



**A VOICE FOR CHOICE
ADVOCACY**

**LETTER OF OBJECTION OF THE ACQUISITION AND REMEDIATION
OF THE PEET ROAD PROPERTY (S.G. BORELLO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL)**

October 17, 2016

Dear Morgan Hill Unified School District Board Members,

This letter is a follow-up to the comments I made at the October 4th, 2016 Morgan Hill Unified School District (MHUSD) Board meeting.

A Voice for Choice Advocacy, Inc. sincerely objects to the building of any school on the Borello Property on Peet Road, or any other property that is laden with toxic chemicals and asks for the proposal to be withdrawn or voted against immediately, and the property be returned to the Borello family.

It is in MHUSD's Board's short and long term best interest to do this. If you have not already read the FULL Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) report, I urge you to do so before voting on the building of any school on this property. Not doing so would be a breach of your responsibility to the health of the children and community of Morgan Hill.

There are two issues related to the toxicity of the Dieldrin levels found in the soil on this property that raise serious concern. The first is the removal and relocation of 38,000 tons of Dieldrin contaminated soil to the Kirby Landfill. The second is the long term health effects to the children who attend a school built on the remaining soil which is likely also contaminated with Dieldrin.

Background

The Borello Property on Peet Road, on which an elementary school is proposed to be built, was a fully functioning Apricot Farm up until recent years, on which the pesticide Dieldrin (among others) was sprayed. Dieldrin bioconcentrates and biomagnifies through the terrestrial and aquatic food chains. Unexposed Dieldrin has a half-life of 60 years. Dieldrin slowly evaporates in air and can travel long distances in the environment attached to dust particles blown by the wind. Dieldrin was banned by the EPA in 1987 because it determined that it is a probable human carcinogen. Acute exposure to high concentrations of Dieldrin can cause seizures and convulsions and even death. Prolonged exposure to lower levels has induced headaches, dizziness, irritability, vomiting, and muscle spasms. Dieldrin has been linked to autism, kidney/liver failure and cancer. See CDC Fact Sheet on Dieldrin (<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=316&tid=56>).

The soil on this property was tested in 2003 and showed high levels of Dieldrin (0.03mg/kg). Thereafter it was supposedly remediated in 2004 and the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) gave the go ahead for developers to build on the land. However, in 2014, the soil on the property was tested again after the Borello family donated the land to the MHUSD. The levels of Dieldrin (0.69mg/kg) found at that time showed not only was the soil not remediated, but the levels of Dieldrin were 20 times higher than in the unremediated 2004 soil. In the current remediation proposal, DTSC has given a confidence level of 95% that the soil will be adequately remediated, leaving a 5% likelihood it will not be. Note: DTSC is currently under investigation for fraud, so confidence in their abilities is questionable.

High levels of other know toxins, such as DDT (1.0 mg/kg), were found exceeding the hazardous waste threshold, in the soil in 2014, but the removal of Dieldrin is the most concerning, and so what we have focused on here.



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Issue with the Removal and Relocation of Dieldrin Contaminated Soil

In order to remediate the soil on the Borello Property on Peet Road, the PEA recommends removing the top three feet of soil, consisting of 38,000 tons of soil. This soil would be loaded onto trucks and moved to the Kirby Landfill, four miles away. At certain times of day, Morgan Hill is extremely windy, year round. Loading that much soil onto trucks, hauling it four miles through Morgan Hill and dumping it in the landfill uncovered, will allow countless opportunities for the Dieldrin to either evaporate in the air or come in contact with dust particles and travel long distances blown by the wind. What is a contained underground currently, will become a health risk for the entire Morgan Hill community short and long term. The remediation process calls for air monitoring during all activities in which contaminated soils are being handled or disturbed, and if an action level is reached or exceeded all work will be stopped. However, once Dieldrin is in the air it is too late. There is no way to recapture Dieldrin and the entire Morgan Hill community downwind may be exposed.

Long Term Health Effects on Children who May Attend the Proposed School

The rate of chronic illness in children continues to rise steadily with 1 in 54 children have a chronic illness today. This generation of children are the first generation of children who are not expected to outlive the previous generation. There is no one factor that has been identified to cause this rise in illness, but most scientists and health practitioners agree that it is due to the increased toxicity in our environment. Dieldrin is known to be highly toxic and so, if exposed, would contribute to that.

If the school is built, the remediation process will have removed the top three feet of soil. The soil below three feet has not been tested and so it is unknown whether it is also contaminated with Dieldrin, but given the number of years the apricot farm was in existence it is likely the case. Sewer lines and other plumbing will likely have to be dug into the soil below the three feet that has been removed, again likely exposing workers and the community to toxic Dieldrin in the air. The site proposal includes a park and field areas, and it is unknown if Dieldrin in the soil below could leach up into these areas or if Dieldrin left on the property will linger or remain accessible for children and teachers to be exposed to in the future. If future students' families find out that the school has been built on what was a toxic property, it is unlikely they will enroll their children there.

There have been a number of lawsuits regarding contamination and subsequent illness from Dieldrin toxicity (https://scholar.google.com/scholar?start=10&q=dieldrin&hl=en&as_sdt=2003). MHUSD would be directly responsible for any illness that can be shown to have been caused by exposure to the Dieldrin on or removed from the property. MHUSD is already stretched for funds and a single lawsuit would wipe out the school's budget for multiple years. It is the board's fiduciary responsibility to ensure this does not happen, but the likelihood that it will is high given the toxicity of Dieldrin and the likelihood of contamination during or after removal to the Kirby Landfill or from what is left on the site. There is also a 5% likelihood that the property will not be completely remediated, at which point MHUSD will have spent millions of dollars with nothing to show for it.



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Morgan Hill does not need another public elementary school at this time, as the majority of the new residents send their children to private schools because the public schools system is so lacking. We urge the MHUSD Board to spend the money that would have been spent on this project on much needed upgrades and/or the expansion of existing schools.

A Voice for Choice Advocacy, Inc. asks YOU – are YOU willing to potentially sicken the children and community of Morgan Hill? Are YOU willing to take that chance, because the board members will ultimately be responsible? YOU know the possible dire consequences of taking this action. Therefore, A Voice for Choice Advocacy strongly urges MHUSD's Board to withdraw or vote no on the proposal to build any school on the Borello Property on Peet Road.

Christina Hildebrand

Christina Hildebrand
President/Founder
A Voice for Choice Advocacy, Inc.

Giving issues a voice, A Voice for Choice Advocacy advocates for people's rights to be fully informed about the composition, quality, and short- and long-term health effects of all products that go into people's bodies, such as food, water, air, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.