Friends of Tregaron Foundation, Inc.
3101 Macomb Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

October 30, 2000

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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Ms. Jerrily R. Kress, Director
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, N.W., Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Application Number 16623
Washington International School, 3100 Macomb Street, NW

Dear Ms. Kress:

As President of the Friends of Tregaron Foundation, Inc., I write to oppose the authorization of a permanent special exception for the modular building located at Washington International School's Tregaron campus at 3100 Macomb Street, N.W. Because of reasons set forth below, I would not object to a temporary extension of the school's special exception, allowing continued use of the modular building for a short period of time. The Friends of Tregaron would like to see the modular building, which is temporary in its very construction, removed by the end of academic year in the summer of 2001.

The Friends of Tregaron Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit organization that has been in existence since 1965 and has over 500 members. The Foundation is dedicated to preserving and protecting the Tregaron Estates, a twenty-acre property that is an historic and environmental treasure, not only to our city, but to the nation. Tregaron Estates which is located in the historic district of Cleveland Park was declared an historic landmark in the District of Columbia in 1978 and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

The Washington International School ("WIS" or "School") occupies approximately seven acres in the northwest portion of the site. The school's property includes the buildings designed in 1912 by Charles Adams Platt, the premier architect of the American Country House Movement in American. Tregaron was the only residential commission of this master architect in Washington, DC. In addition, the grounds and landscaping of the Tregaron Estates are historically protected. Designed by the notable Ellen Biddle Shipman, the Tregaron Estates landscaping include formal gardens, terraces and groves, with the buildings surrounded by a natural setting. Platt intended for the buildings and the grounds to be read as a single unit. Therefore, the built resources and the grounds of Tregaron Estates are preserved and protected together.

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In 1995, when the School received approval to have a temporary modular building located on its Tregaron campus, the Board of Zoning Adjustment limited its approval to four years. The reasons set forth by the School for needing this temporary trailer were to provide classroom space for students during the construction and completion of its lower school (located on a different campus in Georgetown) and the planning and construction of the new music and arts facility and gymnasium on the Tregaron campus. In 1999, the School sought and received approval to extend the special exception permit for two additional years or the completion of the arts and athletic facilities on the Tregaron campus. The Board allowed the School to relocate the modular building during the construction period. The Friends of Tregaron Foundation, Inc. did not oppose the School's application because the School assured the Friends that the temporary unit would be removed once the arts and athletic buildings were completed. The School promised that the modular building would be unnecessary when the large new buildings with their numerous classrooms were finished.

The School now seeks to make this ugly modular building permanent. It has moved the very modern and poorly constructed building close to the historically significant mansion. Despite a new coat of paint and a few plantings, the building is unsightly and definitely out of keeping with the important historic nature of the Tregaron Estates. Not only will the addition of this modular building undermine the very historic significance of this notable property, it deteriorates the value of the landmark and may threaten the historic designations of the land. In the past, the School has worked very closely with the Cleveland Park Historical Society, historical consultants and the Historic Preservation Review Board when planning any permanent construction on the property. It would be a shame to allow a modular building, which by its very nature is temporary, to become a permanent eyesore on this beautiful property.

The reasons set forth by the School for needing the continued use of the modular building fall short of justifying its permanence. With some planning and schedule rearranging, it appears that the classes could be accommodated elsewhere. Of course, the School would like the additional space, but it did just finish a huge art and music building, as well as a gymnasium facility. Among the stated reasons for this construction project was the need for additional classroom space. It rings somewhat hollow that the School needs even more now.

The School specifically states that an accrediting group and educational consultant recommended that WIS "minimize the use of basement space," dedicate certain spaces to "reflect cultural aspects of the languages being taught," and promote efficient use by WIS of its facilities. In addition, the School added a new course, design technology or "shop" this year. Also, the School feels that it has a shortfall of office space. Therefore, the School argues it needs the modular building forever.

Without commenting on the School's curriculum or academic schedule, the Friends strongly suggests that the School work within the space that exists, especially with the addition of the new buildings. The recent construction of the music and art building and the gymnasium and sports facilities took nearly two years and was a

nuisance, unpleasant, noisy and often added unbearable traffic and construction-related problems in the neighborhood. After surviving this construction period, the Friends of Tregaron and other neighbors find it difficult to think that the new buildings were not enough.

The Friends of Tregaron enjoys a good, working relationship with the Washington International School and tries to be patient and supportive of the School and its students. Equally, the School also tries to communicate and work with the neighbors and the Friends. The School makes efforts to correct problems and be a good member of the community. Given this, the Friends will not oppose the extension of the special exception permit. We do, however, ask that it be limited in scope and not granted permanent status.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this case pending before you on November 21, 2000. I will be presenting these views before the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3C on October 30, 2000. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (202) 362-9595.

Sincerely yours,

Bonnie J. LePard

Bonnie J. LePard, Esq.
President, Friends of Tregaron Foundation, Inc.