

HINSDALE MIDDLE SCHOOL PARKING DECK

Dear Residents:

The Village of Hinsdale has finalized the design of the parking deck adjacent to the new Hinsdale Middle School, and I am pleased to report that construction of the parking deck should begin late this summer. As residents appreciate, the parking deck is extremely important to help solve the long-standing parking problem in Hinsdale's Central Business District.

Negotiating with the School District over the parking deck was extremely difficult. While the School District used the parking deck as a selling point for the referendum to build the new Middle School, the School District's interest in the parking deck evaporated after the referendum passed. Even though the Village and the School District represent many of the same residents, the School District treated the Village as an adversary in negotiations concerning the parking deck. And while it is the fiduciary responsibility of *both* the Village Board *and* the School District to ensure against wasteful spending on the parking deck, the deck will cost approximately \$1.3 million more than it should have cost, as direct result of School District's actions.

At the very first meeting I had with School District representatives to discuss the intergovernmental agreement for the parking deck, the School District advised me that they had no interest in building a parking deck and would be "perfectly happy" with a simple surface lot for teacher parking. (However, a new surface parking lot would have cost the School District \$2.6 million, substantially more than the School District agreed to contribute to the cost of the parking deck.) Not surprisingly, the School District's attitude made negotiating the parking deck project with the School District extremely difficult. Every time any issue arose concerning the parking deck's design, rather than working with the Village to address the issue, the School District would reiterate that they would be perfectly happy with a surface lot for teacher parking, and had no interest in a parking deck.

In a recent press release, School District Superintendent Garcia claims that "as required by building code, D181 insisted that the upper deck be designed and constructed to a live load of 100 psf." That statement is demonstrably false. The International Building Code and the building codes in most, if not all states, including Illinois, clearly require parking decks to be built to 40 pounds per square foot ("psf"), not to 100 psf, as Dr. Garcia falsely claims. We provided the School District with over fifty examples of parking decks from around the country built to 40 psf. -- all code compliant. For example, the parking deck adjacent to Quicken Loans Arena, which has a capacity of 20,500 and is home to the Cleveland Cavaliers and where the entire arena's crowd leaving a basketball game or entertainment event empties onto the parking deck, is designed to 40 psf. An example closer to home is the parking deck adjacent to the new Rosemont baseball stadium, which is also 40 psf. There are countless other examples of parking decks built to 40 psf. In fact, in our research, we never came across a 100 psf parking deck.

Moreover, the preliminary design for the deck, which was completed by the School District's own architect, and was the basis for negotiating the IGA, contemplated a deck at *40 psf*. Long

after the IGA was signed, the School District demanded that the deck be reinforced to 100 psf, because they planned to hold school assemblies on the deck. When the Village advised the School District that we were building a parking deck, not a venue for school assemblies, the School District shifted gears and claimed – without a shred of support – that the deck needed to be built to 100 psf for emergency evacuations of the school. That is complete nonsense. The engineer the School District managed to dig up to support its argument that the parking deck should be built to 100 psf had no experience whatsoever with parking decks (he is a heating and cooling system engineer). Even the School District’s own “expert” engineer was ultimately forced to admit that the international standard for parking decks is 40 psf.

It cannot be disputed that at 40 psf the deck would be more than adequate for any conceivable emergency. At 40 psf, the deck could hold a parking lot full of cars, plus the entire student body of the Middle School and its faculty, plus hundreds of additional people. The Village provided the School District with opinions from structural engineering experts -- who had designed hundreds of parking decks -- that 40 psf was more than adequate for any conceivable emergency, as well as countless examples of other decks built to 40 psf. Moreover, the Fire Department has repeatedly advised the School District that its plans to evacuate students onto the parking deck filled with cars in the event of an emergency is foolish, if not hazardous. The Fire Department advised the School District that, in the event of an emergency, it should have students walk down the sidewalks and get as far away from the building as possible. All this fell on deaf ears. The School District simply responded that if we did not build the deck to 100 psf, the parking deck would not be built. The Village ultimately surrendered to the School District’s demand so that the parking deck could be built.

Also, the Village’s budget for the landscaping for the parking deck at the time the IGA was signed was \$40,000. That \$40,000 estimate was provided to the Village by the *School District’s* architect. After the IGA was signed the School District insisted on planter boxes around the deck that more than quadrupled the cost of landscaping. The planter boxes require that the deck be further reinforced, and the design of drainage systems for the planter boxes was extremely expensive. The School District insisted on the planter boxes and that the Village pay for them, or the parking deck would not be built.

Dr. Garcia’s attempts to lay blame for the delays in building the deck at the Village’s feet is preposterous. The Village had finalized design plans for the deck and was ready to start the bidding process last fall, so that the deck could be completed on time this August. But the School District decided to insist on 100 psf and an extremely costly landscape plan for the deck, which was three times the cost of the landscaping that the School District had budgeted for the new Middle School itself. The Village then proposed a quick mediation to attempt to resolve these issues. Though the Village originally proposed mediation in October 2018, the School District stalled for *five months*, until February 2019, before agreeing to schedule the mediation.

Though Dr. Garcia states in his press release that “the Village was contractually obligated to commence work [on the deck] by May 24, 2019,” when the Village attempted to start the bidding process in March of this year, consistent with its adversarial approach, the School District had its lawyers send a letter to the Village threatening legal action against the Village if bids were awarded without a finalized landscape plan that included the School District’s beloved planter boxes. We finally got it done -- at a budgeted cost of \$1.3 million more than it should have cost,

thanks to the School District -- but we had to overcome the School District's near total lack of cooperation.

On a positive note, the Village has worked with local legislators and METRA to help offset these unnecessary costs. With the help of State Senator Glowiak, we were able to secure \$400,000 for the parking deck in the infrastructure budget the state legislature recently passed. With the help of Representative Mazzochi, we were also successful in obtaining \$500,000 in funding from METRA for the parking deck. In addition, we are working to re-appropriate \$451,000 in savings in grant money from the Oak Street Bridge to the parking deck project. We are hopeful that we will be successful in re-appropriating those funds.

Tom Cauley

Village President