

Friends of Hyland

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

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January 7, 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 on February 15th, 2024.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you for your response dated January 5, 2023.

The reason Friends of Hyland have been reaching out to the Board of Commissioners is that the operations staff at TRPD (led by Superintendent Boe Carlson and Jeff May) have not resolved issues that have been presented *repeatedly* to them over the last 10 years or more.

- Boe Carlson has stated that he's been hearing about the equity issues for over 15 years.
- Both Boe Carlson and Jeff May has received numerous letters/emails, and been in meetings about equity and safety issues over the past 10 years.
- Yet, the issues are not resolved, and in fact they are getting worse.

Boe Carlson and Jeff May have been on the recent e-mails from Friends of Hyland and are certainly capable of reaching out via e-mail to let us know that they understand the issues, ask for clarification and share resolutions.

- The issues are very clear and laid out at FriendsofHyland.Com.
- Solutions have been suggested repeatedly over the years and are very easy to implement. They also are on the website.
- It's not complicated to share facilities equally, stop giving favors (subsidies) out to Team Gilboa, limit over-crowding and put-up fencing in strategic places around the ski area. Other ski areas do this quite effectively.

With the simplicity of solutions, lack of refutation of the issues, and lack of action, it is **apparent that TRPD wishes to keep the unfair and unsafe status quo** for reasons that you, Chair Gibbs, refuse to share.

This *is* a Board of Commissioners matter at this point. TRPD Superintendent Boe Carlson reports directly to the Board of Commissioners. All TRPD operational staff, including Jeff May and Hyland staff, report up through Mr. Carlson. We are well apprised of how governance is designed to work. The Board of Commissioners is at the top and is ultimately responsible for the strategy, policy, finances and that these functions are carried out effectively under the direction of your hired superintendent.

The only value to a meeting with Friends of Hyland at this point would be for TRPD to share resolutions for reform or ask questions. This is easily accomplished by email. And, to reiterate, email communication has a lower risk of retaliation for our supporters of fairness and safety.

We appreciate this statement in your letter: "No specific instances of retaliation have been brought to our attention - but retaliation is not consistent with Park District policies." However, judging from other policies (e.g., DEI, Safety) not being upheld, we have little faith that the TRPD retaliation policy will be upheld – especially without specific assurances from the board. Additionally, there is documented retaliatory behavior that has occurred in the past.

- Examples of past retaliation are available. Please see the website for examples of job loss, entire teams being retaliated against in terms of limited facilities allocation, intimidation tactics by former commissioners, reprimands/threats by TRPD and Hyland management to whistleblowers, etc. We'd be happy to discuss this with you in detail. Of course, we would like witnesses present, minutes taken and written assurances that no more retaliation will occur.
- We can also supply written accounts that *should* be on record with TRPD, and letters to employers that resulted in job loss and harmed reputations.
- In addition, there is a voice recording of a meeting (October 2015) with your staff at TRPD HQ where a Hyland supervisor was threatened with their job for speaking up about inequities. TRPD followed through on that threat. Boe

Carlson will be aware of this situation because his office scheduled that meeting. And, Mr. Carlson did not show at the meeting.

- During that same timeframe, several Hyland staff were threatened or “advised” not to sign a petition for fairness. Several lost their jobs over this matter.
- Past lane schedules produced by TRPD starting in 2016 show evidence of retribution against teams. These schedules should be on file with TRPD and we can also supply them if needed.

Kicking the can down the road does not make these problems go away, Mr. Gibbs.

However, it does appear that the Board of Commissioners is protecting the favoritism that has been occurring for decades with egregious favors handed out to a privileged few, at the expense of the majority.

- Friends of Hyland and citizens are especially confounded as to why safety continues to be treated in a cavalier manner with unmitigated hazards year after year, seriously injuring many (vulnerable) people needlessly.

If the staff doesn't have the power/authority or ability to implement the changes needed to effectively run the organization *per established policy*, it is the board's responsibility to remedy the situation, as that *could* be a policy or procedural matter. It could also be staffing issues at any level - from the top on down. This might be your responsibility depending on the level of staff involved.

If someone within TRPD is – or has been – getting favors for giving favors (e.g., Quid Pro Quo or kickbacks), that is a very serious issue, no matter how small the favors. Again, TRPD is a publicly funded, taxpayer supported public entity within the State of Minnesota. As patrons and taxpayers, it is easy to see how people could wonder about this possibility, as corruption and coverups seem rampant across government entities these days.

- If there is rational justification for the inequities and subsidies to Team Gilboa, then why won't TRPD share this? We've been asking for this repeatedly, and there has been no refutation of the issues.
- We must say, it's hard to imagine your superintendent or operations staff taking kickbacks for favors. It would be a terrible shame if they were being forced to violate TRPD's policies to keep their jobs. If people were *hired and promoted* based on their willingness to keep the status quo despite being in direct violation of TRPD policies, that is also problematic. We already know that several people have been threatened, reprimanded and let go for whistleblowing.
- Again, as stated above, we will be happy to speak with you in depth about this, Mr. Gibbs.

Since we citizens don't have the power to develop procedures (easy as it would be in this case), direct staff or make staffing changes when policies and procedures are not followed, we rely on the Board of Commissioners to **oversee** that this gets done.

- That's your responsibility as overseers of TRPD – not ours.

We've done our job as concerned citizens - which is to alert you to problems with clarity, and alert you to the fact that your superintendent and management have not addressed these concerns. This is despite being apprised of them many times, for over a decade.

Now it's time for you to do your job.

Friends of Hyland was optimistic that the board would be appreciative of knowing about these concerns because of the enormous negative impact on Hyland's patrons and the taxpaying public.

It's been eight months since we first contacted this current board. And it's been 20-25 years of inequity and favoritism at Hyland.

We have yet to receive answers to our questions, resolutions to the problems or justifications for the inequities and lack of safety.

Thank you. We would look forward to hearing from you, Boe Carlson and Jeff May regarding reform.

Sincerely,

Friends of Hyland

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FriendsofHyland.com

Gibbs, John

From:john.gibbs@threeriversparks.org

To:friendsofhyland@yahoo.com

Cc:Carlson, Boe,May, Jeff

January 5, 2024

Friends of Hyland: We have received your December 21 correspondence and January 3 and January 4 resubmittals and attachments. Those communications and their attachments are included in the records of the Three Rivers Park District.

As shared in previous correspondence, the role of the Three Rivers Board of Commissioners is to establish and guide policy. Three Rivers staff is responsible for operations.

Your various correspondence has noted policies in place and that there are no policy changes necessary to address the issues raised. We agree.

The matters raised are fundamentally operational in nature. Three Rivers staff, rather than the Board, is responsible for operations and as such, we urge you to reach out directly to Superintendent Boe Carlson or Hyland Hills Manager Jeff May to have the matters addressed.

We do not take lightly the importance of safety, and the staff leaders will be open to all input in that regard. No specific instances of retaliation have been brought to our attention - but retaliation is not consistent with Park District policies. Please be assured that the Park District goal is to strictly adhere to such policies and follow all procedures in place to have any such matters addressed.

I would also like to restate my offer that I am quite willing to attend any meeting or join any conversations that you schedule with staff.

- John Gibbs

Chair, Three Rivers Park District Board of Commissioners.

(651) 324-0874