

Friends of Hyland

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To: ***Three Rivers Park District Board of Commissioners***

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Cc: Boe.Carlson@ThreeRiversParks.org – Three Rivers Park District Superintendent
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Ashley.ORourke@ThreeRiversParks.org – Supervisor of Hyland Ski Patrol
Luke.Williams@ThreeRiversParks.org – Supervisor of Hyland Ski School and Race Department

January 3rd, 2024

Dear Chair Gibbs and Commissioners,

Please enter this letter (and the attachment) into the public record for concerns at Hyland Hills for the upcoming TRPD Board Meeting, January 4th, 2024, or February 15th, 2024.

Please note: if the threat of retaliation against supporters of these concerns were adequately addressed by you, Chair Gibbs, we would happily attend public or private meetings with your representatives. As you are aware, we have made this request but have yet to receive assurances of no retribution or retaliation.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

This is an update that despite many letters, with supporting documentation, and eight months of time lapse (starting in May 2023), nothing has resulted from our concerns about Hyland Hills being raised with you, the TRPD Board of Commissioners.

Most concerning is that **safety issues** at Hyland, that are easily addressed, have not been mitigated. Over the years, these hazards have resulted in unnecessary serious injuries to patrons, mainly to children. Already this season, one child crashed into the

steel piped chain link fence at the bottom of North and required ski patrol assistance. B-Netting would have likely prevented this injury.

The **equity issues** that have persisted for 20-25+ years have not been addressed either, and the unfairness continues.

What is especially concerning is that the Board of Commissioners has not answered our questions of

1. Why is this discrimination enabled to continue year after year?
2. What justifies this favoritism? What is the public benefit to this when the majority of the kids are marginalized, each ski season?

This is on your watch, Commissioners. You have the authority to *easily* rectify this situation. Your own policies call for it in your Ordinances (<https://www.threeriversparks.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/ordinance.pdf> - see safety) and your 2040 System Plan (<https://www.threeriversparks.org/2040plan> - see DEI sections).

Yet, judging by your lack of response, you don't seem interested in reform.

We ask you once again:

1. Why haven't the safety hazards been addressed this winter?
2. What are the reasons for the continuation of the favors being given to one group (Team Gilboa) when fairness could be easily achieved for all 18 programs, and the subsidies (resulting in \$millions over each three to four years' time) could either be ended, or given out to all the patrons at Hyland?

Again, we would appreciate your making the effort to address these concerns. We hope that with your vigilance, and attention, these problems will be solved, achieving the long overdue reform that is needed.

After all, Three Rivers Park District exists to serve *all* of the public – and not favoring a select few for no legitimate reason.

Sincerely,

Friends of Hyland

Attachment

Please include this letter also in the public record for the upcoming meeting on either January 4th or February 15th, 2024.

Please note: As of January 3, 2024, we have not received a response to this letter dated December 21, 2023.

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December 21, 2023

Dear Chair Gibbs and Commissioners,

Please enter this letter into the public record for concerns at Hyland Hills

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

This is an update to inform you that none of the safety changes that have been requested by us and many others have been implemented.

These requests are standard operating procedures for ski areas around the country that the common lay person would find reasonable. These requests are not frivolous, and they are neither difficult nor expensive to implement.

In some ways, safety is worse off this year than last year.

Several coaches, patrons and Hyland staff have made these safety requests (again) this year. Yet, nothing is being done. Specifically:

- There is no B-Netting at the bottom of lanes 3-11 on North to stop skiers from colliding with permanent chain link fencing and large trees. This B-Net fencing *has* been in place intermittently in previous years. There is some flimsy netting on part of this hazard but this only provides a visual barrier and does not stop a skier from hitting the solid objects right at the bottom of the ski runs. Currently, with the way the snow is piled up, a skier could hit big ice chunks, a chain link fence with steel poles and large trees.
 - Already, one out-of-control child (in the Gilboa program) collided with the chain link fence and steel top bar on Saturday, December 16th, because of lack of proper fencing at the bottom of North. This child was carted off by ski patrol.
 - Last year there were several collisions with this permanent chain link structure fencing.
 - There is also a large ditch between the snow/ice and the fence that is a hazard and gets worse when the snow is deeper. When the snow reaches a certain level, out of control skiers can launch over the fence and into the trees.
 - It should be noted that there is not much run out at the bottom of this part of the hill, worsening the hazards.



- The snow gun towers on North have the same situation with flimsy red netting in place that does not break a collision like B-Netting is designed to do. There should be B-Netting around the tops and sides of these towers.
- There is no fencing to protect the skiers/riders who are out in front of the chalet and allow safe passage from Center/South to North or to the stairs to get down to the shuttle bus and parking lot.

***This is a major hazard – right in front of the chalet!
There is only one way to get off the entire ski hill, and it is not safe.***

- The kids in the park are coming down in droves, launching off of jumps *right in front of the chalet*, where the skis and boards pile up further constricting passage.



- Children and adults who are learning and in lessons are especially vulnerable here, but all riders/skiers are at risk.
- Please see video here (<https://unofficialnetworks.com/2022/04/05/chaotic-ski-resort-video/>) on what this looks like on a typical afternoon/evening and weekend days.
- Once the kids start jumping off the big kickers, the passage to North will be even more dangerous.
- It is interesting that there is B-Netting in front of the ski patrol room. Is it here to protect the windows or to protect humans? If the latter, why is B-Netting in place here but not other places as well?
- **“B-Net”** is a standard of netting used at ski resorts all over the world because it breaks the fall of a person, reducing injury. It protects humans better than an immovable fence structure in the event of a collision.
 - The Hyland Ski Patrol department obviously *knows* about the benefits of “B-Net” because they have it installed in front of the ski patrol room.

It's only a matter of time before another person is seriously injured or killed due to collisions.

We are not sure why these easily mitigated safety hazards continue to go unaddressed. This is after multiple request and letters to you, the Board of Commissioners and to Hyland Management this year and in years past, including Boe Carlson, Jeff May, Luke Williams and Ashley O'Rourke.

- Several requests have been made to Hyland management starting in December of this season. Yet, nothing has been done.

It must be lack of knowledge, lack of effective management, lack of equipment (fencing), lack of procedures, insubordination, or a combination of these things.

Or, it could also be a lack of caring or a feeling of immunity and arrogance on the part of Three Rivers Park District.

- Maybe this hubris is because, as several people have been told in the past:

“Insurance will take care of it”

- We hope this “reliance on insurance for potential lawsuits” isn't the case and that proactive measures will be taken to remedy these issues regardless of how big your insurance policy is.

There are huge costs to this type of ignorance – legal fees and most importantly, injured people and altered lives.

- Harming people needlessly (especially children) is never a good strategy for any organization – public or private. Safety should never be treated in a cavalier or incompetent manner.

Again, we would appreciate your taking the time and effort to address these concerns. We hope that with your vigilance, and attention, these problems will be solved thoroughly, addressing root causes, and achieving the long overdue reform that is needed.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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