

4/29/22

School Board members:

I'd like to raise concern about the possibility of Neah-Kah-Nie School District constructing employee housing. Being a local business owner, I am acutely aware of the issue of workforce housing in our area. Our business has also considered the prospect of investing in worker housing, so I'm not against the idea completely. I am concerned, however, about the price tag as proposed.

As a member of the budget committee, I see how fast millions of dollars can be spent. I'm not against capital improvements, and I understand the idea of investing in those improvements now so that we don't have to later if timber funding goes down. At the budget committee meeting, I voted to against removing the \$1Million line item from the budget. The district can currently "afford" it, even if it leaves us a little tight on our ending balance, and I perceive that my role in the budget committee requires that I make that decision based solely on the accounting side of things. I did not feel it was the place to voice my concerns about the project details. Perhaps I should have spoken up as a concerned citizen during public comment that night, but a big concern of mine was preventing the school board from moving forward on its project because we, as budget committee members, wrapped it up in red tape and prevented them from making their timelines.

As has been mentioned by several of the budget committee members, I feel that the school board basically wants the budget committee to rubber stamp their budget. I appreciate all the work that Mark and the school board put into this budget, but I don't think the budget committee is left with very good options for amending the budget, especially if the proposed change is a large one. As much as I don't like the idea of more meetings, I think perhaps the timeline on the budget committee meeting should be reconsidered, with the addition of a second follow-up meeting, to give the members more time to consider and discuss large proposed changes.

I would have liked to discuss that while the idea for workforce housing could prove to be helpful to the school district, a \$1M duplex was not (in my mind) a sound use of that amount of money. It was brought up that it wasn't expected that the bid would come in that high, but they were leaving themselves extra room just in case. I would argue that a lower price tag that is closer to what is actually being considered, with a contingency line item for an extra \$200,000 would be a better idea. It would force the board to consider more carefully what they are getting for their money with this project.

I would also have liked to discuss the idea that with two lots and \$1Million, the school board should consider something with more valuable returns than a duplex. Perhaps a 4plex or more. While two teachers is better than zero, in the large picture, it's a (million dollar) drop in the bucket. If a housing investment could provide small residences for 6-8 teachers or more, that would be a better start and I think it would get more community support for the large price tag.

Thank you for your careful consideration going forward with this project. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions on my testimony.

Respectfully,

Tamara Mautner