

Belmont Development Testimony
Elmont Memorial Library
March 22, 2018

Good afternoon,

My name is Michael Dantona and I am the Superintendent of the Floral Park-Bellerose Schools.

Thank you for the time to speak on behalf of the families of the Floral Park-Bellerose School District. I am here today to talk about the development of the Belmont property, particularly the north side of the property, and what that means for the children of Floral Park-Bellerose School District.

First a little about our district.

- We are an elementary school district serving more than 1500 students in grades Pre-K through 6.
- The Floral Park-Bellerose School shares a border with Belmont Park.
- On school days, the field between the Floral Park-Bellerose School and the Belmont property serves 860 students.
- On weekends in the spring and in the fall, our field serves more than 1000 children who play soccer, lacrosse, and baseball.
- Our fields also host athletic tournaments that serve hundreds of visitors every spring and fall.
- Our shared border is delineated by a chain link fence that we have opened to accommodate overflow parking for the Belmont Stakes.

We are concerned about the safety of our community, our 1000 children and staff who spend more than 6 hours a day within a football field's distance of the proposed site for a PSEG substation and an active parking lot.

- **Questions about the rationale for building a PSEG Substation and an active parking lot adjacent to the Floral Park-Bellerose Elementary School**
 - Why would you put a substation (40,000 sq. ft.) a soccer field's distance from one of the largest elementary schools in the county, where more than 1000 children and adults go every day to learn and to work?

- Why would you prioritize PSEG's objective to build this substation over the safety of the more than 1000 children who regularly attend school and use the fields at the Floral Park Bellerose School?

Environmental Concerns

- What are the effects of electromagnetic radiation from such a substation on the development of our children who will spend 6-7 hours, 180 days a year, for 7 or 8 years?
 - Would you want your children to be exposed to this environmental hazard?
 - **Any risk to any one child is unacceptable.**

Risks from Accidents and Disasters

- Have you decided that the risks posed by accidents and disasters like fires, transformer leaks, and equipment malfunctions, are worth taking in such proximity to our children?
 - **Any risk to our children is unacceptable.**
- Have you decided that our chain link fence is enough to protect our children from cars and trucks accessing the parking lot or the substation? It is not.
 - **Any risk to our children is unacceptable.**

Risks from those would do our children harm

- We are charged with safeguarding our children from outside threats. We have invested in infrastructure that is designed to ensure the safety of our children. We have staff members who are trained and certified to grant access to our school only after careful and purposeful screening. We safeguard our children by engaging every person before they are near our children.
- Why would you create a condition where adults would work and park in close proximity to our children separated only by a chain link fence?
- Anyone who works for our school district is fingerprinted and screened to be certain that s/he is fit to be near children.
- Uncontrolled, unmonitored, unsupervised, and unabated visual and verbal access to our elementary school children is a serious concern for all parents and educators. It is a real threat to our children.
 - **Any risk to our children is unacceptable.**

Safety...please consider safety

Please...take a lesson from Las Vegas. Consider the preparations and the ongoing efforts to ensure public safety across the country. Now reflect on this project. Have you done and are you committed to doing enough to ensure the safety of the communities that surround Belmont

Park? In the planning, in the construction, and in the operation of the future Belmont Park, safety must be your highest priority.

This hotel, a substation, and a parking lot are proposed to being placed in the backyard of the Floral Park-Bellerose Elementary School with unabated visual access to our children. Whether that means regular everyday access or occasional access, the **risk to our children exists**. How will you help us protect them?

We ask you to commit to the safety of our community and of our children as you are in the planning and design stage of development. We are hoping you will engage us in conversation about planning to keep our children safe.

We strongly advocate for

1. Finding another location for the PSE&G substation.
2. Establishing a buffer zone between the parking lot and our property.
3. Design the hotel so that clients do not have a direct line of sight to our children.
4. In all aspects of the project eliminate visual, verbal, and physical access to our children.

Again, we would be happy to join in conversation. Ultimately we both need to be good neighbors.

Our agenda is simple, our task complex.

We are here to ensure the safety of our school community. Please join us in doing so.

Thank you for your time.

Michael F. Dantona, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Floral Park-Bellerose UFSD