



SUFFOLK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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June 6, 2024

The Honorable Members of the
Suffolk City School Board

Dear Chair Jenkins, Vice-Chair Howell and Board Members:
Dr. Brooks-Buck, Dr. Brittingham, Byrum, Slingluff and Riddick;

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding the plan to rezone certain elementary schools that has been reviewed by the Department of Justice (DOJ).

As you are aware, Suffolk Public Schools is currently subject to court ordered desegregation that has been in effect since 1971. The school division is currently seeking to have the court order set aside and Suffolk Public Schools declared a unitary system — meaning that the school division has eliminated past vestiges of school segregation to the extent possible under the Green factors.

By order of the federal district court, entered on March 20, 2017, the court found that the School Board has achieved unitary status by eliminating vestiges of a prior dual system of racial segregation in the areas of faculty hiring, staff assignments, extracurricular activities, transportation, and facilities. The only area that remains unresolved, before Suffolk Public Schools can achieve unitary status, is student assignments.

One of the ways in which the school division can address this remaining issue — student assignments — is to rezone some of the school division's elementary schools. The rezoning plan that is currently before the School Board has undergone extensive review by the DOJ. Toni Coleman, Trial Attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section, has written the following regarding the school division's rezoning plan:

Based on our office's review of the data, maps, and other information provided by the District, along with the representations made by District personnel and counsel, we do not have any objections to the District's proposed elementary school rezoning plan. We reserve the right to raise objections, however, if we learn the District is not operating in good faith and/or if we learn of information from the District or community that significantly changes the information that we relied upon when reviewing the District's proposal. Please continue to alert us to any community feedback that the District receives or any changes the District makes to the proposal.

Letter to School Board

Re: Rezoning Plan

June 3, 2024

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This is being provided for your information as you consider the rezoning plan that is currently before you. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Wendell M. Waller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Wendell M. Waller, *Esquire*
School Board Attorney

xc: Dr. John B. Gordon III, School Superintendent