

July 23, 2009

Dear 7/11 Committee Members,

The area east of the 5 Freeway where most of the DMUSD schools are located is far more vibrant than the same area west of the same freeway. It was only a few short years ago that school boundaries were re-drawn by DMUSD as between the Ashley Falls and Sycamore Ridge Schools on account of growth in the student population. My daughter had numerous friends and classmates that were forced to move to Sycamore Ridge because they lived in the Seabreeze Farms development. I would think that at least 150-200 students left Ashley Falls for that reason. Our daughter continued at Ashley Falls. As set forth below, changing the character of Ashley Falls makes no practical sense at various levels since there are better alternatives that best serve the student population to whom the DMUSD Board has its primary allegiance.

Del Mar Hills School is the oldest of all schools in the DMUSD system, which I understand was constructed in or about 1965. Del Mar Heights School is the second oldest school in the DMUSD system, constructed sometime in or about 1975. The attached chart taken from a well-known San Diego Union Tribune article shows that Del Mar Hills' enrollment is projected to decline in 10 years to about 150 students below capacity. The same chart shows that Del Mar Heights is projected to grow in 10 years but would still be about 100 students under capacity. It is also my understanding that both Del Mar Hills and Del Mar Heights may be overflow schools when space is unavailable for DMUSD schools east of the freeway. Ashley Falls was constructed in or about 1998.

However, the same chart shows that Sycamore Ridge is projected to experience tremendous growth of 223% in 10 years and double in its maximum capacity of 712, i.e., have a student population of 1,474 students! The nearest school to Sycamore Ridge remains Ashley Falls where excess students could easily attend with or with undoing the boundaries re-drawn by the Board only a few years ago. Thus, it would make no sense to close Ashley Falls and would be a financial blunder for purposes of mid to long-term planning.

Pardee Home Builders has been an integral part of the past, present and future growth of Carmel Valley. Closing Ashley Falls would leave a gaping hole in the community which I would not be surprised Pardee could find concerning as to its future plans, needs for the community and desired perceptions of stability.

Regardless of where the DMUSD Board members reside, they are entrusted to first serve the needs of the students that attend its schools. Somewhere I have seen that

someone proposed that age of the schools does not matter because they are either remodeled, e.g., Del Mar Hills, or are newer schools, i.e., those east of the freeway like Ashley Falls. This argument frankly makes little sense. Given (a) the frequency that bond measures are submitted for voter approval throughout California to build new schools to replace those of similar age as Del Mar Hills, and (b) that the students are to come first, it would be unreasonable for the Board to relocate its district office, maintenance and operations to a new facility like Ashley Falls but relegate students to attend the aging Del Mar Hills. I have been to Del Mar Hills many times for our daughter's attendance at summer camps, and we have practiced sports at its poorly maintained fields. If Del Mar Hills was remodeled, it is barely noticeable and its condition cannot be compared to that of Ashley Falls. Del Mar Hills still remains the oldest school in the DMUSD system, and lies directly next to the freeway with associated likely elevated levels of vehicle exhaust emissions and noise.

In sum, the Board should relocate DMUSD's district office, maintenance and operations to Del Mar Hills, and allow Ashley Falls to continue undisturbed in its character as one of the best performing schools in San Diego County.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.



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Attachment: 2-page chart

School	Capacity	Enrollment		Projected Change
		2009	2018 ¹	
Ashley Falls	677	512	310	-39%
Carmel Del Mar	573	460	478	+4%
Del Mar Heights	593	445	497	+12%
Del Mar Hills	449	342	298	-13%
Ocean Air	732	638	862	+35%
Sage Canyon	818	733	666	-9%
Sycamore Ridge	712	456	1474 ²	+223%
Torrey Hills	888	654	804	+23%
Total	5442	4240	5389	+27%

1. Projected

2. Assumes 3,000 new homes in Pacific Highlands Ranch, which faces several obstacles and could be a decade away.

Source: Del Mar Union School District. Table re-created from Union Tribune.