

Warren Jr., Richard A. - Clerk's Office

From: Monica Esparza [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 25, 2023 11:48 AM
To: City Clerk's Office
Subject: Public Safety Committee Meeting @ 1pm
Attachments: Hickory Hill Opposition Letters.pdf

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Greetings City Clerk,

Please share the attached correspondence (12 letters) from residents of the City of Richmond opposing Resolution 2023-R023 pertaining to Hickory Hill Community Center, with the Public Safety Committee meeting today.

Thank you.

Monica M. Esparza, Trustee

Image Church - Renewal of Life Land Trust

[REDACTED]
Land is Health and Wealth

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Civic Letter of Support-Hickory Hill Community Center

Deja Mitchell [REDACTED]

Mon 4/17/2023 9:15 AM

[REDACTED]

Good morning.

As a concerned citizen, I am writing to let you know my concern about the proposed fire safety burn building area. The Hickory Hill Community Center is integral for the people of Richmond. This building provides a space for seniors who are searching for companionship to have a place where they can exercise, utilize computers & learn other skills to increase life satisfaction. Not only is there a space for our senior citizens but also the city's youth. The young people in town will lose space for after-school & summer programs as well as a place to gather and experience mentorships with adults that have their best interests at heart.

While fire safety is an important facet of our community, there is also a very important connection for many Richmond residents to this historical area. Please reconsider another area for this fire safety building.

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April 21, 2023

Mayor Levar M. Stoney
Richmond City Council
Richmond Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities Director Chris Frelke
900 E. Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

It was community people and their efforts as the heart and soul of the restoration of Hickory Hill School in years leading up to 1999 when the Hickory Hill Community Center was rededicated. The Hickory Hill Preservation Committee, in collaboration with the government restored the building and many of those volunteers, including the Hickory Hill Alumni Association remained in close support of the facility. Many committee members have passed on; but in their wisdom, two young people (Eric Hunter Sr. and Monica Esparza) were invited to carry forward the legacy and we remain; inviting the next generation to carry forward.

We have watched and actively engaged with a constantly rotating recreation and parks staff, who were largely unable to honor community wishes because "downtown told us not to do it." Unfortunately, we are in this space again; apparently banned from access to classroom spaces, the auditorium and recently restored library that are the heart of this historic facility. I also report that standing community activities have been shifted around and forced to share space to accommodate fire department occupancy. We continue to oppose the presence of the Fire Department at Hickory Hill Community Center for this as well as environmental challenges, health concerns and other matters addressed at recent Planning Commission and Urban Design Commission meetings.

Public safety is highly prioritized in all realms of government and even schools; and is essential to all city residents. However, Southside Richmond has been historically underserved, except by police and fire. This begs us to wonder if and how this aligns with why 34,500 of the city's youth are negatively engaged with the Juvenile Justice system. Though we tremendously respect the work and training initiatives of the Richmond Fire Department, we seek diversified education and training opportunities for youth and adults in this district. Fire and emergency training is valuable, but should not be the only options presented to youth in the 8th District.

The Hickory Hill Preservation Committee ensured that the Hickory Hill Community Center was spatially and technologically ready to meet education, business and workforce strategies by the installation of a computer lab (presently in dismal shape), as well as other complementary spaces. Educational programs were a prioritized interest to include "math, science and reading tutoring, exposure to engineering, law, medicine, urban planning, entrepreneur development, skill training in carpentry, welding, plumbing, electric, computer training and library to house archives of the Hickory Hill Center."

Diverse education and training opportunities provided by mentors and counselors in the community could motivate and inspire young adults, adults in dead-end jobs, individuals re-entering the community from incarceration, people seeking entrepreneurial opportunities and others seeking life changes. It is our desire to have city representatives and administration support the original vision for Hickory Hill and work with residents (not only corporate and/or public safety sponsors) to bring education as well as recreation services to fruition.

We have come aware of grant funds acquired for the benefit of vulnerable and underserved community sectors. Hopefully, those funds will be equitable allocated and include improvements to the Hickory Hill Community Center. Hopefully, this historically disenfranchised community will not be shut out from the facility that we helped to restore and cared for so much over the years.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Monica M. Esparza

Monica M. Esparza

Eric Hunter Sr.

Eric Hunter Sr.

Hickory Hill Preservation Committee Members

RIVER CITY KUNG FU

www.RCKungFu.org

To: City of Richmond
From: Sifu Moses McClendon / River City Kung Fu
RE: Hickory Hill Community Center

Greeting,

My name is Moses C. McClendon II and I am the Sifu / Chief Instructor for River City Kung Fu. We are a martial arts school/society that has operated in the City of Richmond since 2006. We teach the Wing Chun (Ving Tsun) kung fu system. It is a southern Chinese Kung Fu style, rooted in Hong Kong, Head-Quartered in New York (IIMYVTF.org), and is still the only system invented by and traditionally best for women. We have taught hundreds in Virginia from workshops, seminars, women's defense classes, children's classes, and security teams since our inception in 2006.

Our 1st school location was at the Hickory Hill Community Center for 5 years. They took us in and under the management during that time, they embraced and supported us there. As the landscape changed so did the treatment toward us and our programming. We found it increasingly difficult to teach classes there. We were not able to obtain and secure a stable location inside the center. We moved almost weekly from place to place, were not able to secure our own equipment there and eventually had to make the difficult decision to exit from there and move to a better solution for our school.

We have grown since then and now in our 17th year we are hearing that there is interest in changing the Community Center identity. This is disappointing to hear. River City Kung Fu maintains the position that if we would have received a better solution and treatment at this location, we would likely continue to be there, servicing **our own** community as we strive to deliver some of the best in self-defense to **our children** on the southside.

Professionally,



Sifu Moses C. McClendon, II

Moy Mo`Xi



April 19, 2023

Honorable Mayor Levar Stoney
City of Richmond
City Hall, 900 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Hickory Hill Community Center and Fire Training burn tower Project

Dear Mayor Stoney

Please consider information that has been revealed at the City's committee and commission hearings on this matter and that these members have independently voted against the Fire project.

Additionally, On April 17, 2023, the Nighty News at MSNBC with Lester Holt and Tom Costello reported "concerns over the rash of high- profile chemical fires." And that "communities and firefighters" are to be informed of "toxins" such as Hazmat Storage that are stored on sites.

The report goes on to warn that "even minimal exposure can do lasting damage; and that non-smoking cancer rates are rising in the United States."

This information is provided to oppose the Fire Training project at Hickory Hill and to ask the City of Richmond administration to use its resources to determine a less pollution driven and more suitable location for Fire Training, other than a functioning Community Center.

Respectfully



Delores Esparza, Deerbourne resident




April 8, 2023

Mayor of Richmond
City Council Members
City of Richmond - City Hall
900 E. Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear City Leaders:

WE DONOT APPROVE OF THE FIRE
TRAINING UNIT BEING AT HICKORY HILL SCHOOL.
REASONS: HEALTH - NOISE - AND LOSS OF ALL NEIGHBOUR
ACTIVES.
AS A NEIGHBOUR WE HAVE TOO MUCH TO LOSE ,

Sincerely,

RUDOLPH TABB

DEERBORNE RESIDENT

April 13, 2023

Mayor of Richmond
City Council Members
City of Richmond - City Hall
900 E. Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear City Leaders:

I am vehemently opposed to a fire training facility at Hickory Hill. I am a resident of Deerbourne. The fire department was not transparent when they canvassed the neighborhood. They did not disclose the Urban Design Committee rejected the proposed site.

I respectfully ask that our city leaders stand with the voice of the people. We gathered over 68% of signatures within Deerbourne that OPPOSED this facility. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Melissa G...


Amelia E. Lightner

APRIL18,2023

To the Mayor, Lavar Stoney
cc to all Council members, Richmond Virginia

Greetings.

Our concerns over the Fire Department's choice to build it's Training Center on the Hichory Hill Community site.

Our Communties are underserved and is in need of much. However, Our hope is more consideration be given to the need of the residents in this area of the Eight District.

The area in which has been identified for the Fire Training for it's Fire Fighter can be used to help the neighborhood that has no place for large meetings or other activities on the grounds of Hichory Hill. If consideration was given to these needs, they would be greatly acceptable.

According to the letter presented in your February meeting several location were mention, we would like to know the reasons for not choosing one these locations.

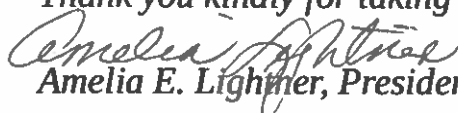
There are approximately 10 different neighborhoods utilizing Hichory Hill Community Center. To take away the ability to have less and not more is very unjust to these residents. The residents are in need of inside and outside space due to the growing population in the area.

It have been stated the South side is consider a highly crime place and it is to be a un-safe place live. We believe that this reputation could become proven untrue.

There are already too few green spaces in our South Richmond communities, especially in marginalized neighborhoods, and building a training facility does nothing to protect our green spaces and the health of our residents.

We are at the mercy of your viewing the Project, and deciding, would this be in the best interest of our neighborhood.

Thank you kindly for taking the time to read our plea.


Amelia E. Lightner, President, Upper Reservoir District



Richmond OIRE

Business chat

The City of Richmond proposes to move the Fire Department Training Academy and apparatus including hazardous materials with cancer risks to the Hickory Hill Community Center. Adjoining neighborhoods and their supporters oppose this action to protect resident and recreation patrons' health, safety and well-being. This move would illuminate the field that is utilized for soccer matches.

Community Center is integral for the people of Richmond. This building* provides a space for seniors who are searching for companionship to have a place where they can exercise, utilize computers & learn other skills to increase life satisfaction. Not only is there a space for our senior citizens but also the city's youth. The young people in town will lose space for after-school & summer programs as well as a place to gather and experience mentorships with adults that have their best interests at heart. *

*

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* While fire safety is an important facet of our community, there is also a very important connection for many Richmond residents to this historical area. Please reconsider another area for this fire safety building. *

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Copy

April 10, 2023

Richmond City Council
900 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219

To Mayor Levar M. Stoney and Richmond City Councilpersons:

I am sending this letter to express concerns about the proposed relocation of a training center to the site of the Hickory Hill Community Center by the Richmond Fire Department. The Hickory Hill Community Center serves as a vital resource for children, adolescents, adults and the elderly in the community to experience cultural enhancements, recreational opportunities and educational experiences. It is a gathering place for people across all age groups to share their gifts and talents, to uplift and learn from one another. Reconsideration of this move is imperative, as the proposed location of the training center is more of a hindrance than a benefit. The people in this community rely on this center and it is actively used. With resources for community spaces limited within the city as is, why eliminate it and leave several of the community's residents without? The center is used for the mental, physical and emotional well-being of its users, let's not deprive the community of this space. Hickory Hill Community Center is important to this community; I urge you to keep this much needed resource within the community and refrain from replacing it with a Fire building. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shanita Gilbert
Community Supporter



April 10, 2023

Richmond City Council
900 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219

To Mayor Levar M. Stoney and Richmond City Councilpersons:

I am sending this letter to express concerns about the proposed relocation of a training center to the site of the Hickory Hill Community Center by the Richmond Fire Department. The Hickory Hill Community Center serves as a vital resource for children, adolescents, adults and the elderly in the community to experience cultural enhancements, recreational opportunities and educational experiences. It is a gathering place for people across all age groups to share their gifts and talents, to uplift and learn from one another. Reconsideration of this move is imperative, as the proposed location of the training center is more of a hindrance than a benefit. The people in this community rely on this center and it is actively used. With resources for community spaces limited within the city as is, why eliminate it and leave several of the community's residents without? The center is used for the mental, physical and emotional well-being of its users, let's not deprive the community of this space. Hickory Hill Community Center is important to this community; I urge you to keep this much needed resource within the community and refrain from replacing it with a Fire building. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shanita Gilbert
Community

Warren Jr., Richard A. - Clerk's Office

From: Quinton Robbins [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 26, 2023 4:32 PM
To: City Clerk's Office; Saunders, Lincoln - CAO; Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office; Addison, Andreas D. - City Council; Lambert, Ann-Frances - City Council; Newbille, Cynthia I. - City Council; Robertson, Ellen F. - City Council; Jordan, Katherine - City Council; Wright, Kennon C. - City Council; Stokes, Kiya A. - City Council; Nye, Kristen M. - City Council; Jones, Michael J. - City Council; Trammell, Reva M. - City Council; Bishop, Richard K. - City Council Office; Patterson, Samuel - City Council Office; Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office; Philipsen, Sven J. - City Council; Floyd, Tavares M. - City Council; Siverd, Jr, Timmy M. - City Council; Brown, Whitney H. - City Council Office
Cc: Mayor Levar Stoney
Subject: Richmond for All - Concern about Diamond District Updates
Attachments: Diamond District Proposal Changes.pdf

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Dear President Jones, Vice President Nye, and Honorable Members of Council,

Attached is a letter expressing our concerns with transparency around the recently announced updates to the Diamond District development agreement. We have some simple asks that we believe are matters of accountability and community benefit so that the public might have the maximum information before you ink the deal.

We have attached the clerk as well and would like the letter entered into the record with the updated ordinance.

We would appreciate a response in some form from council leadership before the Organizational Development meeting on May 1st since that will be the last guaranteed opportunity for public comment before you vote.

Sincerely,
Quinton Robbins
Political Director
Richmond for All



Dear President Jones, Vice President Nye, and Honorable Members of Council,

We are reaching out on behalf of our over 200 members to ensure that Richmond for All members and the public receive clear and accurate information about the proposed changes to the development agreement for the Diamond District.

Of concern is that now the public instead of the developer will be footing the bill for infrastructure updates that the developer needs and that the Tax Increment Financing Area (TIF) will expand outside of the project area. We are also concerned that the Flying Squirrels have made no guarantee that they will stay or that the league will grant the city an extension to update the stadium, yet you are charging ahead without securing a professional baseball team for the stadium.

You are well aware that we opposed and organized against the Navy Hill development deal on the ground that the TIF area extended far outside of the boundaries of the project. As has been seen in other municipalities, the mayor was attempting to capture organic growth in the tax base to support the private profit of his donors. At the time, the mayor put out manipulative and false messaging that the downtown area was not growing on its own, despite millions of dollars of increased assessments from updated and new real estate. He also tried—and failed—to convince the public that robbing the public coffers was the only way to fund public education. Thankfully, the people of this great city didn't buy it.

Richmond has a dreadful history with public-private partnerships; we are still footing the bill for the mistakes of the past because the needs of the donor class and private industry have been consistently put above the needs of people who live here. This is especially concerning because we are also using general obligation bonds that are funded by revenue that has nothing to do with the project.

We find it to be a great irony that, at this moment, you are set to vote on a budget that will cut fourteen million dollars from Richmond Public Schools' proposed budget. This cut will deny students' access to high quality athletic and recreation facilities as you fund a stadium for a for-profit professional team with public dollars. Even worse, in the course of this development, you attempted to transfer the Arthur Ashe Center, a school athletic facility, to the EDA for demolition—despite the fact that it is owned by RPS.

The public is owed honesty and a transparent process. We are asking that council do the following:

1. Publish the list of parcel numbers that would be in the Tax Increment Financing Area in an easily consumable format.
2. Calculate and publish the total amount that the infrastructure upgrades will cost the city and precisely what is being developed.
3. Clarify if the contracts for public infrastructure will go through a public procurement process since the developer will be handling the management of that construction using public dollars.
4. Remove the provision that adjacent property owners would be able to govern the park areas associated with the project at their discretion.
5. Allow for one full meeting with public comment on the project not limited to the regular time limit at a regular council meeting on the 8th of May at the earliest with a vote at the subsequent regular city council meeting.
6. Confirm that the Squirrels are staying, confirm another team, or better yet, publicly purchase a minor league team so that profits are to the public's benefit.

Sincerely,

The Governing Board of Richmond for All

Warren Jr., Richard A. - Clerk's Office

From: Monica Esparza [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 10:47 PM
To: Mayor Levar Stoney
Cc: Addison, Andreas D. - City Council; Jordan, Katherine - City Council; Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office; Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office; Nye, Kristen M. - City Council; Robertson, Ellen F. - City Council; Newbille, Cynthia I. - City Council; Trammell, Reva M. - City Council; Jones, Michael J. - City Council; Lambert, Ann-Frances - City Council; City Clerk's Office
Subject: FW: From Elizabeth Barrett - Please Protect Hickory Hill - Vote NO on Resolution 2023-R023

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Please find letter below from Elizabeth Barrett to oppose Resolution R2023-023. Thank you.

From: [Elizabeth Barrett](#)
Sent: Thursday, May 4, 2023 10:37 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Please Protect Hickory Hill - Vote NO on Resolution 2023-R023

Dear City Council Representative,

Please vote against Resolution 2023-R023 which would overrule the City Planning Commission's decision to deny the relocation of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services training facility to the Hickory Hill Community Center. There are surely other city properties that could more than aptly support the Fire Department's needs without taking land from a city green space that is much needed in the 8th District.

It is shameful to engage citizens and spend countless hours and resources developing beautiful meaningful master plans only to take actions that fly in the face of the tenets of those plans. It is time now to vote to support the citizens who are working to make the City a greener, healthier, more equitable place to live.

Please vote NO and support the 8th district community that needs more not less green space, trees, and gardens.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Barrett
[REDACTED]