

Dear Tuxedo Families,

At the regular meeting of the Board of Education on October 18, 2023, the trustees voted to approve a mitigation agreement presented to the *Tuxedo Union Free School District* by Manhattan-based *Related Companies*, the developer of *Tuxedo Farms*. The agreement solidifies the transfer of a particular 40-acre parcel of land and a cash payment of \$2.5 million to the *District*. In light of misunderstandings circulating in the community, we would like to take this opportunity to provide background relative to the approval of this agreement.

Any time a commercial real-estate developer builds in a community, both opportunities and challenges result that can have a substantial impact on local residents. *Tuxedo Farms* is no exception. While the *District* has been a longtime proponent of this endeavor, our fervent hope was to move forward with a plan that meets the needs of current and future students. There is no law that mandates a formula for fair mitigation of the educational impact of real property development. It is up to the lead agency to ensure that all its constituents are protected while fostering a balance for development. Between 2012-2014, the *District* had been working to negotiate a fair mitigation. Those negotiations were highly contentious. In 2014, *Related* proposed to convey a particular 40-acre parcel of land, along with a cash contribution of \$2.5 million in what they considered to be a mitigation proposal, not a “definitive agreement”. At the time, it was understood that *Related* would be responsible for setting up utilities and bringing a road to the edge of the land, as this 40-acre site would be used for the construction of a new school.

In 2014, the *District* agreed to the parcel with the condition that the developer would prepare the site for development and provide access to utilities. *Related* has since maintained that the \$2.5 million cash payment was offered in lieu of preparing the land for use. The *District* proceeded to hire architects, engineers, and demographers to assist in learning the full impact this development would have on our school community. This resulted with the estimated the actual cost of land preparation to be between \$25 million and \$26 million for 10 of the 40 acres offered. That would result in a cost to taxpayers of \$2.5 million per acre. When the *District* presented these findings to *Related* and our our desire to negotiate an alternate site communication stopped.

The *Town* leadership attended a meeting at the *District* in October 2022 prior to the October 20 *Town Board* meeting. At the meeting, we outlined our main concerns relative to the *District* and even suggested two alternative sites that would be acceptable for development: *Related*-owned Long Meadow Road and *Town*- owned Quarry Field. The *District* asked the *Town* to delay any vote until an acceptable agreement could be reached. We hoped *Related* would consider offering additional money either in lieu of the land or to clear their proposed parcel.

The *Town* accepted and approved their own separate agreement with *Related* on October 20, 2022.

We have held several public workshops explaining our position and concerns of: (1) the true cost land preparation, (2) details related to utility infrastructure to service the site, (3) the safety in

developing a school facility and environmental impact due to the presence of snake dens on and around the property, (4) statements about the 40-acre property lot line and the multitude of subsequent changes, (5) the impact and timing of anticipated enrollment from the development on the elementary population and the inadequate capacity of the George Mason Elementary, (6) state formulas in calculating minimum per-pupil space requirements, (7) encroachment of the development on the District's Euvrard Field site, (8) lack of timely surveys and topographical maps of the 40-acre parcel, and (9) estimates of "equalization rates" used to estimate tax revenues to pay for the new demands on the educational system as a result of the development.

The *School Board's* decision to approve the resolution followed much debate and discussion. On October 18, 2023, the *School Board* agreed that disapproving the agreement with *Related* would have risked the loss of \$2.5 million, and thus, reluctantly voted to approve the resolution.

With all said, we maintain a positive outlook for the future of *Tuxedo* and the *Tuxedo Union Free School District*. We are looking forward to our anticipated growth as a result of the *Tuxedo Farms* development. We will continue to strive to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of all our current and future students are met.

Thank you for your continued support

Sincerely,

The Board of Education of the Tuxedo Union Free School District

