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March 20, 2000

Sheila Cross Reid, Chairperson
DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Second Floor
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Case # 16559, The Field School Application for use of the Cafritz Property

Dear Ms. Reid:

I am writing in support of the Field School's application to use the Cafritz property. I am a Field parent, a life-long resident of the District, an architect versed in zoning and community issues, as well as a close neighbor of another private school that will be coming before you soon. I believe this gives me a unique perspective to share with you.

Our city generally, and BZA specifically, will face tough decisions about three private schools. I deeply hope that my hometown won't take a uniform position, saying that no school can evolve within the District, or that no stress on the city is tolerable. Such an attitude could easily dispatch these and future applicants to our suburbs. We would diminish ourselves. If we truly value education, we must work hard to find solutions to the problems of schools, when solutions are possible, that put all the issues in their unique context: those of each school, the city, and each neighborhood.

BZA was *created* to address context. The context of Field's application reflects the fact that it doesn't exist in a vacuum, that it has an impact on its current neighbors, and will have an impact in *whatever* future that develops. Perhaps the real question in this application is not its total impact, but rather, looking at the broad context, the change in its impact in relocating to Foxhall.

Our city is not a blank slate. Nor is it static. I believe that your consideration of context must wrap those broad realities around another reality, which is the quality and substance of the applicant. Field's purpose is not trivial, so the motivation for trying to solve the problems that are caused by its vitality are also part of the context before you. The city, as well as the school, are among those who have reasons to share the motivation to find solutions. Some neighbors may see themselves as having good reasons to find solutions as well.

Some specifics:

Regarding the Traffic Pattern

Field plans to have internal traffic circulation for drop-off and parking. In other words, it would operate with a gateway between the site and the adjacent street.

Regarding Traffic Volume

Field has approached all of us regarding its management plan and shuttle system. A large percentage of Field students currently use Metro and walk or bus from a station to the school. The new system would be, if anything, much easier, with shuttles dedicated to student and faculty use. As parents, we would be more comfortable with their use of this mode of getting back and forth at different times of day.

BZA
Case No. 16559
Exhibit No. 367

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16559
EXHIBIT NO.367

Site Utilization

What user best fits the site?

The site is, in a sense, the client, too. The by-right use of the Field/Cafritz site, single-family houses, would subdivide one of the great green spaces left in the city. The Cafritz house, with its history, is a part of that site and a part of the City. What user will incorporate it respectfully?

Site Organization

The Field plan arranges the buildings, and modulates their scale and rhythm to minimize impact on the site. It uses landscaping and topography to reduce impact further.

Choice of an Appropriate Site

Field is trying to leave a very congested site, immediately adjacent to perhaps the city's busiest thorofare, to make a new home. Certainly the new location will impact its neighbors, and to some limited extent increase traffic loads. But overall, the relocation is a sea change for the better, for the city as a whole. The problems, the real problems that are created for the immediate neighbors must be addressed, and the test here is whether you agree that Field has done that *sufficiently*. Not everything is possible. The site must be appropriate, not perfect.

Finally, I urge you to consider that:

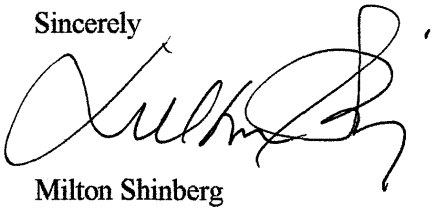
1. Neighbors of relocating or expanding schools have nothing to gain, other than stress, except when confronted by a worse potential reality. Their opposition is generally assured. In some cases, neighbors will oppose any and all users indefinitely, to avoid the stress of use. I believe it is worth considering whether denying Field's application would be a serious lost opportunity for proper use of the site, and potentially a serious institutional loss for our city. It's hardly constructive or fitting to continue, perhaps for a very long time, to use the Cafritz mansion as a huge lawnmower shed.

2. The context varies enormously, as do potentials and options for reducing stress by finding adequate solutions. Field has chosen a site and designed solutions that will reduce stress to levels that should be considered to be, and *are* reasonable. Only empty sites generate zero stress.

3. The City's interests are served by retaining existing private schools, but only when the schools' proposals *balance* their interests with avoidance of undue burden both on close neighbors and on the broader community. This requires the most careful work by the applicant. I believe Field has demonstrated clearly that such a balance has been reached.

I heard Mayor Williams speak at a recent Martin Luther King Day event. He expressed his belief that if Dr. King were alive today, he would put his greatest emphasis on education, knowing that everything else, from political to economic self-determination would flow from it. But no priority is without cost. Our duty is to find solutions that enable our children to succeed. I believe that the school has found not just a fit, but also a splendid and enlivening place to forward that mission with your help and support.

Sincerely



Milton Shinberg