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August 11, 2016

Tom Hart  
City Manager  
317 College Street  
Grand Prairie, TX 75050

Re: Section 423.4 of the 2015 Edition of the International Building Code

Dear Mr. Hart:

On behalf of Grand Prairie ISD and its students, parents, and taxpayers, I request that Section 423.4 of the 2015 Edition of the International Building Code be waived for construction projects funded by the 2015 GPISD Bond Program.


As you know, the voters in Grand Prairie approved a Bond Referendum raising \$91,000,000 for renovations and new construction at several school facilities. Grand Prairie High, Austin Elementary, the Young Women's Leadership Academy, Garner Fine Arts Academy, and others will undergo significant renovations. Bowie Elementary will be entirely rebuilt. When the citizens of Grand Prairie learned of the Bond Program's anticipated projects, they did not know the City of Grand Prairie would later adopt a brand new building code, including Section 423.4, that would significantly raise construction costs not accounted for in the budget.

Section 423.4, if applied to the 2015 Bond Program, will raise construction costs by \$7,500,000 because Garner, Austin, and Bowie would be required to have new storm shelters. The taxpayers and voters of Grand Prairie did not approve these new costs. As a result, projects that the taxpayers did vote for will be discarded to fund the unanticipated storm shelters. I ask that the City waive the application of Section 423.4 to the 2015 Bond Program to enable the voters and taxpayers of Grand Prairie to receive all the projects they voted for.

The lack of funding and notice to the taxpayers are certainly my primary concerns, but there are other concerns as well. The renovations and new construction were planned to meet current, prioritized academic needs. If Section 423.4 is not waived, storm shelters would be erected at three of those sites, not because they would be strategically located for safety and security, but just because that's where the encumbered construction sites are. The location and use of storm shelters should have more deliberate planning to be used effectively. Other concerns include the required elements of the storm shelters that experts tell me unnecessarily raise costs. For example, requiring separate plumbing for a safe room that would shelter individuals for only moments while a tornado passes is needlessly redundant.

Please ask the City Council to waive Section 423.4 for the construction projects in the 2015 GPISD Bond Program to allow all planned construction to occur and to allow experts to review the requirements of the new storm shelters for efficiency and effectiveness. Thank you for all you do for our City, and please contact me if I can help in any way.

Sincerely,

  
Susan Simpson Hull, Ph.D.  
Superintendent