

February 16, 2026

To the Members of the CHCCS Board of Education:

We are writing as a broad group of community members interested in the future of our school district. Some of us are Ephesus alumni, some of us are senior citizens, and some of us are concerned residents. We don't currently have children at Ephesus Elementary, but we have lived in this community long enough to see what makes neighborhoods thrive—and what quietly erodes them. A truly walkable neighborhood school is one of the strongest “social anchors” a town can have. For many of us who are older, Ephesus Elementary is not just a place where children learn; it's a daily, visible reminder that our community is alive, connected, and thriving.

We support keeping Ephesus open because its value extends well beyond the students who attend it today. When children can walk to school, you get something rare in modern life: everyday, informal connection. Neighbors see one another. Older residents feel included in the rhythm of the neighborhood. Streets are calmer at peak hours. Parents build relationships that become mutual aid networks. Children gain independence and a sense of place. These things are difficult to quantify, but they are not “soft.” They are the social infrastructure that helps communities weather hard times.

For that reason, we hope the district is coordinating closely with other public officials—especially the Town Council and the County Commissioners—because a school closure is not an internal operational adjustment. It is a community-wide policy decision with ripple effects across housing, transportation, land use, equity, and long-range growth. If the district's primary challenge is declining enrollment, then we should be especially mindful of how local planning and growth decisions can either worsen that trend or help reverse it.

This is where Ephesus matters to the *whole* community. The Town's long-awaited Legion Road project has been discussed for years as a major investment in housing and public space. The Town describes the Legion Property as a 36.2-acre, Town-owned site planned for affordable housing and a public park, with the park space directly connected to Ephesus Park and Ephesus Elementary. The Town's own materials emphasize that this area will remain accessible via Ephesus Elementary, Ephesus Park, and nearby trails as the project progresses. In other words: major pieces of Chapel Hill's growth and “complete community” planning on this side of town are physically and conceptually tied to the Ephesus area.

At the same time, Chapel Hill has invested significant energy—rightly—into walkability and “Safe Routes to School” planning. This work is explicitly intended to increase safe walking, biking, and rolling to school. The Town has already adopted and begun implementing its Safe Route to Schools Action Plan. Ephesus Elementary is a flagship example of what those efforts are meant to support. It is widely recognized for having a substantial walk zone and a strong walking culture compared to many schools.

If we are worried about enrollment, then it makes little sense to undermine the very conditions that make it easier for families to choose and stay in a school community: nearby housing

growth, connected parks and trails, and safe routes that allow children to walk. Those are not side issues—they are part of the enrollment strategy whether we name them that way or not.

We understand there are difficult tradeoffs in facilities planning. But we urge you to evaluate Ephesus not only as a building, but as a community asset that supports walkability, neighborhood cohesion, and the Town's own long-term development plans on this side of Chapel Hill. Closing a walkable neighborhood school can create a slow-motion cost that doesn't show up neatly on a spreadsheet: more traffic, less connection, less neighborhood stability, and fewer reasons for families to plant roots here.

Please keep Ephesus open—and please do so in partnership with the broader network of public leaders whose decisions shape where families live, how children travel, and whether Chapel Hill will truly grow in a way that sustains its schools.

Respectfully signed,

Name	Neighborhood
Jennifer and Niels Lameijer	Ridgefield
Ken & Beth Friedman	Ridgefield Park
Katherine Stalberg	Briarcliff
Kristin Webb and Todd Woerner	Ridgefield/Briarcliff
Carolyn and Frank Beatty	Briarcliff
Marisa Beatty	Briarcliff
Lisa & Elle English	Briarcliff
Deborah Davis	Briarcliff
Natalie and Jeffrey Howard	Briarcliff
Christine and Steve Jernigan	Briarcliff
Pam Krakow	Briarcliff
El Fisseha	Briarcliff
Christian Kammerman	Briarcliff
Lisa & Wayne Huggins	Briarcliff
Dan & Elizabeth Cefalo	Briarcliff

Betsy and Wes Dain	Ridgefield
Alexander Gillon and Raisa Behal	Briarcliff
Justin Haslett and Gia Podobinski	Ridgefield/Briar Cliff
Tim and Dawn Shohfi	Briarcliff
Ellen & Cort Boylan	Ridgefield
Lucretia Dickson	Briarcliff/Colony Woods
Darren Legge and Andra Wilkinson	Ridgefield Park
Karoline and Lewis Nelson	Briarcliff
Rebecca McDonald	Colony Woods East
Micah Hughes & Rana Alkhaldi	Colony Woods
Alexis Rudolph & Eric Manturuk	Colony Woods
Emily E. Weinstein	Colony Woods
Kara Hensey Sharkey	Colony Woods
Rick & Miriam Fahrer	Colony Woods
Jonah Sharkey	Colony Woods
Henry and Merin Hensey	Colony Woods
Dimitri and Dikki Putilin	Colony Woods
Paula DiBiasio	Briarcliff
Amy Lewis	Briarcliff
Naza and Daria Filonov	Colony Woods
Stephen Feagin	Colony Woods
Raine Lee	Colony Woods
Marie Adele Moser and Jeremy Spears	Colony Woods

Dana and J vanBever-Green	Colony Woods
April and John Laures	Little Ridgefield
Pam & Brad Hemminger	Oaks/Colony Woods
Mark & Eleanor Hollins	Briarcliff
Cristina Smith & Andrew Park	Briarcliff
Lindsay and Michael Bradshaw	Little Ridgefield
Gian & Carla Sartor	Ridgefield
Kurt & Carol Uphoff	Briarcliff
Jody Jarowey & Chris Deschene	Briarcliff
Kim Stahl	Little Ridgefield
Elizabeth and Daisy O'Nan	Little Ridgefield
Richard, Sarah, Eleanor and Will Allred	Colony Woods
Bonnie Crotty and Jeff Nelson	Colony Woods
Debbie & Chris Bevin	Briarcliff
Derek & Rebecca Rodriguez	Colony Woods
Veronica Rodriguez	Colony Woods
Julie Hogue	Briarcliff
Meg Moran	Colony Woods
Rob and Virginia Anderson	Colony Woods
Jennifer Baddour	Briarcliff/Ridgefield
Marion and Victor Schoenbach	Briarcliff
Anne and David Levin	Briarcliff
Ann Baker and Mike Lienesch	Ridgefield
Betsy and Ben Edwards	Ridgefield/Briarcliff

Martha Delafield	Briarcliff
Kathleen & Dan Herr	Colony Woods
Alice Glover and Donald Beeson	Briarcliff
Dick and Lynda Baddour	Briarcliff
Victoria Freeman & Charles Humble	Briarcliff
Ruthann Hurwitz & Jeanette Valleau	
Gary Dwyer & Maureen Costello Dwyer	Briarcliff
lisle and stephen pearman	briarcliff
Jennifer Yi	Colony Woods
Trish Croom Halsey	Briarcliff and Southern CH
Kim and Bob Christopher	Briarcliff
Bob and Vanessa Lynch	Colony Woods
Patty Smith	Colony Woods
Boykin and Greg Bell	
Sara Summers and Randy Cubrilovic	Ridgefield/Briarcliff
Sara Morgan and Frank Morgan	The Oaks
Whitney and David Wright	
Marianne Gildea	Briarcliff
Volker Mueller	Colony Woods
Jim and Laura Baxley	Ridgefield/Briarcliff
Ann and Jeff Koonce	Briarcliff
Silvia Tomaskova & Peter Redfield	Colony Woods/Briarcliff

Dana and Nancy Graves	Colony Woods
Thomas Rasmussen	Colony Woods
Evi Rasmussen	Colony Woods
Thomas Grizzle and Kerry-Ann da Costa	Colony Woods
Paul and Soohae Chyu	The Oaks
Nada and Goran Stanisic	Briarcliff
Amanda Boulle Matrai	Colony Woods
Jimmy and Betsy Long	Briarcliff
Dale and Suzy Osborne	Colony Woods
Judy Murray	Ridgefield
Sarah Cabell & Ben Provan	Ridgefield
Robert & Beth Nielsen	Colony Woods
Sally Schatz	Briarcliff/Colony Woods
Dalton Johnson & Gabriela Reed	Colony Woods
Kristen Boekelheide & Davin Stewart	Ridgefield
Caryl Price	Colony Woods
Dan Levine	Colony Woods
Shannon Holmes	Briarcliff
Allison and Ryan Siebens	Briarcliff