

Belmont Development Testimony
January 8, 2019

Statement from the Floral Park-Bellerose School Board

Good evening. My name is Laura Ferone. I am the President of the Floral Park Bellerose School District as well as a 30 year Floral Park resident.

I am here tonight to speak on behalf of the children and families of our community.

I have been an active participant and listener since the inception of the Belmont redevelopment project, yet I stand here tonight in order to reiterate our questions and concerns, which have frankly gone unanswered.

As you have heard before....the Floral Park Bellerose Elementary School is home to over 900 students, pre k through 6th grade. Our playground is literally feet away from that fence. On weekends more than 1000 children play soccer, lacrosse, and baseball in addition to community members and their families enjoying the playground and field.

The school property shares a more than 1000 foot border with Belmont Park that is delineated only by a chain link fence.

We have repeatedly asked that a berm or barrier be created to protect our children and residents from construction, noise, and added pollution from construction and cars.

Most significantly, we require a barrier so that thousands of strangers on a daily basis do not have open access to our most precious

resource—our children. Need I remind you of recent tragedies such as Las Vegas? Let's not begin a project that puts our children at risk from the start.

Although there have been rumors that there will be a berm, it does not appear on any document and there is no guarantee in writing to our school district.

Despite the fact that your own document states on page A8 dated August 29th, 2018, "School Districts with facilities in the study areas will be contacted," as of today, neither the Floral Park-Bellerose School District nor the Sewanhaka Central High School District have been contacted.

If you are listening and indeed working with us, then draw a 50 yard barrier along our shared property. Surely, with 23 acres in the North Lot alone, it should be quite simple to move the entire project back 50 yards.

In addition, this barrier must be placed prior to any construction beginning. The plan specifically shows storage of construction equipment in the North Lot, exposing our children to unvetted strangers, noise, and the dirt and debris of construction.

Another point with regard to the North Lot is irrigation. Our district is spending over \$ 100,000 this summer to renovate and irrigate our fields. We need a written assurance from the Empire State Development group that any damage or water drainage problem which develops or occurs at any point on your side of the property will be rectified to our satisfaction by the Empire State Development Group.

These are simple requests with easy solutions. I ask you tonight to back your own statements and assure us that these needs will be met as requested.

With regard to traffic and safety, there are 4 schools within the boundaries of Floral Park Village. Two of them are on Plainfield Ave. To date, the Plainfield Ave gate has not been an active gate with the exception of Belmont Stakes day. We need an assurance (in writing) that this gate will remain closed for daily public use, tour buses, or shuttles.

The vast majority of our students walk to and from school. Despite your “traffic study,” which states that there will be no anticipated rise in accidents due to increased traffic, common sense would suggest otherwise. More cars on the road without question will lead to more car and pedestrian accidents. Since the beginning of the school year, there have been 3 car accidents in close proximity to 2 of our high schools, and all occurred during drop off, pick up and on route to a school event. Plainfield is already congested between the hours of 3pm and 6pm, which is when the greatest number of children are walking, bicycling, or skateboarding through our streets.

Can you guarantee tonight that that Plainfield Ave gate will not be utilized as a main entrance to the Park, arena, or stadium?

Finally, in closing, development is good (maybe even great) but it must include a solid, clear, intelligent plan with appropriate resources: adequate space, access, water, power, transportation, and most importantly safety. If not it’s like building an airplane in the air and realizing you forgot the engine.

I look forward to your response and guarantee in writing, and most importantly, I ask that you to agree here tonight to walk the property

line with myself, our board, and our superintendent at your earliest convenience.

Most Respectfully,
Laura Ferone
Floral Park-Bellerose SD Board of Education President