

RIVERSIDE LOCAL SCHOOLS

Achieving Excellence

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The District evaluated many sites: some that were for sale and many that were not including the existing High School site, Swagelok, Van Pelt, Concord Cliffs, Chaffee Farm, Osborne, Concord Airport and countless others through the Lake County GIS System. Part of the District's analysis is again statutorily driven. Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.48 requires the District to: "provide for the free education of the youth of school age within the district under its jurisdiction, at such places as will be most convenient for the attendance of the greatest number thereof." While we can argue that Zoning Resolution Section 13.10 is in conflict with the statute, we have attempted to harmonize the two. Generally speaking, we were looking for property that was consistent with your zoning resolution provision 13.10, generally level (to reduce costs of cut and fill or soil import or export) and centrally located for the student population (as required by Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.48) that was to be served by the School and a sufficient distance from the other remaining elementary schools. None of these properties met the mark or were priced too high. We ultimately purchased the "Stearns" property on State Route 608 which was approximately 9.85 acres in March, 2017 and we believe met all of the statutory and zoning requirements. The District, desiring to provide for the long term, purchased five contiguous acres from Little Mountain Homes in June, 2017.

We began our engagement with utilities and governments having jurisdiction over the project as early as August, 1, 2016 when the Superintendent of Schools, Jim Kalis, sent an email to Bruce Bullard then Zoning Department Director/Zoning Inspector regarding properties under consideration. Mr. Bullard responded on the same day stating that the property dimensions "all meet the basic criteria for Zoning. See below for the Conditional Use requirements ..." He then copied Planning and Zoning Resolution Section 13.10.

Mr. Kalis sent an email to each of you, Kathy Mitchell, the Township Administrator and Heather Freeman, your Planning and Zoning Director in February, 2017. Ms. Freeman responded the next day on February 16, 2017 with her offer to assist the District with the Stearns property and provided a copy of Planning and Zoning Resolution Section 13.10. Shortly thereafter our architects and Ms. Freeman organized a kick-off meeting to discuss the zoning requirements, utilities and related issues. At no time did anyone from the Township express any concerns regarding the site. In fact, Michael Myers, the District's Architect, asked if anyone knew of any issues with the site and there was no affirmative response. The Township and District informally discussed other sites at times but no concern was expressed about the site chosen and no formal offer of an alternative site has been made.

In your letter, you represent that the School District was repeatedly encouraged to pursue other sites. When there were suggestions for other sites, they were considered. We are not aware of any written correspondence from the Township advising that the property on State Route 608 was unacceptable. We did receive some correspondence from some of the neighbors stating their opposition but no one attending our meeting and spoke against the school site.