

Article by Jamela A. Ali – published 5 November 2025 in *Stabroek News, Kaieteur News, Guyana Times, Village Voice* news under letters

City breached public trust principle in relation to Farnum Playfield (*Stabroek News*)

Farnum Ground is not owned by City Council (*Guyana Times, Kaieteur News, Village Voice News*)

FARNUM GROUND IS NOT OWNED BY CITY COUNCIL

Farnum Playfield in Subryanville, Georgetown is an open green space designated as community ground. It is not the private property of the Mayor and City Councillors (M&CC) to be disposed of, rented or occupied for private advantage. It is held in trust, to be preserved for recreation and community use and bound by covenants that prohibit business use.

The public trust principle is enshrined in the Constitution of Guyana. The Municipal and District Councils Act gives authority to Council to maintain recreational open spaces for the use and enjoyment of the public. This power is not intended to be misused and converted for private gain or to refuse to disclose and produce information.

ATTEMPT TO LEGITIMIZE ILLEGAL OCCUPATION

M&CC and CHPA under the Town and Country Planning Act failed in their duties to prevent the erection of the large 2 storey prefabricated structures on the community ground. Now M&CC proposes an agreement. This is intended, to retrospectively legitimize the structures built illegally, to permit the operation of multiple private owned schools, to give licence to occupy and privatise community ground for profit and to take away public rights, all without consultation.

In effect, M&CC wishes to reward a private person for building, without permission, without proof of ownership and without certificate of registration for Mae's Schools. CHPA and government agencies have elected to remain silent despite being notified. This is an egregious breach of public trust and a violation of M&CC's fiduciary obligations which require them to act in the best interest of the public. No payment, albeit nominal, can cure an illegal occupation or convert a public trust into a private tenancy. Financial arrangements will not mitigate the traffic chaos endured by residents, who for years maintained Farnum, in the absence of M&CC upkeep. The traffic generated by the schools will lead to foreseeable potential dangers to residents and road users.

Initially, without receiving a written application, M&CC granted permission in secret to a private individual to use Farnum for one year for tents. Even before the permission ended, the developer purportedly applied for extension and proceeded to build permanent-type structures, despite objection from residents. This demonstrates how “temporary” permissions easily become entrenched, changing the character of the ground replacing green field with steel, concrete and sand - leading to slow conversion of public trust property into private possession.

Notably, lawful alternatives existed, the Mae’s Schools Extension at Farm as advertised, temporary rental of private land or placement in the breakaway Mae’s Schools established by the former Mae’s Headmistress. The very existence of alternatives removes any justification for violating public trust of land.

It must not be forgotten that in 2017, the original Mae’s owner attempted to convert part of Farnum Ground, residents intervened and M&CC and CHPA halted the illegal attempt. The residents were however left with the burden of restoring the ground.

THE INTEREST OF CHILDREN ARGUMENT

The welfare of children, while important, is not a legal exemption for breaching laws, public trust and safety regulations. Illegality cannot be justified or sanitized under the guise of compassion.

Protecting children include ensuring they learn in a safe, lawfully sanctioned environment, not in unapproved and anarchic conditions, with electrical and safety risks. A true and valuable lesson in child welfare is teaching respect for the rule of law, public integrity and environmental responsibility – not disregard for laws, justifying unlawful conduct or the art of circumventing laws.

The public interest lies in upholding the laws, transparency and accountability – the very principles that secure environment protection and sustainable use for future generations. When regulatory and state authorities fail to enforce the laws, they erode public confidence and good governance with direct consequences for the rule of law.

This conduct violates Guyana and international laws that community lands must be managed in trust for all. The attempt to privilege private interests over collective rights is contrary to Council’s by-laws, town planning, environmental and other laws that are intended to prevent degradation of public spaces and obstructs Guyana’s commitment to protecting open green spaces.

See publication links below

<https://www.stabroeknews.com/2025/11/05/opinion/letters/city-breached-public-trust-principle-in-relation-to-farnum-playfield/>

<https://kaieteurnewsonline.com/2025/11/05/farnum-ground-is-not-owned-by-city-council/>

<https://guyanatimesgy.com/farnum-ground-is-not-owned-by-the-city-council/>

<https://villagevoicenews.com/2025/11/05/farnum-ground-is-not-owned-by-the-city-council/>