

September 19, 2022

To: Elm Grove Village Trustees

From: Barry Wightman

The School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) will not be pleased. Their historic campus is in danger of being abandoned by Elm Grove. And I am not pleased.

After approving in March 2022 what is both a visionary and prudent proposed redevelopment plan of the now vacant landmark campus in Elm Grove, the School Sisters entrusted the Village of Elm Grove and the well-known regional developer Mandel to bring the plan to fruition. That project, a long-term win for Elm Grove and for the legacy of the School Sisters, is in serious jeopardy, a victim of irresponsible political brinkmanship by Village Trustees Jennifer Stuckert, Jim Koleski, Kristina Sayas, and John Schindler.

Opponents of the redevelopment plan, led by Trustee Jennifer Stuckert, are now taking a political victory lap feeding off misinformation and ignorance, leaving the Village and its taxpayers holding the bag. Trustee Stuckert, who along with Trustees Koleski, Sayas and Schindler have voted to seek outside legal counsel to review and try to overturn the entire process. They are convinced that the Board and the agreement is and has long been riddled with skullduggery. *"We just want to make sure,"* says Trustee Stuckert.

The more than two-year painstaking process to produce the plan of course involved much legal counsel, detailed financial, construction, and engineering consultants to evaluate *every* aspect of the project. It's all *public information, visible and available*. It's what good government does. It's what our village government has always done. Have you read it? It's right there.

But wait, there's more. A request for proposal to review Elm Grove's process went out in July to nine law firms of various sizes and breadth. Eight decided there was no basis for such a review. Clearly there is not much appetite for such blatantly political litigation. One small firm, a known opponent of similar civic projects did respond – his reply outlined his plan to attack the already approved project. And his response was late.

Speaking at the August 22nd public meeting of the Trustees, in a failed attempt to soothe the packed Board Room, Trustee Stuckert said, *"We just want to make sure."* Clearly surprised to face well-spoken and knowledgeable opposition, Ms. Stuckert heard comments from at least twelve opponents of her demand for review. The message to her was – stop this dangerous nonsense now.

But Ms. Stuckert won't stop. Another request for legal representation has been issued, a lawyer RFP do-over.

The Village of Elm Grove, as a result, now faces long-term financial disaster. We are approaching breach of contract. We could end up on the hook for many tens of millions in damages, folks. If Elm Grove, goaded by Ms. Stuckert, goes further down this dark path

breaching our duty of civic good faith and fair dealing, we will be in danger of ruinous permanent damage, both financial and reputational. Perhaps so far as our being driven into the arms of Brookfield, the end of Elm Grove as we know it. No, really.

The next Village Board meeting is September 26th. Opponents of this craziness will be there. I say, "*We just want to make sure...this goes no further.* That sanity will prevail."

Do the right thing.

The School Sisters will be pleased.

Sincerely,

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