

**Riley, Kate**

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From: Robin Bonner [REDACTED]  
Subject: Concerns & Questions About Callanan Playground / Tobin Field / Tobin Montessori / VLUS Rebuild Project  
Date: December 9, 2019 at 2:28:47 PM EST  
To: City Council <[citycouncil@cambridgema.gov](mailto:citycouncil@cambridgema.gov)>  
Cc: "clerk@cambridgema.gov" <[clerk@cambridgema.gov](mailto:clerk@cambridgema.gov)>

To the Honorable City Council,

We the undersigned, residents of Corporal Burns Road, have several concerns, listed below, about the planning process and plans proposed for the rebuilding and expansion of the Tobin School/VLUS.

We object to the City making any final decision on the Tobin School / VLUS rebuilding and expansion until these concerns and questions can be addressed and answered.

1. The City is referring to the land as a "campus" when in fact the space is a dedicated park (the Callanan Playground and Tobin Field) with an associated public school. This labeling of the site as a "campus" is misleading. The park is a community facility, enjoyed by multiple constituencies of all ages for a wide variety of purposes. Throughout the remainder of this process we ask that the city use the correct name for the site: the Callahan Playground, Tobin Field, and Tobin/Vassal Lane Schools. This will give the public a correct understanding of the implications of the school expansion proposal.

2. What portion of the entire parcel is dedicated and zoned as Open Space and what are the restrictions for building on Open Space?

3. If the City plans to remove the land from its Open Space designation, what is the exact process for rezoning the land? Are there any state restrictions on the removal or reconfiguration of dedicated open space? If so, what is the process that is required to remove designation or to reconfigure the open space?

4. Was public money ever used to establish, renovate, and/or maintain the park/open space? If so, what are the restrictions, if any, for building on or developing the land? For instance, if any money from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was used to create/renovate/maintain the park, there are obligations to preserve the open space in perpetuity. If no LWCF money was used, was any state money used, and if so what are the obligations for preservation and/or restrictions on development?

5. We are all in support of adequate facilities for students and for promoting access to high-quality and much needed pre-school, self-contained special education and English language immersion programs. However, we are concerned about the significant increase in the number of programs and students and the associated staff. First, what was the process that led to this decision and was there any public input into the discussion around placing these programs in this location? Second, what will be the total number of staff associated with the full programmatic build out of the schools?

6. Were any models considered for building(s) higher than three floors to conserve on-the-ground open space? Were any models considered that pushed the buildings as much as possible to the parcel boundaries where the abutters are commercial/non-residential (i.e. backed against the armory, gas station, car repair/sales shop)?

7. We are concerned about retaining and enhancing safe pedestrian access to Fresh Pond from the Concord Avenue neighborhoods. In the current scenarios, it appears that this connector becomes an alley-way.

8. Were any scenarios considered to use the rooftop as play space or for other outdoor uses? We understand the City's laudable desire to have a net zero building; however, there are other mechanisms to create an offset, such as exploring the possibility of erecting solar panels at the Self Storage site (approximately three acres of land) and/or the roof of the Armory?

9. Because of the land's past history, is there any requirement to undertake a formal environmental assessment (i.e., MEPA review) of any of the proposed actions to determine impacts and alternatives? If the proposed project does not meet state thresholds for review, is there a similar formal city review process that includes public input and comment?

Sincerely,

Eileen Woodford, [REDACTED]

Robin Bonner, [REDACTED]

Suzanne Hopkins, [REDACTED]

Wendy Wood, [REDACTED]

Carole Bundy, [REDACTED]

Alice Heller, [REDACTED]

Larry Childs, [REDACTED]

Lisa Camacho, [REDACTED]

Jessie English, [REDACTED]

Ang Thilatham, [REDACTED]

Tyler Giannini, [REDACTED]

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