Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3-D
P.O. Box 40846
Palisades Station
Washington, D.C. 20016

March 14, 2000

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OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Ms. Sherry Pruitt
Secretary
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW Suite 210
Washington DC 20001

RE: BZA Application No. 16559 – The Field School

BY FACSIMILE: 727-6072

Dear Ms. Pruitt:

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D held its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on Monday, March 13, 2000 at Sibley Memorial Hospital's Ernst Auditorium. Notice of this meeting was posted in all SMD's seven days prior to the meeting, notice was posted in the Northwest Current and notice was also distributed by fax to interested parties. A quorum (4) was present at all times.

On the agenda was BZA application #16559 – Application of the Morris and Gwendolyn Foundation/ the Field School for a special exception to establish a private school under Section 206 for a maximum of 320 students and a maximum of 74 faculty and staff in the R-1-A District at premises 2301 Foxhall Road NW

After hearing from the Field School and other interested parties, the Commissioners of ANC3D voted 5-0-0 to recommend to the Board of Zoning Adjustment that the Field School's application for a special exception to build a new campus in a residential neighborhood be disapproved because it does not meet the legal criteria for the granting of such an exception under the zoning regulations and because the proposed use of the site is not in accordance with the Ward 3 Comprehensive Plan for this low density residential area.

Based on the extensive written and oral record before this ANC (developed over the course of five long public hearings), it is our opinion that the operation of the new Field School campus as outlined in the application will have an adverse affect on the surrounding neighborhoods because of reduced traffic safety and increased traffic congestion. A school at this location will adversely affect the quality of life for the

BZA
Case No. 16559
Exhibit No. 135

Board of Zoning Adjustment
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CASE NO.16559
EXHIBIT NO.135

community and unalterably change the character of the surrounding residential neighborhoods for the worse.

Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Concerns

The proposed site for Field School is on Foxhall Road, a major thoroughfare for commuters from Spring Valley, Wesley Heights and the nearby areas in NW Washington and Montgomery County heading downtown, as well as thousands of Virginia commuters traveling to employment centers in Upper NW Washington and Montgomery County. According to a DPW report dated March 9, 2000, over 17,000 cars used Foxhall Road daily in 1997. It is our observation, substantiated by residents in close proximity to that artery, that the traffic volume has increased substantially since the 1997 data was collected.

The proposed site is located at a point on Foxhall Road that is narrow, curvy and steep, with poor visibility. Ingress and egress from this school will be perilous for both vehicles and pedestrians as the accident data in the DPW report suggests. In addition, the extra traffic inevitably taking shortcuts to the School through our residential streets, many without sidewalks, will jeopardize the safety of our neighbors. Even at rush hour, our nearby residential streets are full of children, parents with baby strollers, dog walkers, joggers, etc. There is no other example in the Metropolitan area of such a large school that is only accessible from a very busy traffic artery with only two lanes.

Traffic Congestion

Presently, Foxhall Road is in gridlock most morning and evening rush hours. Similarly, MacArthur Boulevard is experiencing more traffic than ever before. As a result, residential side streets adjacent to Foxhall Road are feeling the impact of this traffic Commuters are turning into our neighborhoods streets (for example, Garfield, Dexter and Fulton) and proceeding down to 49th Street and ending up on MacArthur Boulevard to avoid the congestion on Foxhall Road. Locating the Field School at this site will only exacerbate a very serious problem, which already exists.

Field School's Traffic Plan

The latest traffic plan proposed by the Field School (dated March 9, 2000) is unacceptable. Although the shuttle bus component of the plan contains some useful ideas, there are many significant and crucial details still to be worked out. In addition, a major part of the plan would prohibit left turns into the School from the south bound lanes of Foxhall in the morning rush hour and thus force every car to enter and leave the School by making a right hand turn from the north bound lanes. By prohibiting left hand turns, the plan will divert morning school traffic from Foxhall Road onto the residential

side streets to the west of Foxhall so that cars can realign themselves to come back onto Foxhall Road via "W" Street in order to make the right hand turn into the School. Thus, "W" Street and other nearby residential streets will become heavily used – something this ANC tried so hard to prevent in the GWU/Mt. Vernon Campus negotiations.

The Field School's plan also envisions traffic lights on Foxhall, both at Whitehaven Parkway and at "W" Street. And, in fact, without both these lights, their traffic plan would probably be unworkable. ANC3D supports a light at Whitehaven Parkway to accommodate the increasing traffic caused by the GWU/Mt. Vernon Campus, St. Patrick's Day School and the Lab School. However, we do not think the Field School's suggested routing of their parents and students via Whitehaven Parkway is manageable because of the 325 students from St. Patrick's who are being dropped off on Whitehaven during rush hours. In addition, neither the School nor the DPW traffic reports consider the large number of students, faculty and service related vehicles associated with GW University which will begin to use Whitehaven in the next few years. / As we suggested earlier, the proposed Field School traffic of as much as several hundred cars will quickly be diverted to "W" and other nearby residential streets.

The ANC, the Palisades Citizens Association and the Neighborhood Alliance with GW have not supported and do not support a light at "W" street because we do not want this residential street to become an alternate commuter route. Field School had publicly committed to support this position. But their present traffic plan is predicated on a light at "W" Street. ANC3D believes the traffic diversion caused by this light will have a major adverse impact on the residential character of this area Moreover, a light at "W" Street will make it impossible for the two houses located on the East of Foxhall Road to safely exit their driveways.

Other Issues

The site plan does not provide adequate buffers for the adjoining residential properties from the noise, lights, exhaust fumes and water/salt run off of the parking lot.

There is no adequate public transportation for this location. Every other similar private school in this city (including the Field School in its present location) has better access to the bus or metro than this residential site in this totally residential neighborhood.

For all of the above reasons, ANC3D believes that the special exception request to locate the Field School on the Cafritz property should be rejected. We request that the BZA give our advice the "great weight" to which it is entitled under No. 1-261,DC Code, 1982 ed.

(If the BZA decides to proceed against our advice, we recommend that the approval be conditioned on a reduction in the size of the parking lot and a traffic plan worked out with the School, which is acceptable to DPW and this ANC and which should include consideration of a vehicle or student population cap and a third "left turn" lane on southbound Foxhall Road at the school site.)

Sincerely,

Eleanor Roberts Lewis (bpm)

Eleanor Roberts Lewis
Chair, ANC3D

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RESOLUTION OF PROPOSED FIELD SCHOOL FOXHALLCAMPUS

WHEREAS Commissioner Ann Heuer moved to authorize the Chair to draft and send a letter to the Board of Zoning Adjustment to reflect the Field School's application for a special exception on the grounds that it is likely to adversely affect the surrounding neighborhood because of reduced traffic safety and increased traffic congestion and also on the grounds that the proposed use of the site is not in accordance with the Ward 3 Comprehensive Plan for this low density residential area and

WHEREAS Ann Heuer additionally moved that this letter should indicate that in the event that the application is approved by the BZA, the approval should be conditioned on a reduction in the size of the parking lot as well as the development of a traffic plan worked out with the School which is acceptable to DPW and this ANC and which should include consideration of a vehicle and/or student population cap and a third "left turn" lane on southbound Foxhall Road at the school site;

THEREFORE this Resolution was voted on and unanimously approved (5-0-0) at the March 13, 2000 meeting of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3-D