

# City of Grosse Pointe Park

15115 EAST JEFFERSON AVENUE • GROSSE POINTE PARK, MICHIGAN 48230 • PHONE: 822-6200

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

May 6, 2019

Board of Education:

This letter is to express my views on current plans for reconfiguration of the Grosse Pointe Public School System. After considerable contact with residents, discussion with President Summerfield and Superintendent Niehaus, analysis of the available data, and discussion with the City of Grosse Pointe Park administration, it is my view as Mayor that no schools should be closed at this time.

I agree that there is a financial challenge faced by the district, but I do not agree that it is a crisis that justifies the community trauma and long-range negative impact on all of the cities in the district that I believe is occurring and will intensify. My strong counsel is to take less disruptive short-term action to manage the operating budget while taking a step back on the reconfiguration process. Actions such as selling 389 St. Clair, reconsidering closing Barnes while relocating and expanding programs, and willingness to utilize the district's substantial operating fund surplus could be parts of a short-term financial solution. Closing any elementary school at a savings of approximately six-tenths of one percent of the operating budget while moving fifth graders to middle school and redrawing numerous elementary school boundaries is simply not justifiable in our community. Further, the elementary school population is projected to be essentially flat over the next several years. It also has the unfortunate effect of sowing divisiveness between neighborhoods.

With a slowing of the current process the Board would have the opportunity to learn the direction of State funding under our new governor, consider ways such as early childhood programs to incent families to come to the district, evaluate demographic trends and preferences of the many young professionals currently living in Detroit urban environments, and re-evaluate potentially less disruptive changes which leave in place our walkable neighborhood elementary schools (an essential part of the community identity).

Some of the topics that I believe the Board would have the time to re-evaluate include educational impact of grade configurations (e.g. K-4, K-5, K-6), impact of early childhood program expansion on future enrollment, and other revenue generating activities that serve the community such as fifth year high school and adult education. Reconsidering the relative impact of closing elementary schools compared to a middle school could also be examined in greater depth.

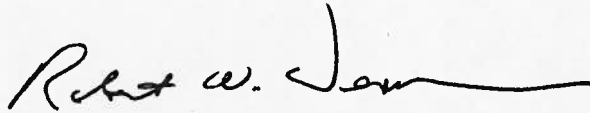


If the Board does elect to proceed on the current path, I know that you have become familiar with many, many concerns of our residents and city officials. Some of these that have come to my attention are:

- Safety of the children especially when crossing either I-94 or Jefferson Ave.
- Educational impact of K-4 vs. K-5 vs. K-6
- Building disposition and impact on a neighborhood, including green space
- Decline of property values – some have indicated up to 9% in affected neighborhoods
- Attractiveness of a neighborhood for young families reducing property values and reducing pupil counts
- Stressing currently successful, diverse, but sensitive neighborhoods
- Cost burden on municipalities of coping with some of the above factors

I do appreciate the considerable effort that has been applied by the Board of Education, school administration and the volunteers of the Blue Ribbon Committee. I believe that all are acting in good faith trying to lead our schools to long term success and excellence. The Board, much like municipal elected officials, work on a volunteer basis out of love for their community. This is a very difficult and complex topic, and I believe, one that merits slowing of the process and careful consideration of what has been learned in the past several weeks.

Thank you for your hard work and consideration.



Robert W. Denner  
Mayor, Grosse Pointe Park

cc:  
Superintendent Gary Niehaus  
Grosse Pointe Park City Council  
Dale Krajniak

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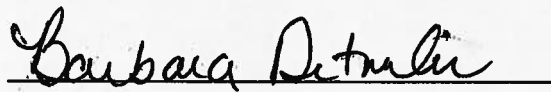
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May 13, 2019

In the preamble to the Charter of the City of Grosse Pointe Park it is stated that " In ordaining and establishing this charter we do thereby declare that this community is, and always has been, predominately a residential area and we do thereby counsel all officials of the city to discharge their official duties in such a manner as to protect and further such residential character of the community." In as much as walkable neighborhood schools are an essential component of our community, we, the undersigned elected officials of Grosse Pointe Park wish to express our agreement with and complete support for Mayor Robert Denner's correspondence submitted to the Board of Education and the Superintendent of the Grosse Pointe Public School System on May 6, 2019.

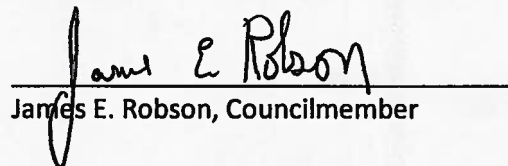
  
Daniel E. Clark, Mayor Pro-tem

  
John E. Chouinard, Councilmember

  
Barbara Detwiler, Councilmember

  
Daniel C. Grano, Councilmember

  
Lauri A. Read, Councilmember

  
James E. Robson, Councilmember

