

2546 Rolling Hills Ct.  
Alamo, CA 94507

September 27, 2022

**VIA HAND DELIVERY**

City of Watsonville  
Watsonville City Council  
275 Main Street  
Suite 400 (4th Floor)  
Watsonville, CA 95076

**Re: City of Watsonville and Ceiba's "Information and Listening Session"  
Scheduled for September 29, 2022, at the Civic Plaza**

Dear Members of the Council,

By way of introduction, I am a former resident of Watsonville, and my immediate family resides in Watsonville. I am also a property owner here and a member of a grassroots movement opposed to the Ceiba College Preparatory Academy ("Ceiba") spot zoning application. Last month, I presented material issues to the City Council regarding Ceiba's aggressive expansion plans and purchase of toxic waste properties.

As you know, the Ceiba charter school, located on industrial land along Riverside Drive, is operating under a temporary Use Permit that expires next year. Ceiba was granted that Use Permit in violation of the Watsonville industrial zone regulations and has been an objectionable adverse impact on the adjacent neighborhood since opening.

The Watsonville City Planning Department has formally acknowledged that the school is not a permitted use and, consequently, has not allowed the Use Permit to be modified regarding the expiration. Instead, the Planning Department has guided the school to pursue an amendment to change their industrial zoning to a children's school zoning.

However, in April of this year, the Planning Commission did not approve that amendment due to neighborhood opposition. Watsonville City Staff has been working with the school officials to try and make things appear better before the matter comes before the City Council for a final decision.

As part of that process, it appears that a sort of a governmental meeting, identified as an "information and listening session", has been arranged for this Thursday at the Civic Plaza building. Some households near the Ceiba school have received letters in the mail announcing that meeting. Some stakeholders, like myself, have not. (A copy of the letter is attached). It is unclear what mailing protocol the City used to notify residents.

There are several issues with the planned meeting and the City's letter.

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Despite the fact the letter was sent on official Watsonville City Governmental letterhead of the City Manager's office, the Ceiba School Principal's signature, name and title are at the end of the letter along with those of the City Manager.

The Ceiba Principal, Josh Ripp, is not a Watsonville City Official. Josh Ripp and the Ceiba School are the source of adverse impacts that resulted from the failure of urban planning in the Watsonville City Government. The Watsonville City Government is expected to be the guardian which upholds the public safeguards of the Zoning Code.

Placing the school principal's signature on City Government letterhead blurs the distinction between City Government and Ceiba and thus is deceptive to the public. Such deception is both unseemly and objectionable, particularly for an entity that is expected to be an honest broker of a zoning procedure.

It almost appears that the meeting is intended more for the parents of the Ceiba students to explain the status of the process, which is a valid thing to do. But a question arises as to why the notice was mailed to neighborhood residents who oppose the school operation.


If the meeting is intended for those residents as well, then another issue exists. That letter was distributed and written only in English. No one who reported receiving the letter has received a bi-lingual version with a Spanish translation.

Given that most of the adjacent residents are not English fluent, **this appears to be a serious disservice to them in fairness and transparency of process.**

The Ceiba school was established in the neighborhood through a mass of failed and defective planning procedure. It is notable that defects in your planning procedure regarding Ceiba are still happening now.

I will be reaching out to each of you in the coming weeks to share my ongoing concerns regarding Ceiba.

Sincerely,



Marta J Bulaich

Attachment



# City of Watsonville

*"A Community of Opportunities"*

September 20, 2022

Dear Valued Community Member,

I am reaching out to invite you to an information and listening session for the Ceiba College Prep general plan amendment and rezoning application. The purpose of the meeting is to provide you information on the current status of the process and also to answer your questions. The meeting will be held at the City of Watsonville Community Room located at: 275 Main St. 4<sup>th</sup> Floor on September 29, 2022 from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Spanish translation and interpreter services will be provided. We will also be providing child care services for children ages 5-10 years old during the duration of the meeting.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

- I. Introductions
- II. Intent of the Meeting (Rene Mendez, City Manager)
- III. Status of the Ceiba general plan amendment and rezoning application and next steps (Suzi Merriam, Community Development Director)
- IV. Ceiba College Prep presentation and information (Josh Ripp, Head of School)

I realize that you are probably very busy, but hopefully you are able to carve out some time to attend.

Sincerely,

Rene Mendez  
City Manager  
City of Watsonville

Josh Ripp  
Head of School  
Ceiba College Prep