



June 11, 2024 *Corrected June 12, 2024**

Supervisor Ed Smyth and
Members of the Huntington Town Board
100 Main Street
Huntington, New York 11743
melvilleredevelopment@huntingtonny.gov

Dear Supervisor Smyth and Members of the Huntington Town Board:

Over the past year, the Half Hollow Hills Board of Education President, the Board trustees, and I have attended public hearings, small stakeholder meetings, and civic association discussion groups regarding the Melville Town Center Overlay District. We are submitting this letter to be entered into the public record.

While these opportunities have provided some information regarding your vision, many details remain elusive. Typically when a project of this scope, and frankly those much smaller, is under consideration within the boundaries of our school district, we have the opportunity to review the State Environmental Quality Review and Completion of Draft Supplemental Impact statements. At present, no such studies or information is available.

As we have shared with you in prior conversations, our primary concerns for the project relate to the projected student enrollment increases and the strain this will put on our school system and our current residents whose property tax payments represent roughly 80% of our revenue. With this in mind, we are concerned that PILOTs or other tax reductions or accommodations through the Town of Huntington and/or the Suffolk IDA will have the opposite impact as has been championed by Town Board Members of increasing the tax base, and would shift the burden to existing residents. Should the Town grant PILOTs (as has been the case for Millenium Hills and Highland Greens) or support Suffolk IDA PILOTs, in the absence of significant impact fees to the Half Hollow Hills CSD, it would be irresponsible for us to remain silent and ask our current residents to finance new high-density housing. We are supportive of the new State legislation passed by both houses *S.4040-B / A.7532-B* that would make reforms to the current Industrial Development Agency (IDA) structure by requiring each IDA board to have representation from at least one school board member or school superintendent. Until the Governor signs the bill into law we need your support to advocate for the interests of the school district.

You have often stated that there will be a 3,000 cap on residential units. We could support a clear and reasonable cap but further questions remain including, how/why was the large number of 3,000 units chosen? Are the units for rental or sale? If rentals, what are the proposed monthly rents? What is the square footage and the number of bedrooms for each unit? All of these questions are important to our long-range planning, as this development will likely require the reopening of an elementary school that presently serves preschool and school-age children with disabilities who would need to find a new location as we recoup the space for District students. This will both increase costs and decrease revenues from current leasing arrangements.

You have stated that *eleven units will produce one school-age child* based on industry standards. I would point you to **ACTUAL** unit to student data in Half Hollow Hills for five existing *Melville communities* as well as two adjacent ones:

Community	# units	# students
Avalon Court - 100 Avalon Court Drive, Melville	153	54
Avalon Court North - 1 Court North Drive, Melville	340	47
Millenium Hills - 101 Paumanok Hills Court, Melville <i>*Corrected June 12, 2024</i>	84	42*
Villas Circle - Fairfield - Villas Circle, Melville	68	24
Highland Green Residence - Ruland Road, Melville	117	19
Bethpage Park Apartments - 1233 Melville Road, Farmingdale	70	11
Maple Crest Apartments - Baldwin Path, Deer Park	242	32

In total, 1,074 residential units currently generate 229 students; which calculates out to double the “11 units to 1 student” industry standard that you are using. If we use actual numbers to estimate the student enrollment impact of 3,000 residential units, the increase is approximately 640 students (and not the 273 students which the industry standard would indicate).


To further illustrate the impact, the most recent information from NYSED on estimated per-pupil expenditures are: \$20,471 (Grades K-6 General Education); \$29,210 (Grades 7-12 General Education); \$55,996 (Grades K-6 Special Education) and \$64,735 (Grades 7-12 Special Education). Our present demographics show that over 20% of our enrollment included students with disabilities who receive special education programs and services. ***These items together with a 3,000 residential unit increase would create an estimated annual impact of \$20.5 million.***

Of note, since its inception, the Half Hollow Hills CSD has worked to prepare an annual budget within the guidelines of the state property tax levy cap. To exceed this cap would require a 60% supermajority. As we have seen, many Long Island school districts have been unsuccessful when attempting to “pierce the cap.” We believe our community would have strong opposition to a tax levy increase above the cap. When school budgets get defeated, it often requires a reduction in educational opportunities for students.

We strongly believe that the forecasted impact of any proposed development needs to be as accurate as possible and would encourage a more deliberate process moving forward. You have stated there would be a “pause” after every 400 residential units to measure impact; why then start with a large 3,000 residential unit plan if you recognize that 400 units are significant enough of a number to measure impact and guide next steps?

We welcome further discussion and appreciate your consideration of our concerns.

Very truly yours,


Patrick Harrigan, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools


Diana Acampora
President, Board of Education

Cc: Town Clerk Andrew P. Raia
Half Hollow Hills Board of Education
Suffolk IDA