

**For Immediate Release
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Former Johns Hopkins University Fundraising Official Speaks Out in Support of Belward Farm Donor Family as University Responds to Their Lawsuit

Rockville, MD – Less than one day after Johns Hopkins University (JHU) filed a motion to dismiss the high-profile “donor intent” lawsuit brought against it November 10 in Montgomery County Circuit Court, John Dearden, the former JHU development official who spearheaded the Belward Farm donation, announced his support for the donor family’s lawsuit.

The lawsuit, *John Timothy Newell, et. al. v. Johns Hopkins University*, alleges that the university’s new plan to develop the 138-acre Belward Farm violates the use restrictions set forth in the 1989 contract that transferred ownership of the farm from Elizabeth Beall Banks, who lived on and operated the farm, and her two siblings, to the University.

The original development plan, which complied with the 1989 agreement, called for the building of a modest, low-rise academic campus of no more than 1.4 million square feet of gross floor area on the site of the historic Civil War era farm. The new development plan, which the donors’ heirs are contesting, calls for the construction of a high-rise commercial R&D office park that eventually will have more than 4.7 million square feet.

Dearden, who worked for 12 years at JHU and served as its Director of Sponsored Projects at the time the farm was donated to the university, said he is in strong support of the family’s efforts because he “spent several years of my professional life working on [the gift].” He is positive the university “understood the intent” of the donor was to create a “version of [JHU’s] Homewood campus,” not a high-rise commercial complex that is part of Montgomery County’s “Science City.”

Speaking with Elizabeth Beall Bank’s nephew and lead plaintiff John Timothy Newell, Dearden said all of JHU’s senior administrators “understood the intent”, including Dr. Steven Muller and Robert Buey, JHU’s president and vice president at the time of the gift. Dr. Muller “thought the whole deal had to be handled in a straightforward, above-the-board manner that *remained true to your aunt’s desires*,” Dearden said.

When asked if he thought Ms. Banks would have gifted the farm to JHU if she knew that they planned a cityscape instead of a small campus, Dearden said, “In my opinion, no ... strongly, she would not have endorsed that, she would not have made the gift if she had known they would not respect her intent.”

Ms. Banks was an outspoken opponent of large-scale development and turned down numerous offers from real-estate developers interested in buying Belward Farm. She

sold the farm to JHU for \$5 million – instead of the estimated \$50 million it was thought to be worth at the time – to keep it out of the hands of developers. The difference between the property's \$50 million value and the \$5 million sales price was treated as a charitable donation to the University, on the understanding that the University would own and operate the campus as stipulated in the agreement.