



**BOARD OF EDUCATION
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

HATTIE MAE WHITE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT CENTER
4400 West 18th Street • Houston, Texas 77092-8501
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Harvin C. Moore
Trustee, District VII

Mr. Lance Gilliam
Chair, Board of Commissioners
Houston Housing Authority
2640 Fountain View Drive
Houston, TX 77057

February 3, 2016

Dear Mr. Gilliam:

It has come to my attention that Houston Housing Authority (“HHA”) personnel have been distributing the attached “FAQ Sheet” concerning plans to construct a 233 unit project inside the overcrowded Briargrove Elementary School attendance zone. This sheet was given to Principal Eden Hinds of Briargrove by Donna Dixon of the HHA on Monday.

I ask that HHA cease and desist from distributing this false information and immediately and in writing retract and correct the following false statements:

Q: We have heard schools in the area are overcapacity, how will this affect my children?

A: While Briargrove is over capacity, HISD is constructing a new 850 student capacity elementary school in the area to resolve the issue. Additionally "zoned" enrollment rates at nearby Pilgrim and St George elementary schools, as well as T.H. Rogers elementary are significantly under capacity. These local options provide excellent elementary education opportunities.

Literally everything in this statement is false, other than the opening words that state “Briargrove is over capacity.”

Not only are these statements false, HHA’s President and Board know they are false. As I have stated to you repeatedly and in writing, with supporting data (which I have attached again to this letter), all of the adjacent schools to Briargrove are at or above capacity. Pilgrim and St. George, contrary to this FAQ Sheet, are both fully enrolled and above capacity. TH Rogers is also at capacity – although as has been explained to you and HHA, TH Rogers is not a “local option” – it is a districtwide magnet only school and so its capacity is irrelevant to any discussion of zoned attendance. Finally, the new west side relief school, named Governor Mark White Elementary, will have a 750 student capacity, not 850 as you FAQ Sheet states. As you also know from my previous statements, the new relief school will not “resolve the issue” of area overcrowding. It will lessen the problem, but those schools, including Briargrove, will continue to be overcrowded.

As I have stated several times to you, your board, and HHA President Gunsolley, current and accurate school capacity data is easily available from the school district by written request to me



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or to the Superintendent of Schools with a cc to me. That current data, which I have provided to you and numerous other interest elected officials at a meeting with you in Congressman Culberson's office, as well as to your full Board and the public at your meeting on January 19, 2015, makes quite clear that there is NO excess capacity at any of the schools listed on your FAQ Sheet.

I am perplexed at what appears to be a pattern of HHA continuing to propagate false information about the capacity of HISD schools when it knows better.

Let me reiterate to you again: if HHA plans to make any statements regarding school capacities, please contact me and the Superintendent of Schools to check your numbers before making public statements. You will get a quick, professional and accurate reply.

As the data and maps I have provided you earlier, and which I attach again today, clearly show, there are a large number of census tracts that both qualify under HHA's "opportunity zone" rules, and also have school capacity, including six schools in HISD alone (not to mention Spring Branch or other adjoining districts) which are within a few miles of this location and which have the same State accountability rating as Briargrove. The choice of the Fountainview location for this project reflects a total lack of analysis of educational factors.

And, I will reiterate the objection I have made to you since we first spoke after I learned of HHA's plans for this site: it is irresponsible to spend public tax dollars to build a housing project aimed at families with children in an area with no school capacity. It is unfair to the future HHA tenants who are being told they will have access to a good neighborhood school, and it is unfair to the people already living in the neighborhood who will be displaced by your project from their neighborhood school.

The process HHA has utilized is also flawed – from a lack of timely and meaningful analysis of school capacity, to a clear practice of withholding meaningful and timely notice of project plans from the affected community, the affected school district, and local elected officials. I look forward to facilitating discussions about a new location for this project based on a responsible analysis of educational factors.

Sincerely,

Harvin C. Moore
Trustee, District VII
HISD Board of Education



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Cc: Superintendent Terry Grier
Mayor Sylvester Turner
Mr. John Luman
Congressman John Culberson
Councilmember Greg Travis
State Representative Jim Murphy

Attachments:

HHA "2640 Fountainview Apartments FAQ Sheet"
Remarks of Harvin Moore at HHA Board Meeting, January 19, 2016
HHA Map of Opportunity Zones
HISD Overlay of HHA Map Showing School Zones and Available Capacity
HISD Analysis of apartments in area showing existing affordable housing