

Hudson City School District Statement on Potential Use of the Former Charles Williams School Property

HUDSON, NY (September 25, 2023) – News stories and social media posts have mentioned the City of Hudson’s intent in using vacant land for affordable housing. The property being considered is a portion of the former Charles S. Williams Memorial School. The Hudson City School District Board of Education would like the community to be updated about the full story and latest developments.

In late August, the Board of Education’s attorney notified the Board about the City’s intent to use this land for affordable housing. The Board immediately instructed its attorney to learn more about the situation and investigate the ownership and history of the property.

Land records showed that the City of Hudson owns the land, which was given to the City by the School District in 1983. That transaction included a restriction that the land be used for “park and recreational purposes only” – and that any other use would return ownership of the property to the School District. The land, while not an official park, has been used by the community for informal recreation. Softball fields once on the property no longer exist.

The Hudson City School District Board of Education certainly agrees that the City of Hudson needs additional housing. The Board has told the City Administration that it would welcome an official outline of the City’s plans for the land, as well as an official request to remove or change the “park and recreational purposes only” restriction. To date, however, the City has not provided an outline or issued that official request.

These details are required so the Board of Education can determine what legal steps are needed for the property to be considered for other uses, including housing. The Board of Education cannot simply “OK” a City request, and the Board and/or the City cannot simply withdraw or ignore the “park and recreational purposes” clause. That restriction in the 1983 deed must be legally addressed before a housing plan can move forward.

Another fact to consider is that the New York State Constitution forbids public entities from giving gifts unless there is a public benefit. In this case, the City plans to sell the property to a developer, The Kearney Group, which would build the housing. Such a sale to a developer does not qualify as a public benefit, so the land must be sold for a fair market price.

Other issues that would require attention:

- The land is in a flood zone, meaning that there is a high risk of flooding during heavy rain.
- What costs would the School District potentially have if families move into the additional housing and increase enrollment in our schools?

The Board of Education looks forward to communicating with the City and is committed to weighing options in the best interests of the community and the children of the City of Hudson.



Thank you for considering this vital information. Updates will be provided as warranted.

Sincerely,

The Hudson City School District Board of Education

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