



Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961...

The Voice Of The People of Howard County

Date: 22 April 2019

Subject: HCCA Council Testimony Regarding CR49-2019 the DRRA

Good Evening. My name is Hiruy Hadgu and I am testifying on behalf of Howard County Citizens Association.

In March 2018, the Board of Education selected the Mission Road site to build High School 13 after a long and often acrimonious debate between communities in Elkridge and Jessup. While the developers and county leaders watched from the sidelines, community members were lobbing insults and hateful messages at each other on social media and public settings. It got so bad because the schools became so overcrowded. In the meantime developers were not paying their fair share. In fact they received direct and indirect financial benefits through low school impact fees and favorable zoning decisions.

The Development Rights and Responsibilities Agreement (DRRA) between Howard County and Chase Land, LLC is not a simple contract. It has several economic and fiscal ramifications. In its current form, all the benefits go to the Developer and all the costs goes to the taxpayer. It is not entirely clear to us why a contract for the sale of land, which the developer will not own, is attached to another contract for land the developer controls for a hypothetical future development. Why would county leaders even consider such an agreement for development plans that are not public?

At the time of the initial permit, the Board of Appeals ordered the quarry operation to not last beyond 25 years. The DRRA appears to extend this permit beyond the initial 25 years while also getting all kinds of other favorable giveaways.

The bottom line is the school sale agreement cannot allow the Developer to operate the quarry beyond what the Board of Appeals ordered. The DRRA gives too much away with nothing in return. Community members are anxious because influential forces in the county tried to previously maneuver the school site away from Jessup. The county is anxious because the school district is bursting at the seams due to overcrowding and everyone is demanding action to relieve classrooms.

It looks like the Developer wants to take advantage of this pressure and it seems like the county is being forced to sign to a deal with a gun to its head, because without this DRRA, the Developer has threatened to convert the school site into residential development. County leaders have a responsibility to protect taxpayer dollars; not Developer dollars. It is a dereliction of duty to sign a deal that will lead to MORE overcrowding.

We urge county leaders to split up the DRRA into a sale agreement for the school site with a clause to protect the initial permit ruling granted by the Board of Appeals and a separate agreement that protects equally the county's and Developer's economic welfare.

Furthermore, we ask the Council to really analyze the cause and effect of this DRRA for the benefit of your constituents.

Thank You,

Hiruy Hadgu
HCCA Board of Director