NEIGHBORS AGAINST FOXHALL GRIDLOCK
2621 FOXHALL ROAD, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20007

January 16, 2003

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Mr. Geoffrey Griffis
Chairperson
District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Room 210
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Field School, BZA Order No. 16559

Dear Mr. Griffis:

As the Field School is seeking a one month extension of its alternative transportation management plan, it seems an appropriate time to bring to your attention issues related to the School.

Underground Utilities: One major concern at this time is the failure of the DDOT and PEPCO to honor condition #15 of the order, which states specifically that "the applicant, shall, with the approval and under the supervision of DPW, remove and relocate all utilities and other visual obstructions, including the existing utility poles and street lights, along the Foxhall Road frontage." In December PEPCO began its utility work and has simply located the new poles out of the way of the new lane. The record in this case shows that the School clearly was to locate the utilities underground. When asked about this, Ken Laden simply stated that the failure to place the utilities underground is due to cost considerations.

There were reasons for this condition, paramount being visibility and safety issues. These new poles are as dangerous in their new locations. How can this important condition be brushed aside without a formal modification process? Moreover, neither the School nor the city chose to notify about nor justify this decision.

Nighttime Lighting: Condition #32 states that the School "shall turn the lights at the southernmost parking lot off at 9 p.m." The School has been reminded a number of times that this is not the case. Those who can change the timers at the school continue to say that this has been taken care of yet they don't visit the site at night to get the true situation. The lights are on well past 11 p.m. when I am returning home at that time and Mrs. Shugrue at 2207 Foxhall confirms that she sees them on at midnight.

This brings up as well the offensive and excessive nighttime lighting of the school buildings. When possible, a new condition is required to reduce the nighttime lighting which goes well beyond the security needs of the School. The School is lit up like a commercial building at night but is in a residential neighborhood.

BZA
Case No. 16559
Exhibit No. 516

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16559
EXHIBIT NO.516

Community Outreach: The School's required meetings with neighbors have been totally unsatisfactory. From the days of the meetings at the Palisades Library to the ones now held at the School, the School has offered only selective information to a select few in a condescending manner. Objectionable conditions have persisted for months as the school continues to say, "We'll get back with you." Every abutting neighbor with whom I have spoken attests that the school promises and delivers nothing. Among the most objectionable conditions at this time are those suffered by the 44th Street neighbors plagued with the very noisy chiller unit and the proximity of the parked blue school buses. Other neighbors see the berms collapsing. No responsibility is taken for road issues. I am one of the select many who has yet to be invited to one of these meetings (though I have attended a few thanks to the courtesy of others). I am on the mail list, however, of "community neighbors," all blessed recently with an insulting letter about keeping off the property. The School did not take advantage of this opportunity to address in a positive manner what it is doing to alleviate the neighbors' real concerns.

Traffic Counts: I would also like to comment on the School's inbound traffic numbers submitted January 13, 2003. First, as the Upper School does not commence classes until 8:50 a.m., the window of 7:30-8:30 am is no longer a relevant indicator of morning traffic volume. Secondly, it is hard to believe that after deducting faculty/staff entries that there are more than forty shuttle runs and construction vehicles entering during that time and that no exceptions are being given.

Extension of Alternative Transportation Management Plan: It seems pointless to object to an extension though one of a month's duration seems optimistic as the road work is just commencing this week. It is unfortunate that the interim plan cannot be made permanent so as to avoid the congestion and problems associated with both the construction and the later operation of the new lanes and lights. Busing the students on a permanent basis and omitting the left turn option would make the road safer than the new "safety" project.

The School again has waited until the final deadline to apply for this extension. It is the all too familiar modus operandi of the School as demonstrated last spring. By last April it was clear that the road improvements would not be made in time for a school opening in September yet the School chose to wait until July with the school year over and the students with no place to go before it approached the city to permit a certificate of occupancy without the road improvements.

Because of the current delay neighbors and commuters now have to face the inconveniences of construction on an accelerated schedule of 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. as stated in the DDOT letter. The rush hour backups, both in the am and beginning at 3 p.m. have extended a half mile to Garfield Street. I would hope the schedule could be extended and the daytime construction window narrowed. I spoke yesterday with Stanley Freeman of the DDOT about this concern.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy M. Woodcock

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Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing was mailed by first class postage prepaid or faxed this 16th day of January, 2003 to the following:

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