

Dr. ALICE SWIFT RIGINOS

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WASHINGTON DC, 20007

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
Government of the District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 200-210-S
Washington, DC 20001

Members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment,

I am present this morning to lend support to the conditions outlined to you by Mr. William Mark Scott regarding the application before you from The Field School.

north-west
Since 1986 I have resided at 2400 44th Street, NW, with my husband, Dr. Vasilis E. Riginos, in the house which we hold in joint tenancy. My neighbors to the north at 2406 44th Street are Mr. and Mrs. William Mark Scott, from whom you have already heard this morning, and to the north of the Scotts at 2420 44th Street are Dr. and Mrs. Vincent Desiderio who could not be here this morning but who have asked that I also write in their name. Today these three properties share their boundaries to the north with the Field School. At the time when each of these houses and the property on which they stand were purchased severally, the property to the north belonged to the Cafritz Estate. The Riginos, Scott, and Desiderio properties are the neighboring properties most affected by the construction of the present Field School buildings on the Cafritz site.

The original Cafritz site had one residential building fronting on Foxhall Road. Foxhall Road itself follows a high ridge running north-south with the terrain on either side sloping sharply downhill. The land east of the Cafritz residence follows this sharp natural slope, a slope on which the houses on 44th Street are situated. At the time when the houses at 2400, 2406, and 2420 were purchased by their current owners, the sloping land to the east of the Cafritz residence on the estate property was an open area covered by a maintained lawn.

The construction of The Field School campus on the Cafritz estate amounted to a radical change in the ground level behind the original residence. Here the sloping terrain was filled in and leveled to accommodate the construction of the gymnasium and the building to its north. The surface surrounding these buildings on the east and north were paved for vehicular traffic. On the east the road surface was leveled, on the north a slope remained leading up to the parking area parallel to Foxhall Road.

Also, to the rear of the gymnasium, along its southern wall, was situated the large heating and airconditioning unit that serves the gymnasium and the adjoining multi-story building. This unit is often referred to as the "chiller."

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The operation of the chiller, the radical artificial elevation (approximately 10 feet) of the ground level to accommodate the new buildings, and the replacement of absorbent grassy lawn with hard surface have had a significant and negative impact on the properties at 2400, 2406, and 2420 44th Street. As stated, the new ground level is at a drop of about 10 feet above the Scott property. During a heavy rain there is a waterfall effect with runoff from the Field School down to the Scott's property where a pool is formed on the patio.

From 1986 to 2002 (the year when the Scotts moved in at 2460 44th Street and the year when construction of The Field School began) the house was occupied by Mrs Katherine Levinthal. The Levinthal/Scott house is quite close to ours, and the patio next door is visible from our house. I never saw flooding on the patio in all the 26 years from 1986 to 2002. This phenomenon began with construction of the School in 2002, and flooding continues to plague the Scott family today. There are even times when the flooding crosses the doorsill and enters their residence.

To return to the "chiller." This is a large heat exchange unit which serves several of the large Field School buildings—and the construction of new classroom space projected in the current expansion program for which the Field School is seeking permission will increase the space to be heated and cooled. The noise emitted by the "chiller" is deflected from the walls of the gymnasium behind it and projected to the south towards the three houses in question. In effect, the increased level of the ground behind the gym and the added height of the gym combine to create a canyon effect for our houses situated down the slope on the south side. This effect makes the sound of the running "chiller" reverberate in a loud and intrusive manner. Consequently, we have lost the use of our back yards and patios for both entertainment and quiet activities. Even on the weekends when the School is not in session the sound of the "chiller" is constant and aggravating.

To their credit, The Field School has made an attempt to moderate the noise of the "chiller," but this has met with only partial success. We think it reasonable at this time, when new building is planned that involves a larger burden for the chiller, to ask that the Field School take more effective steps to end the causes of undue stress suffered by its neighbors for the past ten years.

Finally, I turn to use of the gymnasium by outside groups and expansion of School parking behind the gymnasium. We expect regulations regarding outside use to be made known to us and enforced so as to minimize disturbance, especially in the evening hours. Further, I note that the original plans shared with the neighbors of the School while construction was underway did not include a parking area. Rather, we neighbors were shown (at the regular meetings held by the School during construction) a plan featuring a turnaround free for emergency vehicles. We were told that provision of such unimpeded access to this area was a legal requirement. Is this no longer a consideration?

I conclude by asking you to uphold the conditions presented by Mr. Scott in light of the negative impact of The Field School construction on its neighbors.

Sincerely,

Alice Regin