

2 October 2019

To: Kameron Perez-Verdia and Austin Quinn-Davidson,
West Anchorage Assembly Members

RE: Aquarian Charter School Repairs

Dear Mr. Perez-Verdia and Ms. Quinn-Davidson,

Aquarian Charter School has a vital role in our community, though it does not function under the strict definition of a “neighborhood” school. Please find this letter of support for Aquarian’s efforts to bond repairs to its facility and physical plant. Without an active school in this location our community will suffer.

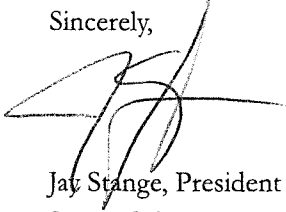
The school is an important gathering place for neighborhood families and children who don’t have safe play areas in the neighborhood. For the area bounded by four very busy streets, Benson Boulevard, Lois Drive, 36th Avenue, and Minnesota Boulevard, it is the de facto neighborhood playground. In winter, Aquarian’s ice rink is a popular local destination. The school’s playground facilities are a massive asset to the kids in this neighborhood and greatly improve our quality of life.

Last year, the Spenard Community Council worked with the Anchorage Assembly and Municipality of Anchorage Project Management and Engineering to identify and bond a project to improve pedestrian safety in the area. Aquarian support was critical to our efforts. There is no safe North – South walking route currently available for the students and families who live in the Aquarian neighborhood to access the West High School/Romig Junior High School campus or the retail and grocery facilities on Benson Boulevard. Lois Drive is the only option unless they walk on the narrow sidewalk on Minnesota Boulevard next to 45 mph traffic. Lois Drive has no sidewalks, except for a poorly maintained multi-use trail on the East side of the street bordering Aquarian. This trail ends abruptly at the end of the Aquarian grounds. The aforementioned \$500,000 project funds a Design Study Report to connect a pedestrian facility from Lois Drive and 32nd Avenue north to Benson Boulevard and east to Minnesota Boulevard. This investment will benefit our neighborhood, the school and all pedestrians, wheelchair users and bicyclists who currently have to share a narrow Lois Drive with speeding (35-40 mph) traffic.

Many Spenard Community Council members are teachers and or parents of Aquarian students. We walk to school and celebrate the amazing art, Spanish language and Science/Technology/Math offerings at the school. It is a welcoming neighborhood space, which we cherish and consider to be part of our public space. Just last month, when our normal meeting facility at the Spenard Recreation Center was closed for gym floor repairs, I reached out to Northwood and Willowcrest Elementary Schools for meeting space. They were unavailable, but Aquarian provided our Council with meeting space in its gym/multipurpose room.

Aquarian is an important part of our community and we – the Spenard Community Council - urge your support for inclusion of its repair needs on the 2020 Anchorage School District bond proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jay Stange', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the left.

Jay Stange, President
Spenard Community Council
spenardcc@gmail.com
(917) 601-3165

Cc: Deena Mitchell and Andy Holleman - current and previous Spenard liaisons for the Anchorage School Board; Anchorage School Board members citywide; Dr. Deena Bishop, Anchorage School District Superintendent; Anchorage Assembly members citywide; Aquarian Charter School Academic Policy Committee (Long Term Planning Committee)

Note: This letter was unanimously supported with a full membership vote at the October 2, 2019, Spenard Community Council Meeting.