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Board of Supervisors & Planning Commission
County of San Luis Obispo
County Government Center
1055 Monterey Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

September 27, 2023

Re: Dana Reserve Development Project

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission,

I write on behalf of the Lucia Mar Unified School District to convey our concerns regarding the impacts of the prospective Dana Reserve development proposed by Dana Reserve, LLC. The potential ramifications of this development on our educational facilities are considerable, and we seek to ensure that these impacts are fully addressed in the planning and approvals process.

In our most recent discussion with Mr. Tompkins, he shared that he has submitted the Dana Reserve Specific Plan for approval and that the plan envisions a substantial development that includes approximately 1,318 new residential units—comprised of 901 non-age-restricted and 417 senior-restricted dwelling units—as well as 200,000 square feet of commercial space. Mr. Tompkins indicated that the age-restricted units will help offset costs to the District. While the nature of the units is not our primary concern, we emphasize the need to fully mitigate the significant impact of the development on our schools.

The necessity for adequate school facilities cannot be overstated. Schools are a key factor that prospective homeowners consider when moving to a new area. Parents universally desire schools close to their homes—ideally, neighborhood schools attended by children from their immediate community. The EIR identifies that the Project falls within the boundaries of Dorothea Lange Elementary School, Mesa Middle School, and Nipomo High School. Except for Nipomo High School, our schools lack sufficient capacity to absorb the new students. Even after accounting for the statutory school fees from the Project, a significant funding gap to the tune of \$6.6 million remains to facilitate the required expansion. If the aforementioned age-restricted units are removed from the plans, the funding gap increases to approximately \$9.1 million.

Our review of the Project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) underscores the considerable strain this development will impose on our already burdened facilities. Our current school sites clearly cannot accommodate the projected student influx. Furthermore, the EIR hasn't addressed the inevitable increase in vehicular traffic around our schools. Currently, the students from the development are designated for Dorothea Lange Elementary School. However, a boundary change will be necessary with the school's current capacity at its maximum and with no additional buildout space. The Project's students would likely be assigned to Dana and Nipomo elementary schools. To mitigate the additional traffic congestion at Dana Elementary School, an arrangement with the County to use the North side of the county park for traffic would be necessary.

Working with a demographer, our most recent estimates anticipate the Project will bring an additional 448 elementary, 145 middle, and 145 high school students. While Nipomo High School might absorb the rise in students without additional infrastructure, Mesa Middle School, Nipomo Elementary School, and Dana Elementary School will require significant expansions. The projected infrastructure cost is roughly \$12.4 million, resulting in a \$6.6 million shortfall even after considering statutory school fees. Without the age-restricted units, the required expenditure would be around \$18.1 million, leading to a \$9.1 million deficit post statutory school fee deductions.

Financial planning is essential for ensuring adequate facilities are available on time. State funding is insufficient, and statutory school fees fall far short of covering the actual costs of new school construction. We continue to engage in constructive dialogues with Mr. Tompkins and have proposed a mitigation agreement outlining collaborative approaches to address the impacts on our schools. We appreciate Mr. Tompkins continued participation in the mitigation discussions and urge him to act promptly to ensure that the necessary facilities are in place and ready to receive students when needed.

We kindly request that this letter be included in the official record for the Project's proceedings. With ample time for negotiation, we believe a mutually beneficial solution can be found for all parties involved.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter. We look forward to collaborating with all parties to ensure the well-being of our educational facilities and, by extension, our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Fawcett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Paul Fawcett, Ed.D.
Superintendent