

February 12, 2009

President of the School Board – Nooshin Meshkaty
Vice President of the School Board – Myra Lurie
Member of the School Board – Myra Demeter, PhD
Member of the School Board – Brian David Goldberg, PhD
Member of the School Board – Steven Fenton
255 South Lasky Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90212

Re: Beverly Hills High School Premises Concerns

Dear President, Vice President and Members of the Beverly Hills School Board:

On January 9, 2009 I made a site visit to the high school with my photographer. I walked around for 2 hours and took pictures of areas that are filthy and dangerous. Shockingly the school is wide open and nobody ever approached me once, and/or asked me who I was or why I was roaming around taking pictures. The lack of security in this age of terror and after such tragedies as Columbine High School is very troubling. Why is the campus wide open? There is absolutely no effort or program in place to control access at the high school.

I manage nearly 20 commercial buildings in the downtown area and on the Westside of Los Angeles. I manage premises for a living for the last 13 years.

I am appalled at the condition of the high school. My husband and I both attended and graduated BHHS. All of our nieces and nephews as well as our oldest daughter graduated the high school. Currently, I have a daughter in the tenth grade at the high school. Hence, we are very familiar with the grounds and visit often. I have asked my tenth grader regarding her impressions of the physical premises of the high school. She shrugs her shoulders and has told me that the campus is depressing. After my visits I agree with her assessment. I would add that I am saddened and angered by the conditions at the high school. I am indignant that my daughter and all the other children are not attending a school that one can point to with pride.

It became obvious that the premises are in need of repair and cleaning. The pictures on the cd rom I have enclosed for your viewing, clearly illustrate the state of disrepair and poor conditions at the high school. The deferred maintenance rampant throughout is cause for alarm. Many of the fire life safety issues are being addressed by local code enforcement with the oversight of the Fire Department. I urge the school board to verify that these violations are being addressed and remedied.

I found the premises dirty, riddled with evidence of vermin infestation, specifically rodents and roaches. For example, the students are apprehensive to perform a "drop drill" for fear of encountering many of the roaches running across the room in the light of day. The "roach motels" in corners of some classrooms. Are merely a band aid. I would like to assert as a professional property manager, that roach motels are not a vermin abatement program. These half measures are just that, and they only deal with the symptoms, not the source of the infestation.

There is trash comprised of food and paper and wrappers strewn all over the campus. There are furniture and equipment strewn in public places and common areas that are either refuse or misplaced items. Either way, the trash is a blight when walking the campus.

For example, all of the "white" drinking fountains, inside and outside are black with soot and dirt! What student would opt to drink from a blackened water fountain? The exterior premises are black with soot and dirt, it would take little time or effort to clean the windows and ledges and metal a few times a year. Judging by the layers of filth, it is apparent these surfaces are NEVER cleaned.

There are too many items of concern, to list in this letter to the Board. Suffice to say, that the premises are in need of repair and constant oversight. Premises do not stay clean and in working order without constant effort on the part of the administration, district and school board. There is no excuse for the current state of this campus, nor any defense for the dereliction of duties to maintain the campus in a clean and safe manner.

The new Science Building is new, but not clean. In time, this beautiful structure will fall into a state of disrepair. What is the point of spending tens of millions of taxpayer's dollars to build new facilities, if the district is unwilling or unable to keep the premises clean? This is a matter of public trust and it should not be violated.

The janitorial and custodial efforts are apparently very lacking. The administration does not seem to mind a dirty school. What other conclusions can one draw from this current situation? According to the California Department of Education the responsibility for compliance with building codes and local ordinances and federal and state environmental regulations rest with the local school board. The school board is responsible for the premises being clean and safe. It is as simple as that.

My husband, Igor Korbatov Esq. has written to Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and the supervisor is in possession of the cd rom and the photo album. I have spoken to his office and they have encouraged me to address these concerns with the local school board and the Beverly Hills City Council.

I am in communication with the Beverly Hills Fire Marshall, as well as the head of Code Enforcement. This is an issue that will not go away until the premises have met a normal standard of clean and safe. The standards of cleanliness and safety are spelled out by the CD of E as "These standards are common sense and common decency policy set by and enforced by the local school board".

I believe our children deserve a clean and safe environment in which to attend school. I understand budget restraints and current economic crisis in the state of California. However, we cannot sacrifice cleanliness or safety of our school premises for the "bottom line". Certainly our children and our community deserve no less. Clean and safe is not a line item in our school budget, it is an imperative and the foundation of our school district. We are all failing our kids if we cannot deliver schools to be clean and safe.

I respectfully remind the Board that these deplorable conditions are on your collective watch. Those members who have served longer should have taken up this cause long before I wrote this letter. However, the current board needs to be accountable for the current state of conditions. It is my sincere hope that this board will work to solve this problem and map a critical path to bring the high school up to the standards this community expects and deserves.

I urge all of the members of the school Board to visit not only the high school but the other 4 campuses, in order to walk these campuses with a keen eye to cleanliness and safety. Perhaps a task force of concerned parents can be created to address the issue of premises.

I have enclosed a copy of the letter to the supervisor, and the advisory drafted by the California Department of Education for your review. Additionally, I have enclosed a cd rom for each board member and one photo album for the board to share.

My husband and I are happy to meet with the board any time at our mutual convenience to discuss these issues in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Lisa K. Korbatov