



Crippling Hidden Cost of Civilian Housing at NWS Earle

This paper articulates NOPE's estimate of the hidden and undisclosed costs of the Navy's plan (to open 300 "Laurelwood" homes on NWS Earle property in Colts Neck to civilians by 2010) on area school districts and why NOPE requests that the Department of Defense void the agreement or buy out the developer, as allowed under their contract.

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Notwithstanding chilly relationships between Tinton Falls and Colts Neck *officials* dating to the 1980s over schooling Naval/military children residing at Earle, the *citizens* of these neighboring towns, via NOPE, agree that the Navy's plan to open 300 base homes to civilians poses a grave, hidden threat to area taxpayers. Local media wrongly limits the exposure to these two towns, whereas NOPE identifies the threat to the school districts including, but not limited to, the townships of Freehold, Wall, Marlboro and Howell.

Citing private discussions with area educational officials and our own research, in addition to public commentary and data shared by the Tinton Falls Board of Education in a presentation to more than 300 borough residents in November, 2007, NOPE easily estimates **costs in the tens of millions of dollars for the districts surrounding Earle**, which includes not only annual service costs, but significant outlays to build or expand schools, clearly not considered by the Navy.

Lacking relevant data on an actual number of Laurelwood occupants, NOPE projects:

- **An influx of at least 300-600 children to area school districts** (assuming only one to two children per household), though this headcount could prove extremely light
- In an environment of rising raw materials costs (i.e. steel, concrete, labor), at least **\$50 million cost to expand existing district schools or construct new facilities**
 - *Please note that the contract between the Navy and its developer mandates demolition of the Laurelwood housing units by 2040, leaving the surrounding townships with eventual excess paid-for school capacity once Earle's civilian residents are removed from the base housing.*
- **Land acquisition costs** (not quantifiable) for new or expanded schools
- **Annual cost surpassing \$7 million**, assuming a current local cost of at least \$12,000 to educate one child and no tax revenue from base residents as an offset. Our estimate *excludes* busing, and a roughly \$30,000 education cost per special needs student.

The Navy's plan to save \$3.6 million per year by filling 300 base homes is not only dangerous, but also ill-conceived. Notwithstanding the outlined excessive financial cost to area taxpayers, the towns surrounding Earle are simply ill-equipped to handle a presumed massive influx of civilian students. NOPE posits that it would take at least seven (7) years to develop necessary facilities plans, convey proposals to area voters, receive state approval, and construct or expand schools. **NOPE encourages the Navy to reconsider the plan.**

*Prepared by: Bill Holobowski, Chairman
Neighbors Opposed to Privatization at Earle*