

July 5, 2019

California Coastal Commission
South Coast Area Office
300 East Long Beach Blvd., Suite 300
Long Beach, CA 90802-4302

Re: Application No.: 5-19-0128; Applicant: Hermosa Beach City School District

Dear California Coastal Commission members:

This letter disputes statements made, and the findings presented in the Staff Report for Application 5-19-0128 for applicant: Hermosa Beach City School District regarding the North School Reconstruction Project. The incorrect information was taken from the North School Reconstruction Environmental Impact Report (North School EIR). The North School EIR contains egregious amounts of incorrect information that has been disproved by residents' research. Evidence presented by residents of incorrect information contained in the NS EIR was promptly ignored by HBCSD hired attorney and consultants in charge of the project. Despite overwhelming community outcry in meetings and letters, School Board members summarily passed the highly flawed North School EIR. Residents were unable to afford the estimated \$250,000.00 to challenge the North School EIR in court.

The finding that "there are no further feasible mitigation measures or alternatives that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts of the development on the environment." is incorrect according to the facts verified in supporting documents attached to this letter.

Starting on page 16, the Staff Report describes HBCSD's ridiculously biased analysis of various alternatives, specifically alternative 1a (modernization*) and alternative 3d (use of the Community Center/aka Pier Avenue School), as described in the North School EIR. The incorrect and misleading information presented by HBCSD regarding the various alternatives is presented first then the correct or competing information verified by documentation is presented afterward.

***Note:** The modernization alternative 1a as described in the Environmental Impact Report (See page 7-5, North School EIR, 7.3.2.1 Alternate 1, Modernization of Existing North School Facilities, November 2107) is **PURPOSELY** short-sighted to discourage further consideration of this option. Modernization could certainly include the demolition of the existing Kindergarten building on the west side of the campus to create the new parking lot as planned in the reconstruction of North School. New buildings, such as an administrative building, could be added to the existing campus footprint. The campus could be designed to support 350 to 400 students instead of the 510 students planned with the rebuilding of North School since the district will have more than enough classrooms space between Hermosa Valley and View schools to support their current and future enrollment needs.

North School is grandfathered in for use as a public school. The ENTIRE current campus was built to stringent Field Act seismically safe requirements. The existing North School campus was built by the same MIT trained architect and engineering team that reconstructed the Community Center/Pier Avenue School after the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake using the same earthquake safe construction methods. (Please see the information presented in Item 5 of this letter describing the structural seismic evaluation

and building condition results for the Community Center.) In addition, HBCSD can use the California Historical Building Code (CHBC) as described in the Policies and Provisions for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings for Public School Use (Exhibit #1) to modernize the older buildings on campuses.

There is NO proof that “usable space would likely be lost to accommodate structural improvements to bring the facility to building code standards” because the campus is ALREADY built to building code standards and is deemed safe and usable AS IS for public school students because it was built to Field Act seismically safe standards overseen by the Department of State Architecture. Lastly, the Department of General Services, Office of Public School Construction found no reason that HBCSD could not use North School as is. In a letter to Superintendent Pat Escalante on March 28, 2014, the OPSC confirmed the availability of State matching funds to modernize North School. (Exhibit #2)

NOTE: The same construction company that renovated Hermosa Valley School in 1985 supplied a detailed cost estimate to renovate North School for approximately 400 students. The estimate included building a new 3,200 sq ft one-story administration, learning center and classroom building on the east side of the campus. The total cost the Juge Company quoted to renovate the North School campus was \$6.2M in 2017 prices, versus HBCSD’s quote to renovate at \$11.5M in 2017 prices. (Exhibit #3) Reconstructing North School is estimated to cost \$28.8M in 2017 prices.

IMPORTANT! Please see the information regarding use of approximately 1.9 acres of district owned property in the Valley Park adjacent to the campus. (Item 4 of this letter) If HBCSD wishes to use North School for **district use or leased to a Charter School** for either 510 students or 350-400 students it will be required to use the full amount of acreage that it owns, including acreage located in Valley Park. This would necessitate erecting an 8’ fence around 1.9 to 2 acres of the public park. **According to CDE guidelines, the district can swap the North School site for the Community Center/Pier Avenue School campus with the City, which would eliminate the need to fence off 1.9 to 2 acres of the public park.** The City of Hermosa Beach could hold community activities at the North School Campus while HBCSD uses Pier Avenue School and adjacent baseball diamond, soccer field and basketball courts for student use. (Item 6 in this letter) The Community Center/Pier Avenue School is located outside the Coastal Zone. This option was summarily eliminated in February/March 2015 by HBCSD and the City.

1. MISLEADING STATEMENT BY HBCSD: (Page 16 of the Staff Report) “*The first alternative considered was modernization of the existing North School facility and construction of a new cafeteria and library (EIR Section 7.3.2.1)*”

COMPETING INFORMATION: North School already has a full kitchen with a serving bay for students and an attached multi-purpose room that can be used as interior eating space. (Exhibit #4: photos of North School kitchen and current campus layout showing the kitchen and the attached multipurpose room.) Any room in the current North School campus can be used as a library.

2. MISLEADING STATEMENT BY HBCSD: (Page 16 of the Staff Report) “*The District determined that this alternative [modernization] would not reduce impacts to traffic ...*”

COMPETING INFORMATION: Historically, North School has been a neighborhood school with less than 400 students. Prior to the district’s plan to rebuild North School into a commuter school for 510 third and fourth grade students, there was little to no parking concerns in the North School neighborhood. Recent (approx. 1986 to 2017) district leasing of North School as a

preschool, afterschool care and Adult school did not create a mad rush of traffic as a result of a fixed start and end time for the campus. Children attended the childcare and Adult School Mommy and Me classes on varying days of the weeks and varying times of day. This allowed traffic to filter in and out continuously during the day and did not create large traffic demands on surrounding streets. (Exhibit #5: Letter submittal to the NS EIR Notice of Participation EIR page B-54, Item 2.2 Existing Setting, 2.2.1. Project Site)

NOTE: Although North School campus is being rebuilt to house 510 3rd and 4th grade students **HBCSD only has 294 3rd and 4th grade students enrolled as of September 2018.** (Exhibit #6: current HBCSD enrollment report) HBCSD only needs 11 classrooms in order to house the entire 3rd and 4th grade class.

NOTE: Opting to modernize North School (alternative 1a) for 350 to 400 students instead of building a new 510 student campus would: #1) ensure that sufficient bond funds are available for the higher priority renovation of Hermosa View School and Hermosa Valley School at which ALL district students are currently housed, #2) a smaller, less expensive and easier to lease school would be less of a burden on the HBCSD budget as income falls due to a decrease in student enrollment AND #3) would reduce many environmental impacts of a much larger school.

3. MISLEADING STATEMENT BY HBCSD: (Page 16 of the Staff Report) “... this alternative [modernization] ... and would not meet the project objectives.”

HBCSD Project Objectives – (Page 7-2 of the North School Reconstruction EIR):

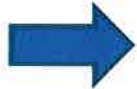
1. Relieve existing overcrowding at Hermosa Valley School and Hermosa View School.
2. Eliminate temporary, portable classroom buildings at Hermosa Valley School and Hermosa View School.
3. Restore temporary, portable classroom buildings at Hermosa Valley School and Hermosa View School by converting the temporary classrooms back to their original multipurpose spaces.
4. Restore the District’s full-day kindergarten program.
5. Maximize the use of limited District funds.
6. Maximize the use of District-owned property.
7. Minimize the construction outside the developed footprint of the North School site.
8. Construct 21st-century educational facilities with flexible outdoor and indoor learning spaces.
9. Construct new educational facilities and/or a new school that is safe and secure for students.
10. Construct new educational facilities and/or a new school that uses energy efficiently and cost-effectively.



COMPETING INFORMATION: Alternatives 1a (modernization of North School for 350 students) and Alternative 3d (use of the Community Center) would satisfy HBCSD Project Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 by quickly adding sufficient classrooms to allow the removal of temporary, portable classroom buildings at Hermosa Valley School and Hermosa View School and allow the District to resume full-day kindergarten program. District plans to renovate both Hermosa Valley School and Hermosa View School with bond funds contain more than enough classrooms to house current and projected future enrollment needs without the continued use of either the Community Center or North School; especially NOT a 510 student campus at North School! (Exhibit #7: Hermosa Valley School, Hermosa View School and existing North School classroom layouts) (Exhibit #6: current HBCSD enrollment report)

There is no reason why Alternative 1a (modernization) could not also satisfy HBCSD Project Objectives 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

4. MISLEADING STATEMENT BY HBCSD: (Page 16 in the Staff Report) North School EIR alternative #1 (modernization) and alternative #2 cite the *"need to close a portion of the adjacent public park during school hours in order to safely use the park for the student's physical education needs"* as the district's reason to reject these alternatives.



CORRECT INFORMATION: The California Department of Education normally requires 10 acres for 500 elementary school students (Exhibit #8: Page 3-16 Section 3.6.5 Guide to School Site Analysis and Development, paragraph three in the North School EIR). The CDE requirement to use ALL available acreage, including 1.9 to 2 acres in Valley Park that the district owns, ALSO applies to the district's plan to rebuild a brand-new campus at North School. In fact, the district's application for the reconstruction of North School with the Department of General Services listed the proposed acreage for the new construction as five acres NOT just 2.35 acres as claimed in the EIR. (Exhibit #9: DGS Application for North Elementary, Proposed Scope - Proposed Acreage field)

NOTE: HBCSD recently erected 8' "ornamental" (i.e. steel rods painted blue) fence around both Valley and View schools. HBCSD will need to erect an 8' fence to corral public school or charter school students and provide some safety around the 1.9 to 2.0 acres of land it owns in the public park (Valley Park) whether or not North School is reconstruction or modernization. The area of the public park that the district will be required to use as playfields is significantly removed from sight and protective classroom structures. Those structures are located at the top of the sand dune in the main North School campus.

5. MISLEADING STATEMENT BY HBCSD: (Page 17 in the Staff Report.) *"Alternative 3d, The Community Center is a historic property and would likely be costly to bring into compliance."*



CORRECT INFORMATION: There is NO PROOF that would confirm this statement as being valid. In fact, the Community Center/aka Pier Avenue School was reconstructed to stringent earthquake safe Field Act specifications after the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake which qualifies it for use by district students. (Exhibit #10: California Education Code #17280.5 (e)) The Community Center passed both an ASCE-31-03 Phase 1 Structural Seismic Evaluation by John Martin & Associates (Exhibit #11) and a Building Conditions Assessment by Civil Source (Exhibit #12) in the summer of 2015 with flying colors. In addition, the California Department of Education publishes Policies and Provisions for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings for Public School Use (Exhibit #1) which states:

"The DSA recognizes that strict use of the regular [building] code may create difficulties where rehabilitation attempts to retain the historic characteristics of a building or structure. The CHBC [California Historical Building Code] provides alternatives that 1) allow most of the historic character to be retained while 2) achieving the performance objectives of the regular [building] code."

Lastly, the Department of General Services, Office of Public School Construction found no reason that HBCSD could not use Pier Avenue School. In a letter to Superintendent Pat Escalante on March 28, 2014, the OPSC confirmed the availability of State matching funds to renovate Pier

Avenue School for public school students given that there were no other buildings that would be available to the district under a forty-year lease. (Exhibit #2) There are no other buildings in Hermosa Beach that would be available to HBCSD under a forty-year lease. HBCSD can lease the Community Center under a forty-year lease as well as exercise its contractual rights to the campus in perpetuity while district enrollment remains above 1,266 students.

6. MISLEADING STATEMENT BY HBCSD: (Page 17 in the Staff Report) "... and would also necessitate that the City find an alternative location for the community activities that currently occur at the Community Center (two theaters, the historical society museum, a senior activity center and Emergency Operations Center). "

COMPETING INFORMATION: HBCSD sold Pier Avenue School to the City of Hermosa Beach in February 1978 well below market value with the expressed provision that HBCSD retain priority use of classrooms, office and storage space when district enrollment surpassed 1,266 students. The provisions were detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding, Exhibit B to HBCSD's Resolution of Intention to Sell. (Exhibit #13) The MOU was attached along with the description of the property (Exhibit A) to the Resolution of Intention to Sell and Authorize the Sale of Real Property to the City of Hermosa Beach and Prescribing the Terms Thereof (Exhibit G). (Exhibit #14) The City of Hermosa Beach accepted the terms of the MOU at their meeting of June 14, 1977 (Exhibit #15) and executed/validated the MOU by taking out an escrow following the directions set forth in the MOU. (Exhibit #16) The MOU along with all other exhibits, A through K, were recorded and each page officially stamped by the Los Angeles County Registrar's office. (Exhibit #17: Three page Letter from City Attorney J.B. Mirassou)

The CDE encourages the joint use of facilities by districts. HBCSD can use classrooms at Pier Avenue School from 7am until 4pm Monday through Friday. The City could continue to use the theater, gymnasium, tennis courts and other areas of the Community Center in the evenings, on weekends and during the summer. The City of Hermosa Beach also owns many other properties (The Kiwanis building, the Rotary Club building, Clark Building, The Community Services Building, four classrooms at South School, Prospect Heights building) that could be used to host activities that are currently housed in the Community Center. In fact, North School could also be used to house City run community activities. Students using the Community Center as a school campus could also participate in an afterschool Children's theatre program (neither Valley nor View schools have a theater), the Historical Society, Emergency Operations classes, tennis lessons etc. In addition to ample room for off-street drop-off and pick-up, Pier Avenue School is located on major feeder streets and is located outside the Coastal Zone. Students would also have use during school hours of the adjacent playfields that contain a full baseball diamond, several fenced basketball courts and a soccer field. After enrollment drops below 1,266, HBCSD can vacate the Community Center and give the classrooms back to the City for City use. Sharing the Community Center with the City gives HBCSD a low-cost way to manage spikes in enrollment. The City would benefit from CDE facility matching funds to renovate the City owned Community Center for public student use.

NOTE: Although the North School EIR eliminates the use of the Community Center, alternate 3d, because of their concern that the City might have to find new locations for low-priority community activities, HBCSD had no problem ousting Children's Journey and the Adult Education classes from North School in order to build an unneeded brand new 510 student campus. 80% of the families who used Children's Journey were from Hermosa Beach. The North School lease had

been an affordable option for the private childcare operators. North School will not be able to be used as a preschool after it is rebuilt for two reasons: #1 the building is being built as a two-story structure for older children and #2 the CDE requires that classrooms for kindergarteners be significantly larger with attached restroom and direct physical and visual access to dedicated exterior play areas.

7. MISLEADING STATEMENT BY HBCSD: (Page 17 in the Staff Report) *"Furthermore, in order to fund the purchase of any of the alternative sites [alluding to the inclusion of Pier Avenue School], the District would need to sell the North School site."*



CORRECT INFORMATION: As stated above, HBCSD has priority contractual use of classrooms, office and storage space at Pier Avenue School when district enrollment exceeds 1,266 students. HBCSD does NOT need to sell the North School site in order to take advantage of the classrooms, etc. at Pier Avenue School/aka the Community Center. (Exhibits: #13, #14, #15, #16, #17)

THE CURRENT ENROLLMENT SITUATION: Enrollment at HBCSD has declined as of September 2018 by 128 students to 1,344 students from its pre-bond high in 2014. (Exhibit #6: current HBCSD enrollment report) According to Table R34.1 District Five-Year Enrollment Projection (2018- 2022) on page 2-423 in the EIR (Exhibit #18), enrollment is predicted to drop by an additional 84 students by September 2022 for a **total decrease of 212 students by September 2022**. 212 less students equates to about 7 to 9 surplus classrooms. The California Department of Finance projects that the birthrate in all Coastal Counties will continue to decrease through 2060. At this point there is **ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE of future increased enrollment, only continued DECREASED enrollment at HBCSD**. From 1979 to 2000 enrollment at HBCSD stayed below 1,000 students. North School campus was last used by HBCSD in 1986 for less than 300 students. (Exhibit #19: HBCSD enrollment info from 1981 to 2008.)



NOTE: Since enrollment has already dropped significantly, it is likely that HBCSD will lease the brand-new North School campus to a private school or business soon after Hermosa View School has completed its renovations if not before. **Leasing the campus will likely bring more people from outside of Hermosa Beach in cars, versus Hermosa Beach students walking or riding their bikes to campus. In addition, a private school or business may have very different business hours than a public school, such as offering night and weekend classes, which could further negatively impact traffic and parking.** HBCSD may not be inclined to dictate nor limit the amount of people and business hours of a potential private school or business in order to secure the most lucrative lease for the campus.

NOTE: The North School campus reconstruction project for 510 students is being sold to parents primarily as a swing school to be used to temporarily house students while View School is renovated. (Exhibit #20: July 2, 2019 social media 'Next Door' posting by a HBCSD parent)



NOTE: Although North School campus is being rebuilt to house 510 3rd and 4th grade students **HBCSD only has 294 3rd and 4th grade students enrolled as of September 2018**. (Exhibit #2: current HBCSD enrollment report) As is, North School is grandfathered in and is safe for public school students. North School currently has 15 regular classrooms. HBCSD only needs 11 classrooms in order to house the entire 3rd and 4th grade class.

CONCLUSIONS:

STAFF REPORT CONCLUDING STATEMENT REGARDING HBCSD ALTERNATIVES: (Page 19 of Staff Report) *"The Commission has analyzed the numerous alternatives presented by this applicant and, as explained below, finds that the proposed project, as conditioned in this staff report, is the most protective of coastal resources, while also meeting project objectives."*

COMPETING ARGUMENT TO STAFF REPORT REGARDING HBCSD ALTERNATIVES:

When all the facts are brought to light, it is obvious that the district *TEMPORARILY* exercising its contractual rights to use the Community Center/Pier Avenue School until enrollment drops below 1,266 students estimated in September 2022 – see the Sale and Purchase Agreement of Pier Avenue School MOU (Items 6 & 7 in this letter), while also renovating North School as a temporary swing school into a less-impacting maximum capacity of 350 to 400 students AND renovating and permanently expanding View School (as planned with bond funds) are the MOST protective of coastal resources, the most financially responsible options, AND the least impactful to the community.

Other issues addressed in the Staff Report with obvious and egregious misinformation provided by HBCSD hired consultants include:

Misinformation and Fabrications contained in Pam Daly's Historical Assessment of North School: (Staff Report page 26, F. Cultural Resources.) *"Based on the review of the technical reports, submitted by the applicant as part of the project EIR, the Commission concurs that the existing structures on the site do not qualify as historic..."*

Correct Information: Pam Daly's May 2016 Historical Resources Assessment Report of North School contained six obvious and inexcusable errors, such as misidentifying the architect who reconstructed North School in 1935. (Exhibits 21) The May 2016 report also contained complete fabrications of fact.

Pam Daly's final Historical Resources Assessment Report of North School for the EIR contained other inexcusable errors and out-right fabrications of fact. (Exhibit 22)

Lastly, **there is a competing historical assessment** of North School** described in an email (dated May 31, 2016) (Exhibit 23) from Debi Howell-Ardilla, senior architectural historian with SWCA and vice-chair of the CHC in South Pasadena that finds:

"... I hold a Bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley and a Masters of Historic Preservation from USC. I have 11 years of experience in historic preservation."

"In my opinion, and based on the dozens of schools I've surveyed throughout SoCal, North Elementary appears eligible for the City of Hermosa Beach Register under local criteria A... C... and D..."

...*"In terms of the California Register [of Historic Places], it appears eligible under Criteria 1, as a highly representative example of a 1930's school, as well as Criteria 3, as an outstanding example of a WPA-era Art Deco institutional building."*...

...*"Given the school's eligibility for the California Register and Hermosa Beach Register, it qualifies as a historic resource under the California Environmental Quality Act."*...

****** Residents were unable to afford the estimated \$20,000 to commission a more detailed historical assessment report of the North School campus by Ms. Debi Howell-Ardilla.

Inadequate, Non-Representative traffic report by Richard Garland's Traffic Study of North School (Garland and Associates):

North School Reconstruction Final EIR (September 2018), page 2-950 through page 2-961, Submission by Miyo Prassas; **Re: Inadequate Non-Representative North School Reconstruction EIR Traffic Data for the City of Hermosa Beach, CA**, September 26, 2018 (Exhibit 24)

Incorrect Information provided by HBCSD on the Application for Coastal Development Permit, Appendix A, page 9, Section VII. Certification, item 2.: *"I understand that the failure to provide any requested information or any misstatements submitted in support of the application shall be grounds for either refusing to accept this application, for denying the permit, for suspending or revoking a permit issued on the basis of such misrepresentations..."* Signed by HBCSD Superintendent Pat Escalante.

1. Application for Coastal Development Permit, page 3, item 7. Lot Coverage. New proposed (sq. ft.) was entered as -7,807. **The correct information should be +8,076 sq ft., for a total of 36,976 - NOT 21,093 sq ft. as written on the application.** Per Staff Report page 11, A. Project Location & Description. (Exhibit #25)
2. Application for Coastal Development Permit, page 3, item 8, b) Amount of fill: 616 cu yds. Correct amount is 1,000 cu yds per Staff Report top of page 12. (Exhibit #25)

There are more than enough examples throughout this letter of deliberate misinformation or misleading information provided by HBCSD hired attorney, consultants and HBCSD staff that should give Coastal Commission members reason to reconsider issuing a Coastal Development Permit for HBCSD's North School Reconstruction Project. The deck is stacked against residents trying to work with a corrupt and incredibly powerful school district. HBCSD has unlimited taxpayer funds to hire attorneys and consultants who have no problem lying to the public for monetary gain. HBCSD takes advantage of parents' insecurities about their children's education to benefit the district's overreaching plans. The Coastal Commission is our last line of defense in this extremely impactful and totally unnecessary North School reconstruction project. HBCSD has ALL ALONG had better options/alternatives that would sufficiently house HBCSD students AND create substantially less ongoing environmental impacts for residents and beach goers.

Sincerely,

Miyo Prassas
1753 Valley Park Avenue
Hermosa Beach, CA 90254
jwprassas@yahoo.com

exhibits attached