BZA APPLICATION NUMBER 16556

JEWISH PRIMARY DAY SCHOOL OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL

MARCH 15, 2000

GOOD MORNING CHAIRMAN REID AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT. MY NAME SHARON ROBINSON. I AM THE PRESIDENT OF ROBINSON ASSOCIATES, LLC, A PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM LOCATED AT 1613 CRITTENDEN ST. NE. THANK YOU FOR HEARING OUR PRESENTATION THIS MORNING. I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE JEWISH PRIMARY DAY SCHOOL'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH EFFORTS. THE JEWISH PRIMARY DAY SCHOOL HAS WORKED IN GOOD FAITH TO SATISFY THE LEGITIMATE CONCERNS OF NEIGHBORS IN SHEPHERD PARK. JPDS CLEARLY WANTS TO BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR AND REALLY DOES WANT TO BE A CONTRIBUTING PART OF THIS RESPECTED COMMUNITY. THE SCHOOL CONDUCTED EXTENSIVE COMMUNITY OUTREACH TO EDUCATE THE SHEPHERD PARK COMMUNITY ABOUT ITS APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY OCCUPANCY OF TIFERETH ISRAEL AND OHEV SHOLOM SYNAGOGUES AND TO GET COMMUNITY INPUT ON ISSUES SUCH AS TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT. THE GOAL OF THE OUTREACH WAS TO LISTEN CAREFULLY TO NEIGHBORS AND TO WORK TO PROTECT THE QUALITY OF NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE IN SHEPHERD PARK.

JPDS' COMMUNITY OUTREACH JOURNEY BEGINS IN THE LATE PART OF 1999 BEFORE THE SCHOOL FILED ITS BZA APPLICATION WHEN THE SCHOOL SUCCEEDED IN NEGOTIATING AGREEABLE TERMS WITH THE TWO SYNAGOGUES, TIFERETH ISRAEL AND OHEV SHOLOM. IN DECEMBER, BEFORE THE INK WAS DRY ON THE LEASE AGREEMENTS, EACH SYNAGOGUE DISPATCHED THEIR COMMUNITY LIAISONS TO CONTACT KEY COMMUNITY LEADERS. COMMUNITY LIAISONS, DANIEL NATHAN, AND MEMBER JEREMY GOLDBERG CONTACTED ANC 4A CHAIR, JOSEPH HAIRSTON, ANC COMMISSIONER JOURDINIA BROWN, JOE MEMBRINO PRESIDENT OF SHEPHERD PARK CITIZENS ASSOCIATION, DR. KATHERINE JAMES, PRINCIBAL OF SHEPHERD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AND NEIGHBORS DERRICK HUMPHRIES, AND FAY LEWIS.

AWARE OF THE TIME CONSTRAINTS IT FACED IN SECURING A BZA HEARING IN TIME TO MEET ITS PARENTS' REQUIREMENTS TO REGISTER THEIR CHILDREN BY APRIL, JPDS SUBMITTED ITS APPLICATION TO THE BZA BEFORE HOLDING COMMUNITY MEETINGS. JPDS HAND-DELIVERED OVER 25 COPIES OF ITS APPLICATION TO NEIGHBORS AND LEADERS. THE MOST THAT COULD BE DONE WAS TO NOTIFY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS AND THIS WAS DONE.

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JPDS WORKED ASSIDUOUSLY TO ENGAGE NEIGHBORS IN A DIALOGUE ABOUT ITS APPLICATION. IN JANUARY, WE SECURED APPROVAL TO PRESENT AT THE FEBRUARY 2 ANC MEETING. PRIOR TO THE FEBRUARY MEETING, SINGLE MEMBER DISTRICT COMMISSIONER JOURDINIA BROWN INDICATED THAT SINCE THERE WERE TWO ANC MEETINGS PRIOR TO THE BZA HEARING, NO ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING; AND JPDS DID NOT PRESENT ITS TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ANC DID DECIDE TO TAKE A VOTE AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING AND VOTED NOT TO SUPPORT JPDS' APPLICATION EVEN THOUGH A COMPLETE PRESENTATION WAS NOT GIVEN. WHILE THIS WAS UNFORTUNATE, ANC 4A DID ALLOW JPDS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT AT ITS MARCH 7 MEETING SO THE SCHOOL COULD PRESENT ITS TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN. HOWEVER, FROM A COMMUNITY RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE, MUCH OF THE DAMAGE HAD BEEN DONE.

DURING THE MONTH BETWEEN ANC MEETINGS, JPDS AND ITS DILIGENT PARENTS LAUNCHED ONE OF THE MOST INTENSIVE COMMUNITY OUTREACH EFFORTS CONSISTING OF FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS, DAILY INTERNET TOWN HALL DIALOGUES, 4 COMMUNITY MEETINGS, INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH ANC COMMISSIONERS, 3 FLIER/LETTER DISTRIBUTIONS AND 2 DIRECT-MAIL DISTRIBUTIONS. IN ADDITION, THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN WAS HAND-DELIVERED TO NEIGHBORS WITHIN A 200-FOOT RADIUS OF THE SYNAGOGUES. WE SPOKE WITH THE LEADERS OF EVERY MAJOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN SHEPHERD PARK INCLUDING: NEIGHBORS, INC., SHEPHERD PARK CITIZENS ASSOCIATION, AND THE PRINCIPALS OF LOWELL AND SHEPHERD ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

* SUPPORTERS OF THE JEWISH PRIMARY DAY SCHOOL WHO LIVE IN SHEPHERD PARK WENT DOOR-TO-DOOR TO MEET WITH THE 56 NEIGHBORS WHO LIVE WITHIN A 200-FOOT RADIUS OF BOTH SYNAGOGUES. IN FEBRUARY, RABBI ETHAN SEIDEL OF TIFERETH ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE DISTRIBUTED A LETTER INVITING NEIGHBORS TO COME TO OHEV SHOLOM AND TIFERETH ISRAEL FOR A SERIES OF COMMUNITY DIALOGUES. HE WENT TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD AND RANG EACH BELL. IN ADDITION, WE MAILED MORE THAN 150 COPIES OF THE RABBI'S LETTER TO THE MAJOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION, NEIGHBORS, INC.

* IN EARLY FEBRUARY, SUPPORTIVE NEIGHBORS AND PARENTS WENT TO THE HOMES OF NEIGHBORS WITHIN 200 FEET AND DISTRIBUTED THE JPDS' INFORMATIONAL FACT SHEET AND INVITATIONS TO FURTHER ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN DIALOGUE AND TO INVITE THEM TO A COMMUNITY MEETING AT OHEV SHOLOM.

* WE HELD NUMEROUS INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS AND/TELEPHONE TALKS WITH VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY TO DISCUSS THE SCHOOL'S APPLICATION. INDIVIDUALS WITH WHOM WE SPOKE INCLUDE: DERRICK HUMPHRIES, ESQ., ANC 4A CHAIR JOSEPH HAIRSTON, ANC COMMISSIONERS LIEUTENANT JUDITH ANDERSON, COMMISSIONER RIDDICK VANN, JOURDINIA BROWN, AND DOUGLASS SLOAN, AND ROSEMARY RIED, PRESIDENT OF NEIGHBORS, INC., JOE MEMBRINO, PRESIDENT OF SHEPHERD PARK CITIZENS ASSOCIATION, MS. GRACIE BAYTON, CHAIR OF SHEPHERD PARK CITIZENS ASSOCIATION, AND AUDREY DUFF OF COUNCILMEMBER JARVIS' OFFICE.

NEARLY 60 PEOPLE ATTENDED COMMUNITY DIALOGUES JPDS HOSTED AT THE SYNAGOGUES ON THREE OCCASSIONS FEB. 16, 17 AND 23. AFTER SECURING COMMUNITY INPUT ON THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN, JPDS, ITS TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT AND COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE MET WITH LIEUTENANT JUDITH ANDERSON, SERGEANT EDWARDS AND ANOTHER OFFICER OF THE FOURTH PRECINCT TO REVIEW THE PROPOSED TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN (TMP). THE FEEDBACK GLEANED IN THIS MEETING WAS USED TO REFINE THE TMP.

SHEPHERD PARK NEIGHBORS WHO SUPPORT THE APPLICATION CONDUCTED TELEPHONE CALLS TO NEIGHBORS TO DISCUSS THE JPDS APPLICATION. OVER 500 PEOPLE IN THE SHEPHERD PARK RECEIVED SOME OF FORM OF COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS. . . THE JPDS FACT SHEET, INVITATIONAL LETTERS FROM THE RABBI, THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN AND THE COMMUNITY UPDATE FLIER. THESE MATERIALS WERE EITHER MAILED, HAND-DELIVERED, DISTRIBUTED AT MEETINGS, AND/OR POSTED AT SHEPHERD PARK LIBRARY.

THIS WAS QUITE AN EXPANSIVE COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND DIALOGUE EFFORT AND IT PRODUCED RESULTS. SOME NEIGHBORS EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERNS AND JPDS WORKED DELIGENTLY TO ADDRESS THESE CONCERNS. MANY NEIGHBORS LET US KNOW THAT THEY SUPPORT THE SCHOOL BUT THAT THEY FELT RETICENT TO GET INVOLVED IN THE CONTROVERSY. HOWEVER, THEY WERE WILLING TO EXPRESS THEIR VOICES IN LETTERS TO THE BZA. MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED PEOPLE CALLED AND/OR SENT LETTERS TO COUNCILMEMBER JARVIS AND THE BZA IN SUPPORT OF THE SCHOOL. A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF LETTERS CAME FROM NEIGHBORS WHO LIVE IN SHEPHERD PARK. IN ADDITION, INDIVIDUALS FROM ACROSS THE DISTRICT WROTE TO EXPRESS SUPPORT. I WOULD LIKE TO READ PART OF A COUPLE OF THESE LETTERS. (MAYOR WILLIAMS, COUNCILMEMBER CATANTIA)

JPDS' WIDE-REACHING COMMUNITY OUTREACH HAS BEEN EXTRAORDINARY. CERTAINLY IN KEEPING WITH THE INFORMATION EFFORT THAT A NEIGHBORHOOD LIKE SHEPHERD PARK DESERVES. THIS IS ONE OF WASHINGTON'S FINEST NEIGHBORHOODS AND JPDS WANTS TO BE AN ASSET TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD. TO THIS END THE SCHOOL'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH WILL NOT CONCLUDE WITH THIS BZA HEARING. JPDS' BOARD VOTED A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO TO ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND BOTH SYNAGOGUES TO CONTINUE COMMUNITY OUTREACH. THE SCHOOL'S ALL-EMBRASING COMMUNITY OUTREACH ATTESTS TO JEWISH PRIMARY DAY SCHOOL'S COMMITMENT TO BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR IN THE SHEPHERD PARK COMMUNITY.