



September 23, 2015

BZA Application – Washington Latin Public Charter School Gym Addition

Application Meets Tests for Special Exception

This structure will be constructed within the R-3 zoning district, the height and set-back of the building will be consistent to the general intent and purpose of the zoning regulations for public schools.

Per Section 411.11, a special exception is sought for the mechanical unit to be placed on the north roof of the building, which cannot meet the 1:1 angle setback as it would be impractical for our project and full compliance would be prohibitively costly for our project for the following reasons:

1. This building addition has only two roof areas, one of them has a long-span structure over a gymnasium. Long-span structures are not designed to carry significant loads and potential vibrational loads from something like mechanical equipment.
2. The roof of the existing structure is entirely disconnected from the roof of the new addition, and is at different elevations. Additionally, the existing building is being treated as a separate building from a fire-code standpoint, and so mechanical services for the addition are entirely separate.
3. The remaining roof area on the north portion of the building has limited area due to site constraints and cost limitations. The proposed design places the mechanical equipment and enclosing screen as far from the building edge as possible while still maintaining required clearances for constructability and maintenance. The screen as currently designed is the same height as the rooftop mechanical equipment.
4. Building a parapet to the full height of the rooftop unit (a 10' height) would be prohibitively expensive for the project. The original scope of the Washington Latin Modernization project completed in 2012, initially included a gym. However, in order to meet the project budget the gym was removed from the modernization project. Over the last three years the school has been raising funds through a capital campaign and is now able to reinstate the project to build a revised gym design to modestly meet the school's needs of the Washington Latin Modernization project.

The mechanical unit will be on the north portion of the building, adjacent to Ingraham Street. However, this unit will not adversely affect the use of the neighboring property. Being an educational facility, noise from fans and vibration have been taken into account in the design and minimized to the greatest extent possible. The screen wall will further reduce noise and will minimize visibility of the unit from the street.

While the proposed mechanical screen has a lesser setback than required by the regulations, we feel it still meets the intent and purpose of the regulation by minimizing visibility of rooftop mechanical systems. Additionally, it is visually preferable to a 10' tall parapet wall because it reduces the scale of the building along the street and provides greater visual interest.