



Portsmouth Neighborhood Association
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Date: September 12, 2008

To: Mayor Tom Potter
City Commissioner Sam Adams
City Commissioner Nick Fish
City Commissioner Randy Leonard
City Commissioner Dan Saltzman

Copy: Portsmouth Neighborhood Association Board
Portsmouth Neighborhood Association Website
Portland Sentinel Website

From: Greg Wilhelm, Portsmouth Neighborhood Association Chair

Subject: October vote on Resolution 36449 that would allow Portland Hope Meadows to use the former John Ball Elementary Site

On October 25, 2006 City Council adopted Resolution 36449 by a vote of three to two (Yeas: Saltzman, Sten, Potter; Nays: Adams, Leonard). This resolution would allow Portland Hope Meadows to use the former John Ball Elementary School Site at no cost for the purpose of establishing an intergenerational community. The proposed Portland Hope Meadows community would consist of 8 family homes with three or four foster children each and 32 reduced rent apartments for elders. The proposal is based on the Generations of Hope (www.generationsofhope.org) model in Rantoul, Illinois.

The Portsmouth Neighborhood Association is on record as being in opposition to the passage of this resolution for the following reasons:

- City Council made no effort to work with the Portsmouth Neighborhood towards determining the most appropriate use for the property. Any future development of the property will have significant impact on not only the Portsmouth Neighborhood, but on the entire North Portland community. Instead, the City granted the John Ball Elementary property (valued at more than \$1,000,000) without engaging the community in which the property resides. This violates objective 2 of the Portsmouth Neighborhood Plan adopted on June 26, 2002 by the Portland City Council (Ordinance No. 176614, Resolution No. 36081): "... encourage neighborhood participation in decisions that affect... the redevelopment of vacant surplus government properties."

- In July 2006, members of the Board of Directors of Portland Hope Meadows went door to door in the area around the old John Ball School site. They quickly, verbally, described the plan concept, and then asked residents to sign a petition stating, "I am not opposed to the Portland Hope Meadows project." Nine individuals would not sign, 153 positive signatures were obtained. Now that the neighbors have more information about the project, The Portsmouth Neighborhood Association is confident that many of those signers would now retract their signatures. Portsmouth Board Members have heard the neighbors' overwhelming opposition to Portland Hope Meadows at our Community Forum Meetings and through other social interactions.
- The Generations of Hope model upon which Portland Hope Meadows is based has not demonstrated the success that was advertised to the Portsmouth Neighborhood.
 - As of April 2007 only 75% of the foster family homes and 83% of the elder housing are occupied. The development started at 100% occupancy.¹
 - Approximately 10% of the families leave the program each year.¹ This is probably due to the fact that the foster children at Generations of Hope are the hardest to place of all children¹ and families must take on three to four of these children.
 - The Generation of Hope business model, which has a fixed overhead, needs families to take on the maximum of four foster children, in addition to their own children. This is done for financial reasons, and not reasons having to do with the well being of the children. Generations of Hope relies on the per child state funding as their main revenue stream. This puts undue hardship on families who might do well with just one or two foster children.
 - The cost of each foster child's care at Generations of Hope is higher than typical placement programs in the State of Illinois.¹
 - As of fiscal year 2007, Generations of Hope is running a \$176,000 deficit against an expense budget of \$1,008,000.²
 - Generations of Hope has been unsuccessful in making up the shortfall with donations and grants. Considering the current economic situation in our country, grants and donations are even harder to come by and the economic outlook is very uncertain.
- Portsmouth residents expressed further concerns at our community meetings
 - Several residents have been told by realtors that their property value will decrease if Portland Hope Meadows is constructed.
 - Most residents are very concerned that with New Columbia being only three blocks away from the John Ball site, we will have two big social experiments adjacent to one another. New Columbia's residents and management are working hard to rid themselves of the past problems of the former Columbia Villa, while Portland Hope Meadows would be bringing with it a whole new set of problems.

The Portsmouth Neighborhood Association urges a “Nay” vote on this resolution and insists on working with City Council to find a more appropriate use for the former John Ball Elementary School site that is acceptable to both the City Council and to the 8,304 residents of Portsmouth Neighborhood.

Respectfully,

Greg Wilhelm
Portsmouth Neighborhood Association Chair

References:

1. 60 Minutes II documentary on Generations of Hope
2. www.generationsofhope.org