Dear Planning Commissioners and City Planning Staff.

The purpose of my letter is to share my concerns regarding the site that has been chosen by the School Board for the city's elementary school. I believe there will likely be significant second order costs the city will incur in the areas of transportation, highway construction, storm water management and water and sewage.

A thousand children will have to be transported daily to the new school by bus or their parent's vehicle. If we assume a third of the children are taken to school by their parents, we will need to purchase 15-20 new school buses at a cost of over one million dollars, plus the ongoing annual fleet expenses for their operation.

15-20 school buses and over 300 cars approaching the new school in the morning and afternoon will create major queuing issues as this traffic attempts to turn left from 33 on to Garbers Church Road and then, turn left again as they enter the school off of Garbers Church Road. My guess is this will become so problematical for the busses that they will be rerouted by way of Erickson so they can eliminate the left turn off of Garbers Church Road. That said, I think you will need to plan on extending the existing turn lane on 33 to accommodate the parents and school staff vehicles and adding a new turn lane on Garbers Church Road for the buses. I also believe there will need to be law enforcement personnel available at the 33/Garbers Church Road stop light in the morning and afternoon to direct traffic, because the traffic congestion to and from the school will be overwhelming due to the proximity of the high school to the elementary school.

Regarding storm water management, this property will have limited landscaping because the available space will be needed for the building, roads entering and exiting the facility, adequate parking for teachers, staff and visitors and space for foodservice delivery trucks and garbage trucks. In addition, the turning radius engineered will need to address school buses, fire trucks, rescue vehicles, foodservice delivery trucks and garbage trucks. Bottom line, there will be a significant amount of space devoted to hard surfaces and, it will be important to

understand the implications this will have on storm water management and what will be the cost to engineer a solution.

Finally, I would encourage you to have staff determine if there will be sufficient water pressure available to meet the needs of 1000 children, teachers and staff and meet the regulations for fire suppression in a multi-story building. It would not surprise me if you learn that a pump station will need to be built to address the additional demands of this new facility.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my concerns.

Best regards,

George Pace

503 Fairway Drive

Harrisonburg, VA 22802

GARBERS CHURCH ROAD PROPOSED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE OF 10 ACRES HAS MANY SERIOUS PROBLEMS

THIS SITE WAS SELECTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD <u>WITHOUT</u> INPUT FROM OTHER CITY DEPARTMENTS AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES AND WITHOUT PROPERLY STUDYING OTHER AVAILABLE SITES.

INITIALLY THE SCHOOL BOARD WAS UNDER THE UNDERSTANDING (ERRONEOUSLY) THAT CITY COUNCIL WAS REQUIRING THAT ANY NEW SCHOOL HAD TO BE BUILT ON ALREADY OWNED CITY LAND.

AN URGENCY TO BUILD A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXISTS BECAUSE THE CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ARE ALREADY USING 15 CLASSROOMS TO PROVIDE FREE PRE-K SERVICES TO OVER 250 CHILDREN.

A "RUSHED" DECISION TO SELECT A SCHOOL SITE WITH ONLY 10 ACRES (LESS THAN 8 ACRES OF USABLE AREA) HAS RESULTED IN A CHOICE THAT RAISES VERY SERIOUS CONCERNS!

URGENCY TO FIND A SITE WOULD NOT EXIST IF OTHER OPTIONS WOULD BE EXPLORED, INCLUDING USE OF THE LUCY SIMMS SCHOOL BUILDING AND A NUMBER OF LOCAL CHURCHES WHICH HAVE AVAILABLE SPACE AND ARE CONVENIENTLY LOCATED NEAR THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, EXPLORER MUSEUM, DOWNTOWN THEATER, COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER, AND THE NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE NEEDY PRE-K STUDENTS LIVE

PLEASE ATTEND THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015, 7:00 P.M., AT THE CITY MUNICIPAL BUILDING TO EXPRESS YOUR CONCERNS

<u>STATE GUIDELINES FOR THE SIZE OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SITE:</u>

Per the latest (September, 2013) Virginia Department of Education - Guidelines for School Facilities in Virginia Public Schools (Section 3.2 - Size of New School):

Minimum school size is Basic Acres of 4 + 1 Acre per 100 Pupils in ultimate enrollment. Therefore, minimum usable site for a school to house 750 students would be 4 + (1*7.5) = 11.5 Acres "Usable site" means that portion of the site that can be developed without excessive cost for school use and may be used for future additions, outdoor instruction, physical education, outdoor circulation, parking, bus loading, and where necessary, sewage disposal or treatment plants. *The site on Garbers Church Road does meet the minimum standards.*

Other noted considerations in the Guidelines under Section 3.2 that the site on Garbers Church Road would not clearly meet are:

- Adequate site acreage to meet needs of outdoor physical education programs.
- Additional considerations would be the shape of the site, topography, and soil conditions.
- Where possible, locate new schools in attendance areas that will promote students to walk or ride bicycles safely to school.
- When developing a new school site or altering an existing site, the design should include features that encourage pedestrian or bicycle access to and from the school site.
- While planning a new school, it is recommended that consideration be given to provide for future expansion and modifications.

<u>Comment</u>: While the propose site is 10 acres, because of the 25' elevation change from front to back of the parcel, ***<u>the actual usable space will be less than 8 acres</u>***. ***THIS SITE IS JUST NOT ACCEPTABLE.***

<u>PARENTS BEWARE:</u>

- School redistricting will require many students living close to Keister and/or Waterman to relocate to the Garber's Church Road school.
- The number of students riding a bus to school will increase and the distance students will travel on the bus will increase.
- Traffic backup at corner of West Market Street wanting to turn left onto Garbers Church Road in the morning will be frustrating. Likewise, turning left from Garbers Church Road into the school site would be difficult.
- Unlike Keister, Waterman, and Stone Springs, this site does not fit the "model" of being a neighborhood school. Thereby promoting walking and biking.
- The only appropriately sized activity fields will be on the high school fields across the highly traveled Garbers Church Road and this raises serious safety concerns.
- Traffic safety concerns also exist due to over 1600 students going to high school and 750 students going to "new site", along with teachers and staff (in addition to golfers and staff going into Heritage Oaks Golf Course) within a very short distance of each other.
- Even heavier traffic volume on Garbers Church Road is expected in the future if the County's planned upgrades to Switchboard Road (Garbers Church Road turns into Switchboard Road at Market Street) are made for a connector to Route 42N.

<u>BIKERS & WALKERS BEWARE:</u>

- Unlike other available sites, this "new site" will not encourage biking and/or walking to/from school. Other available sites tie directly into existing or planned biking trails.

TAX PAYERS BEWARE:

- Due to 25+ foot elevation changes on the site and very rocky conditions of the "new site", excavation costs are likely to be as high as $3,000,000.
- Costs to get students safely across Garbers Church Road to access outdoor recreational space may even include building a very expensive tunnel or elevated crosswalk.
- Site requires a 2 or 3 story school, which is more expensive to build than a single story school building.
- Cost of installing a very expensive at least 14 story high (150') safety net required next to driving range. Concrete poles must be sunk at least 30' into the ground in order to support the net.
- Costs of busing elementary students to the western edge of the City (every added bus costs $200,000, plus operating costs)
- Adverse impact on City Bond Rating due to additional costs, which will increase all future borrowing costs.
- A traffic impact study has yet to be done. Expanding the turn lane at corner of West Market St. and Garbers Church Road to accommodate heavy traffic will be expensive. Additional traffic lights are likely to be necessary.
- $48,000,000 of proposed immediate school construction costs has been requested ($33,000,000 for elementary and $10,000 for Pre-K) with other schools soon to follow.
- Cost of active duty police officer to direct traffic at West Market St and Garbers Church Road due to number of students, teachers, and staff trying to get to both the high school and elementary school at same time work traffic is heading into town.
- Using site for school will permanently prevent future redesign of the driving range. A redesign is needed in the future to increase range revenues at Heritage Oaks.
- Unlike planning that allowed later expansion of Keister and Waterman (and other City schools), the small size of the site prevents any future expansion of any school built on the site.
- Real estate taxes are likely to increase by 15% due to unnecessary school construction costs that are a result of the rushed decision.

FIRST TEE PARTICIPANTS (AGES 5-18) BEWARE:

- Many in the community donated cash, construction materials and services, totaling close to $500,000 in order to design, build, and equip The First Tee of Harrisonburg/Rotary Learning Center (which was given to the City debt free). Taking away the only adjacent land that can be used for expanded First Tee activities is a slap in the fact to this outstanding effort.
- First Tee representatives initiated the idea to acquire the 10 acres next to the driving range in order for the City to avoid having to install a very tall and expensive safety net and to provide for the future expansion of The First Tee Learning Center and related programs. In fact, First Tee representatives negotiated options with two different owners to acquire the property that was turned over to the City. *Note*: Negotiations included convincing a homeowner to move his house (which he had recently renovated) from his land so that only the land would be purchased, and also convincing an investor (who had just bought the remaining 3 of the 10 acres on which to build townhouses) to sell to us for only his investment cost, plus out-of-pocket expenses.
- Donors supporting Heritage Oaks and The First Tee gave $43,000 to the City to provide "seed" money to buy this site.
- Number of youth able to benefit from the First Tee program will be curtailed without this land.
- First Tee has had plans for at least 10 years to access this land for future expansion of The First Tee Program.
- First Tee has already made contact to obtain free design work, as well as grant funds, to develop the land as a low budget a short-game golf area similar to the very popular "Sandy Bottoms" course in Bridgewater for use by: (i) First Tee participants, (ii) elderly golfers, and (iii) beginning golfers.
- First Tee representatives have already met with Jamie Turner of Forecast Golf, a nationally-known driving range consultant, and obtained suggested plans that would improve driving range access for golfers and First Tee participants alike, which in turn (based on studies by Forecast Golf) would significantly improve the profits of the driving range.
- Representatives of The First Tee have met personally with PGA professional Jack Nicklaus and Jack Nicklaus, Jr., concerning development of the 10 acre site and received an offer from the Nicklaus' design company to donate design services.

HERITAGE OAKS BEWARE:

- The inability to redesign the driving range and to create a beginning golfer short-game area by retaining the use of the 10 acre parcel will take away the potential to increase the number of local residents who will play golf at Heritage Oaks.
- With 750 elementary-aged youth next door, safety issues will arise with respect to children crossing the golf course.

FINALLY, WE ENCOURAGE OUR CITY REPRESENTATIVES TO INVOLVE ALL INTERESTED PARTIES TO HAVE "A SEAT AT THE TABLE" IN DISCUSSING WHERE SCHOOLS WILL BE LOCATED. IN THE FUTURE, THIS SHOULD HAPPEN BEFORE THE SCHOOL BOARD HAS INVESTED A LARGE AMOUNT OF TIME AND MONEY IN THE MATTER, AND BEFORE THE SCHOOL BOARD BECOMES RESISTAN TO CONSIDER OTHER OPTIONS.

THE INPUT OF THE CITY PLANNING STAFF, THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION, CITY TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT, AND CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT, ETC., SHOULD BE OBTAINED AT THE OUTSET OF ANY DISCUSSIONS.

IN ADDITION, ANY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS, BOYS & GIRLS CLUB, THE FIRST TEE PROGRAM, EXPLORE MORE DISCOVERY MUSEUM, MASSANUTTEN REGIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY, ETC., SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO HAVE REPRESENTATIVES TO HAVE "A SEAT AT THE TABLE", ESPECIALLY IF THEIR CURRENT PROGRAMS OR FUTURE PLANS ARE POTENTIALLY IMPACTED BY ANY DECISIONS MADE BY THE SCHOOL BOARD.

FINALLY, PARENTS, PTAS, TEACHERS, COACHES, AND PAST SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS WITH EXPERIENCE IN SITE SELECTION, SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION, AND SCHOOL REDISTRICTING SHOULD BE INVOLVED EARLY ON WITH RESPECT TO ANY DISCUSSIONS SO THAT THEIR VIEWS CAN BE HEARD BEFORE THEIR VIEWS POSSIBLY "BECOME" CONTRARY TO THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE SCHOOL BOARD.

IN THE PAST, CURRENT CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, KAI DEGNER, HAS SPEARHEADED A NUMBER OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS TO DISCUSS VARIOUS COMMUNITY ISSUES, THIS SAME TYPE OF FORMAT WOULD BE VERY BENEFICIAL TO ALL.

BETTER ALTERNATIVE SITES AVAILABLE

A SITE RANGING FROM 10 TO 20 ACRES (OR MORE) IS AVAILABLE FOR THE CITY TO PURCHASE FOR ABOUT $50,000 AN ACRE, AND WOULD ADD ONLY $500,000 TO $1,000,000 TO A $35-$40 MILLION DOLLAR PROJECT. THIS SITE IS ADJACENT TO THE WESTERN EDGE OF HILLANDALE PARK; THEREFORE, IT TIES IMMEDIATELY INTO THE BIKING AND WALKING TRAILS THAT BEGIN AT WESTOVER PARK. THIS SITE PROVIDES MULIPTLE STREET ACCES POINTS, IS FLATTER, CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HILLANDALE PARK FOR SCHOOL RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, AND PROVIDES THE IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR FUTURE EXPANSION AND PREVENTS HAVING TO BUILD A 3-STORY SCHOOL.

THERE IS ALSO LAND THAT IS ALREADY OWNED BY THE CITY CONTAINING OVER 100 ACRES AT RAMBLEWOOD PROPERTY ON THE SOUTHERN END OF THE CITY THAT CAN BE REACHED BY OFFROAD BIKING AND WALKING TRAILS. THIS SITE PROVIDES A LOCATION WHICH IS NEAR THE GROWTH AREAS OF THE CITY.

FINALLY, LUCY SIMMS IS LOCATED IN THE AREA NEAR WHERE MANY OF THE CHILDREN LIVE THAT ATTEND THE PRE-K PROGRAM. INSTEAD OF SPENDING $35-$40 MILLION DOLLARS NOW ON A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, LUCY SIMMS CAN BE REDESIGNEDAT A MUCH LOWER COST TO ACCOMMODATE ALL OF THE EXISTING PRE-K CHILDREN. THIS LOCATION WOULD ALSO ELIMINATE THE LONG BUS RIDES FOR MANY OF THE CHILDREN.

Compiled from information provided by five (5) former School Board Members, former Planning Commission Members, local builders, former City Council Members, local engineers, former Director of Parks and Recreation Department, and meetings with various City Officials.

Respectfully, Michael L. Layman
Past Member of the Department of Parks and Recreation Commission, Chairman for 8 years
Past Member of the Heritage Oaks Advisory Board, Chairman for 3 years
Past Member of The First Tee Board, Chairman for 10 years
Past Member of the Harrisonburg Educational Foundation
Resident of the City of Harrisonburg for over 60 years

April 3, 2015

To: The First Tee of Harrisonburg

Subject: Issues related to adjacent development

Pursuant to a recent conversation with Mr. Mike Layman regarding proposed development on property adjacent to the right side of the existing driving range and First Tee facility, there are several issues that should be considered in making a decision. The issues basically fall into two categories: Safety and Expense/Cost. The issues are discussed below.

Safety

One of the primary concerns of all golf range operators is ball containment. The obvious interest in ball containment is to prevent injury and damage along the adjacent property, and thus reduce potential liability associated with errant golf balls leaving the property. A secondary interest is reducing ball loss and reducing operating expenses. When sufficient land is unavailable along the boundaries of the property to provide a safe buffer, then barrier netting is the common solution.

Generally, the right side of a driving range is most susceptible to balls leaving the property. This is because most golfers are right-handed and the most common golf swing flaw results in a "slice," a ball flight that moves from left to right. In addition, the slice also puts spin on the ball resulting in it flying higher, as opposed to a "hook" (right to left ball flight) with a lower ball flight due to some topspin. Consequently, it is common to see taller barrier netting along the right side of a driving range than the netting along the left side.

One of the first questions golf range developers ask is: "How high does my netting need to be?" Unfortunately, there is no simple answer. The netting heights that most range developers have installed represents a compromise of installation expense and theh assumption of risk exposure/liability.

When ball containment for safety reasons (as opposed to the objective of reducing ball loss and ease of ball picking) is the issue, barrier netting typically goes as high as 100'-

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125'. I have personal experience with netting at 125' (above ground height). We found that even at that height the netting did not stop 100% of the balls from leaving the property. Some players are capable of hitting well above that height. And, we found that some recreational customers (usually younger males) would actually aim to try and clear the fencing, a challenge of sorts like hitting a home run. This required vigilant policing of the tee line by the range staff.

Installing netting above 125' is quite uncommon. I have observed two netting installations that needed to move to an extreme netting solution. One was in an urban setting (downtown San Diego), and the other at a community college which experienced a liability problem due to balls leaving the property. These facilities actually installed a netting top, resulting in a fully enclosed driving range. This is an expensive solution, and still it cannot guarantee no balls will leave the property. Balls can still escape through holes in the netting the system that will eventually, naturally occur.

Netting is a fabric, usually artificial fibers like nylon and polypropylene. They are exposed to the elements 365 days of the year. Therefore, they deteriorate due to exposure to sun, wind, and ice, and snow. Depending on the severity of weather conditions, the netting will eventually need to be replaced (Life span approx. 7-12 years depending on quality and conditions), as well as repaired when tears occur in the interim.

Therefore, netting suppliers/installers do not guarantee that balls will never leave the property. All range developers assume a certain level of risk or exposure and try to minimize the risk while balancing that risk with expense.

Expense/Cost

There are many variables that drive the cost of barrier netting. The most common heights range between 35'-75'. At these heights, wooden poles (like telephone poles) can be used and are economical. When installations go above 75' the cost tends to increase exponentially, as a higher grade of equipment (cranes and lifts) are required and it takes more time. In addition, above 75' metal poles are typically used in order to endure the strains of the winds at 75'+ above the ground; this adds to the expense.

Another unpredictable cost factor related to netting installation is that of pole depth, below ground. That taller the netting, the deeper the holes must be drilled to support the height. Generally, the depth of the holes can vary from 25%-35% of the above ground height. So, for example, an above ground height of 120' might require holes to be drilled 30'- 42' deep. Final pole heights and on-site soil conditions will determine hole depths.

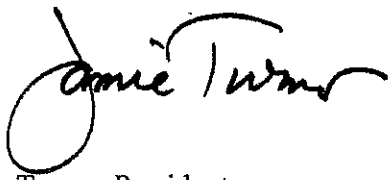
Further adding to the unpredictability of final installation costs is the soil condition. Issues such as water tables, rock, sand, organic waste, etc. can impact the final depth or use of alternative solutions (e.g., metal sleeves, concrete) to deal with the unknowns of drilling below ground.

As mentioned previously, the netting material will tear due to the weather conditions. Large events, such as hurricanes and ice storms, can cause significant damage.

Depending on insurance coverage, repairs may be covered. However, as the netting ages and deteriorates, smaller isolated tears will occur and must be repaired as quickly as possible to prevent balls from escaping. The cost of netting maintenance should be budgeted in annual expense projections/plans. Eventually, the entire netting fabric (not the poles or support wires) will need to be replaced. Again, typical life expectancy for the fabric can be approximately 7-12 years depending on weather conditions and the quality of the fabric.

The issues of Safety and Expense/Cost discussed above are generalizations based upon my observations and experience of being the golf range business since 1993. Although, I do have some familiarity with the First Tee site in Harrisonburg. All sites are unique and need to be evaluated accordingly before proceeding, keeping in mind the potential issues presented above. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me, by phone (cell: 804-363-5660) or email (jamie@forecastgolf.com).

Regards.



James E. Turner, President