting hours and further compound traffic difficulties in and around District schools.

The Board asks that the Governor take these concerns into consideration in overseeing the development of the Facility. At the very least, the developer should be required to conduct a full School Impact Study, to determine the number of school-age children projected for the development, and to actively and continuously engage key stakeholders including the District in every step of the development process.

We are available to discuss this matter and provide further information at your request, and we thank you for considering the Board's concerns.

Very truly yours,

Board President

cc: Supervisor, Town of Fishkill
Mayor, City of Beacon
US Representative
NYS Representative

BOE:vlj