

Article by Jamela A. Ali – 3 October 2025 - published 5, 6 and 7th October in *Stabroek News*, *Guyana Times*, *Kaieteur News* & *Village Voice News*, Facebook online under letters and news headings

Regulatory authorities are turning a blind eye to the usurpation of Farnum Ground (Stabroek News)

Subryanville and Farnum Community Ground – Abuse of Power (Kaieteur News & Guyana Times)

ABUSE OF POWER AND DISREGARD FOR LAW AT SUBRYANVILLE'S FARNUM COMMUNITY GROUND (Village Voice & Facebook)

ABUSE OF POWER BY DEVELOPER AND REGULATORY BODIES

LAND ACQUISITION OF SUBRYANVILLE FARNUM OPEN GREEN SPACE

Letter dated March 2025

This concerns the ongoing matter of the Mayor & City Council (M&CC) purporting to give permission since March 2025 to David Sugrim as “Owner” of Mae’s Schools to “use the Farnum Ground” for one year. This happened shortly after the fire of a wooden and concrete building which was uninsured and on 3 lots of land. The Farnum Playfield is an open green grass community ground located in the residential area of Subryanville, Georgetown. The permission is vague. It did not identify the details of the “use”. It did not define the area of usage of the ground consisting of 24 lots. No reasons were given for the permission.

The Mayor and 2 City Councillors admitted on 9th September 2025 that:

1. There was no consultation of residents before giving permission to use Farnum Ground;
2. There was no written application by David Sugrim seeking permission to use Farnum;
3. The permission was for temporary tents and did not include prefab structures.

Permission was given to David Sugrim as Owner of Mae’s Schools. However, he does not have any valid business or corporate registration in his name for Mae’s Schools and secondly, the Transports for properties of the burnt school are not in his name.

Prefabricated buildings

In or around late August 2025, construction commenced using almost half of the playfield. The green grass was removed and replaced with sand, concrete steel columns, prefab structures and building materials. Welding was used. Heavy duty trucks and other vehicles drive freely across the ground even while the schools are in session.

Despite being told no permission was granted for prefab buildings, Mr Sugrim continued the buildings. Mae's Schools are privately owned. They consist of 4 categories of fee paying schools. If, as reported 2000 students attend the 4 schools, it follows that the owners are in receipt of fees for profit for classes during school hours in addition to lessons. Mr Sugrim completed the one storey of the prefab structures and is in the process of adding a second storey.

Regulatory agencies

In the meantime, the M&CC have delayed their statutory meeting to 13 October 2025 to discuss what action to take, challenging residents to take the matter to court. The Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA), Ministries of Housing & Water, Education, Public Works (Electrical) and Labour have not responded to enquiries from residents concerning breaches, whether approval was given for prefab structures, whether Mae's Schools were licenced for 2024 and 2025, whether satisfied with children being on an active construction site with materials strewn all over, with vehicles driving on the ground, whether the electrical supply and hanging wires attached to a tree have been approved and whether all health and safety standards are observed.

Time for Reset – New Residential Building on Third Avenue, Subryanville

The second aspect is the regulatory roles of M&CC and CHPA and the grant of building permits. On one of the 3 burnt lots, the damaged concrete 3 storey building was fixed and is being used by the children. The front wall of this building extends right on the front boundary of the land leaving no space for a fence. The back of the building has structures that extend up to the back fence of adjoining neighbours. The side of the building is just a few feet away from an adjoining neighbor. This is in breach of the by-laws of the Municipal District and Councils Act. There are no parking facilities within the property and no substantial open space.

It appears that M&CC and CHPA have now received a plan for a 6-storey building which is undated. Residents have requested from CHPA, Mayor and relevant bodies to be informed and consulted before any application is considered. Residents have not been informed.

The main issue that the M&CC, City Engineer, CHPA, Ministry of Education, Environmental agency must consider is that Subryanville is a residential community with restrictive covenants listed on the Transports, stating that no business must be carried on. It would be difficult to argue that 4 categories of Schools for private fee-paying are not 4 businesses.

The effects of businesses, be it schools, hotels or other businesses, which involve the presence of a large number of persons in a small residential community, include the creation of vehicular chaos, inconsiderate parking, blocking of driveways, entrances and access roads, littering, noise nuisance, creation of one-way streets and extension of buildings which obstruct the line of sight, increasing foreseeable dangers of accidents of vehicles and pedestrians exiting onto the main road, as happened to the writer herein.

Before building permits are granted for the remaining 2 lots on Third Avenue, Subryanville, it is imperative that the M&CC and the City Engineer carry out their statutory duties and ensure the Georgetown Building and Planning laws are complied with; CHPA must adhere to the fact that Subryanville is zoned residential with restrictive title covenants. There must be compliance of by-laws on boundaries and other matters. The rights of residents, and to maintain the value of their properties must not be cast aside and ignored.

Questions for the authorities

1. What is the basis of Mr Sugrim's power to continue to build the prefab structures and add a second storey despite being expressly told by the Mayor that no permission was given for the construction of prefab buildings?
2. Why is it that after a month's notice, the regulatory bodies, M&CC, the City Engineer and the CHPA have failed to stop the construction of the prefab structures on Farnum's community ground?
3. Why are all governmental agencies non-responsive to the enquiries of residents who are affected and who have been financially maintaining and weeding Farnum Ground for years?
4. Has anyone approved the 2 storey prefab structures, the occupancy, the health, fire safety and sanitation protocols as well as the environmental effects on the children of the different levels of schools being all together? Given that the structures are air-conditioned, was approval given for the increased electrical load in a residential community and the effect of emissions from so many ACs?

5. Did the owners of the private Schools and those concerned with welfare of children explore any alternative accommodation, including the advertised Mae's Schools Extension at Farm?
6. With regard to the Third Avenue property, did M&CC, City Engineer and CHPA grant approval to construct the 3-storey concrete building in its present form or for additional stories? If yes, for what purpose and what are the reasons for ignoring the by-laws concerning boundaries?

The above breaches are not isolated. It is concerning how building and other laws can be breached and how the regulatory authorities can neglect their duties and obligations, with impunity, all to the detriment of citizens.

The view that laws can be breached, that there is an entitlement to treat community open green space as private property, for personal use or as an extension of profit-making businesses must be put to rest. A community ground or similar open space must not be used to support businesses on a permanent basis, whether for parking, to build structures or to be used for paid services, to the prejudice of citizens.

Is the use and abuse of power, the inaction and the silence due to neglect of duty, implied approval, poor governance, reluctance to act against powerful interests or administrative inaction? Whatever the reason, it undermines credibility, trust and independence, not to mention perception of bias, corruption and selective enforcement. It also sets a precedent for breaches by others. This blatant disregard of laws is compounded when the said M&CC, CHPA and relevant bodies refuse to disclose information and documents to residents, displaying a lack of transparency.

The conversion of green space is contrary to the Presidents' stated policy of biodiversity, promoting and developing green spaces. It is encouraging that he has recently reiterated this policy.

It is time for a RESET. Past illegal conduct cannot be used as a precedent. Previous wrongs must be corrected.

See publications links below

<https://kaieteurnewsonline.com/2025/10/06/subryanville-and-farnum-community-ground-abuse-of-power/>

<https://kaieteurnewsonline.com/2025/10/08/regulatory-agencies-silent-on-construction-of-maes-school-building-on-subryanville-playfield/>

<https://www.stabroeknews.com/2025/10/05/opinion/letters/regulatory-authorities-are-turning-a-blind-eye-to-the-usurpation-of-farnum-ground/>

<https://guyanatimesgy.com/subryanville-and-farnum-community-ground-abuse-of-power/>

<https://villagevoicenews.com/2025/10/07/abuse-of-power-and-disregard-for-law-at-subryanvilles-farnum-community-ground/>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/18q8mfEhaD/?mibextid=wwXIfr>