



The State of Texas
House of Representatives
Austin

ELLIOTT NAISHTAT
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 49

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May 10, 2010

Members of the Board of Regents Subcommittee
The University of Texas System
201 W. 7th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Chairman McHugh, Vice Chairman Longoria, Regent Gary and Regent Powell:

Due to prior commitments, including a House Human Services Committee meeting, I am unable to attend the hearing scheduled for May 13. I have met with several members of various groups involved in issues concerning the Brackenridge Tract and have conferred with other elected officials on these matters, so I am very familiar with the issues surrounding development on the Tract.

As I am sure you are aware, the Brackenridge Tract is a lynchpin of the West Austin neighborhood. Children of married students attend nearby public schools and contribute to their diversity. Research and scholarship done at the Biological Field Lab is internationally recognized. Facilities at the West Austin Youth Association (WAYA) as well as the Lions' Municipal Golf Course (Muny) provide vital recreational opportunities for the entire city. The open space creates pleasing vistas running down to the river and limits neighborhood congestion. Commercial establishments provide dining and shopping opportunities. The University secures income from the Tract, including revenue from the lease of the golf course. Hence, the Tract, as it is currently developed, works for the immediate neighborhood, the City and the University.

Moreover, the Tract is a source of great affection for the neighborhood and the City. The Cooper Robertson report does not recognize that Muny (built in the 1920s), along with Barton Springs, Deep Eddy and the Tower, make up what might be called "Old Austin," and its status for the community is iconic. In this regard, members of a group trying to save Muny have uncovered some wonderful history tied to African Americans who helped build the golf course and who caddied at the course after walking over from Clarksville, where I lived for many years. Some still live in Austin and play on the course. In the spring of 1951, the City Council desegregated the course in a quiet manner, becoming the first city in the South to integrate a municipal golf course. This occurred shortly after the Supreme Court decision in Sweatt v. Painter had the effect of desegregating the UT Law School. I sponsored a House Resolution recognizing this history and attended the dedication of a historical marker at the course, replete with the sounds of a gospel choir from Huston-Tillotson University. The experience was exhilarating.



Members of the Board of Regents
May 20, 2010
Page Two

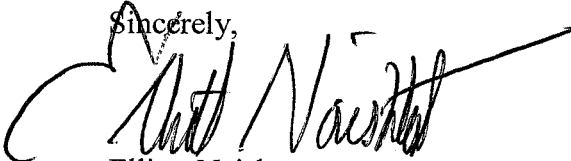
In other words, what has happened on the Brackenridge Tract has helped to define the City of Austin. Its citizens will be extremely reluctant to let the Tract go over to a development project such as proposed by Cooper Robertson that would swamp a vital West Austin neighborhood with traffic and undermine its ebb and flow.

However, both the University and the community share many areas of joint interest, especially concerning plans recently announced to expand the role of health sciences and biotech research at UT Austin. In fact, the City of Austin has already donated land to the University for purposes of a UT health science center. Given such broad areas of common interest, it would seem advisable that the future of the Brackenridge Tract should be considered in the context of broader negotiations between the city, county and university directed at advancing these many joint interests, especially regarding health sciences and biotech research.

In this process of negotiation, I will do everything possible to work to secure state support and facilitate the hard compromises that will have to be made to reach agreement. I am confident that working together we can build a bright future for both the University and community while at the same time saving the character, culture and history of a vibrant West Austin neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elliott Naishtat", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Elliott Naishtat
State Representative

EN/db