

Belmont Development Testimony January 9, 2019

Good Afternoon,

My name is Michael Dantona and I am the Superintendent of Schools for the Floral Park-Bellerose School District. I am here today to speak about the development of the Belmont property, particularly what has been called the north lot.

The Floral Park-Bellerose Elementary School shares a 1000' border with the North Lot; the properties are separated by nothing more than a chain-link fence. Daily, roughly 900 children use the fields adjacent to the lot and on weekends our fields host about 1000 children for sporting activities.

A True Story

Just this past November, school personnel were supervising recess for more than one hundred children when they spotted a man walking near the fence and taking pictures. Our school aides acted appropriately and safeguarded the children by quickly gathering and escorting them into the school building. We contacted Belmont Security and our Floral Park Police and the trespasser was apprehended. After interrogation the authorities determined that this trespasser did not pose a threat as he was simply a bird watcher taking pictures of birds.

The story illustrates our primary concern with the use of the North Lot.

Unobstructed visual and physical access to our children is a real threat to their safety. We in the schools are charged with ensuring the safety of our children...In fact, all in this community, including NYRA and the Islanders must share in this responsibility. Patrons (tailgaters), employees, and trespassers must kept apart from our students and our property.

How will we protect our children with thousands of cars and thousands of visitors separated only by a **chain-link fence and vegetation** (as is indicated in the DEIS). The more than 1000' of chain link fencing along our property line **does not** provide adequate protection for our children.

We must work together to solve this problem. We need:

1. A tall structure that provides a visual and physical barrier to our property.
 - a. A berm that is topped with a fence and landscaping (Trees and bushes) can work
 - b. A structure like sound wall can work.
 - i. Whatever the barrier, there should be a buffer between it and active parking.
2. We need...Electronic surveillance of our shared property line that will help to alert authorities of inappropriate behavior or trespassing in the North Lot.
3. We need...A regular security presence in the North parking lot.
4. We need...To be ensured that project workers and regular employees are properly screened.
5. And we seek your ongoing commitment to working with us to address safety and security concerns.

The DEIS indicates that a “strategic approach to safety and security” is necessary and that such measures “require close coordination with public agencies.” The Floral Park-Bellerose School District is one such agency.

We ask that you now commit to the safety of our community and our children, as you are in the final stages of planning and design. I provided testimony at your first public hearings, and today we continue to see that the idea of a property line Chain-link fence remains in the plan.

We ask that you recognize our concerns and engage us in a **coordinated strategic approach to safety and security planning**. We are prepared to meet to develop a safety plan for our shared border.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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