



Dec. 3, 2014

Dear Happy Valley Neighbors,

Thank you for meeting with me on Nov. 24. As I shared when we met, I appreciated your time and willingness to continue to talk about your traffic-related concerns regarding Happy Valley's site plans.

What has stuck with me from our meeting is a shared acknowledgment that this is an emotionally-charged issue. I really appreciated the neighbor who said that she bought her house because it was on a dead-end street: It is peaceful and pastoral, and it's hard to have someone want to change that.

It's a hard decision when you have people who are passionate and care about education and who feel what you're doing is not the best option. I take that very seriously and therefore, we have spent time and resources carefully reviewing the neighbors' concerns that have surfaced in the last few months to research and address them.

I have enclosed a copy of the complete traffic study that a couple neighbors requested during our meeting, as well as minutes from our meeting; both of these are also posted on our website at [bellingshamschools.org/happy-valley-educational-specificationdesign-advisory-committee](http://bellingshamschools.org/happy-valley-educational-specificationdesign-advisory-committee)

After our meeting and reviewing the recommendation from the Happy Valley Educational Specifications/Design Advisory Committee, I have decided to approve the recommended design and preferred site plan. As I step back and look at the big picture, the data and information we have supports this plan for the new school and addresses the need to improve traffic flow. I also believe that we can take the action steps that we discussed with parent education, signage and gating to minimize traffic impact on Mill and 27 streets for the neighborhood.

I recognize that this is not a popular decision with many of the neighbors who live on these streets, especially with the ambiguity that exists now before the project is complete. Please know that we will be attentive to communication with the neighbors during the construction project. As we did recently with our Birchwood community in their quiet neighborhood during the rebuild of Birchwood Elementary, we will focus on achieving as many shared positive outcomes as possible for all students, families, staff and neighbors involved. It is my sincere hope that we can discover many mutual benefits of the new Happy Valley Elementary to the neighborhood and homes in the immediate area.

Again, I thank you for meeting with me, sharing your perspectives, and for being willing to have a respectful and honest conversation.

Sincerely,

Greg Baker  
Superintendent of Schools

*Bellingham School District #501*

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