GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Policy and Planning Administration

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TO: Jerrily Kress, FAIA
Director

FROM: Kenneth Laden
Associate Director

DATE: April 9, 2002

SUBJECT: BZA Case 16852

The Department of Public Works, Division of Transportation (DDOT) has reviewed BZA Case 16852, which is a request for a special exception that would allow the St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School (St. Patrick's) to operate a school for sixty 7th and 8th graders at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard, NW. This memo describes DDOT's activities and our conclusions regarding transportation and parking needs of the school, and recommends several conditions for approval of the application.

DDOT ACTIVITIES

DDOT has undertaken an extensive review of this case. We have met with representatives from St. Patrick's twice (once to review their plan, and once to express community concerns and DDOT suggestions), and met with representatives from ANC3D once. We have had numerous conversations with ANC3D, and wrote them a letter on April 2, 2002 that included many of the findings contained in this memo. DDOT also visited St. Patrick's Whitehaven Parkway school building to observe the morning drop off routine and traffic conditions. DDOT has worked with St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School to address many of the issues discussed in this memo. And DDOT has reviewed all of the written materials supplied to it by both the ANC and St. Patrick's.

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DDOT has worked extensively with both groups to find compromise solutions for many of the issues associated with this case. We believe that the conditions recommended in this memo balance the needs of the residential community with those of the predominant property owners on Whitehaven Parkway—St. Patrick's and George Washington University's Mount Vernon campus (GW / MV). George Washington University's

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Mount Vernon campus is beginning operations adjacent to St. Patrick's, and changes that must be made to accommodate the University are also addressed in these comments.

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND GENERAL INFORMATION

St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School is proposing to open a school on 4925 MacArthur Boulevard for 60 7th and 8th graders. DDOT and St. Patrick's agree that pick up and drop off of individual students at the MacArthur Boulevard school is not feasible. After considering several options, the school has settled on a plan to have the MacArthur Boulevard building students dropped off at the Whitehaven Parkway school building and bussed to the MacArthur Boulevard building.

However, the current configuration at Whitehaven Parkway would likely not be able to accommodate the increased traffic volume from the new school. Currently, during the morning and afternoon peak drop off period for St. Patrick's Whitehaven Parkway school, queuing traffic occasionally backs up onto Foxhall Road. This is due both to the volume of traffic visiting St. Patrick's and the length of the available queuing space. In addition, through-traffic wishing to avoid the queue must turn illegally into oncoming traffic to do so. Finally, the current configuration requires children to pass in front of cars after being dropped off at the school. Another potential problem is the increased amount of traffic on neighborhood streets that the new school would generate. This traffic is objectionable to some residents.

St. Patrick's is recommending the following changes as part of a traffic plan that remedies the current problems and enables an expansion of the school to the MacArthur Boulevard site:

- Reverse the drop off/pick up driveway direction at Whitehaven Parkway, adding a length of 250 feet to the queuing space available and allowing children to exit on the school side.
- Remove parallel parking from the north side of Whitehaven Parkway during school hours, and from the south side of Whitehaven Parkway in front of the school at all times. This will create two westbound travel lanes, with one available to westbound through-traffic, and one eastbound travel lane.
- Adopt a carpooling plan to reduce the volume of school-related traffic utilizing Whitehaven Parkway and adjoining roads.

Several other changes have to be made, by both DDOT and St. Patrick's, in order to support this plan. Proposed changes include parking, striping, and the potential construction of a raised cross walk and speed humps on Whitehaven Parkway.

GENERAL POSITION

DDOT believes that full implementation of the St. Patrick's traffic plan, including all of the stipulations and conditions listed below, will mitigate nearly all of the negative traffic impacts that expansion of the school at the MacArthur Boulevard site might otherwise generate. Given full implementation of the school's traffic plan, including adherence to all of the conditions listed below, DDOT therefore sees no traffic- or transportation-based

reasons to oppose the special exception applied for by St. Patrick's so that it can use the building at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard as a school.

Moreover, the proposed changes on Whitehaven Parkway, including lengthening the queue lane and reducing volume and friction by adding a westbound through-lane, will improve the current traffic and safety situation on the road. As a result of the changes, DDOT analysis shows that even with the projected student body additions, queues on Whitehaven Parkway are substantially reduced in both the morning by and the afternoon, and backups of school traffic onto Foxhall Road are all but eliminated.

Because of their beneficial impacts, several elements of the St. Patrick's plan, including the creation of two lanes of west bound traffic and one lane of east bound traffic, the reversal of the school's pick-up / drop-off lane, and the restriction of parking along Whitehaven Parkway, are recommendations made in the Palisades Traffic Impact Study. For all of these reasons, DDOT recommends that they be implemented whether or not the BZA application for the MacArthur Boulevard school is successful.

One reservation is that some of the most crucial conditions are behavioral ones that will be difficult to monitor and enforce. These are discussed in more detail below, but include carpooling, stationing of off-duty police officers at key locations, and restricting drop offs at the MacArthur Boulevard building, and others. St. Patrick's can add some of the conditions to the contracts that students and parents sign before enrolling. However, the community has expressed concerns about the monitoring and enforceability of these conditions, and DDOT shares these concerns. We recommend that the BZA, DDOT and the applicant consider ways of ensuring that these conditions of approval, if in fact the case is approved, are met by the school in both the long and short term.

DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC ISSUES:

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Procedures

Whitehaven Parkway St. Patrick's proposes to reverse the direction of the school's pick-up / drop-off lane at Whitehaven Parkway. DDOT believes this is an improvement over current conditions, for several reasons. One, it will increase the amount of space that cars have to queue as they wait to drop off and pick up children. Together with the other changes discussed in this statement, including the addition of a lane for through-traffic, morning and afternoon queues on Whitehaven Parkway will be substantially reduced, and traffic will rarely if ever back up onto Foxhall Road. This is true even with the projected student body additions. Second, the reversed direction will eliminate the need for children to pass in front of cars in order to enter the school, as they currently do.

MacArthur Boulevard St. Patrick's proposes to have 7th and 8th grade students dropped off at Whitehaven Parkway and shuttle-bussed to the MacArthur Boulevard building. The school has also suggested that a limited number of cars carrying carpools of three or more children be allowed to drop them off in front of the MacArthur building as well. St. Patrick's proposes to limit the number of carpooling cars allowed to drop off at MacArthur Boulevard to three or four per day. DDOT has not seen plans for monitoring

and enforcing the number of students per car, or the number of cars dropping off at MacArthur Boulevard.

In principle, DDOT does not have an issue with a few cars dropping off three or more students every day in front of the MacArthur Boulevard building. We are concerned about the provision in practice, however, because it will be difficult to monitor and enforce. Violations of this rule in the form of an increase in the number of carpools, or a relaxing of the number of children per car, would interfere with the WMATA bus stop. Therefore, although DDOT has no objections to a carpool drop off at MacArthur Boulevard if a system that will monitor and enforce this condition can be designed, if not, DDOT does not support carpool drop offs at MacArthur Boulevard. If monitoring and enforcement of this provision is in question, DDOT recommends that carpools not be allowed to drop children off at MacArthur Boulevard at all, and that all children be delivered to the Whitehaven Parkway building and bussed from there.

Both Buildings Because both the MacArthur Boulevard and Whitehaven Parkway buildings are in residential areas, parents and teachers should be required to utilize major streets in accessing the schools and avoid minor neighborhood streets. St. Patrick's has indicated that it will make teachers and parents agree to this condition.

Shuttle-Bus Route St. Patrick's proposes the following round-trip route for the shuttle-bus, carrying 7th and 8th graders from the Whitehaven Parkway building to the MacArthur Boulevard building: Whitehaven, MacArthur, Arizona, Loughboro, Foxhall, Whitehaven. DDOT supports this route, for several reasons. First, it requires only right-hand turns, which are safer than left hand turns in busses. Second, it keeps the busses off of small neighborhood streets. Third, it does not require a dangerous U-turn on MacArthur Boulevard.

DDOT recognizes that some of the streets on the proposed route are residential streets, but it hopes that the small number of round trips to be made by the busses—just three in the morning and three in the afternoon—will mean that the impact on the neighborhood is minimal.

Shuttle-Bus Pick-up, Drop-off, and Storage Locations For the safety of children and motorists, the pickup and drop off location for the shuttle busses must occur off of Whitehaven Parkway. The school has proposed, and DDOT supports, that this location be in the gymnasium garage driveway, westbound side. The busses will back up into this driveway and wait for children to board, at which time they will pull onto Whitehaven Parkway, turn right and head down MacArthur Boulevard. This location is appropriate for several reasons. One, it is out of the road, so busses will not impede or pose a safety problem for them. And two, it allows the children to board off of Whitehaven Parkway.

To keep the roads clear of busses during the day, they should be stored off of any roads. The school has indicated that one bus will be stored during the day in the alley to the west of the school, and one will be stored in the east parking lot. DDOT supports these locations.

Traffic Guards St. Patrick's proposes the stationing of off-duty, uniformed police officers at both the entrance and exit to the pick-up / drop-off lane, during peak drop-off and pick-up times. DDOT believes that these guards are necessary, for several safety reasons. The reversed pick-up and drop-off lane direction will mean that cars turning into the pick-up / drop-off lane have to cross into on-coming traffic, and that some of those exiting will have to negotiate two lanes of traffic. In addition, 7th and 8th graders will have to cross Whitehaven Parkway in order to go to the gymnasium and be picked up. Off-duty officers are necessary to make sure that the operation runs smoothly and safely.

Parking at Whitehaven Parkway

North Side Parallel Parking, Foxhall Road to GW / MV Campus Entrance In a matter tangentially related to this case, all parking, at any time, will be removed from the north side of Whitehaven Parkway, from the entrance to the George Washington University Mount Vernon campus to Foxhall Road. The removal of parking from this segment is necessary to protect the safety of visitors to George Washington University and users of the road. This action will result in the removal of about 14 spaces. The action is supported by ANC3D, George Washington University's Mount Vernon campus, St. Patrick's and DDOT. DDOT is in the process of removing this parking.

North Side Parallel Parking, GW / MV Campus Entrance to Ginger's Way DDOT recommends the restriction of parallel parking on the north side of Whitehaven Parkway, from the GW / MV campus entrance to Ginger's Way, during school times. This will provide a through-travel lane for cars wishing to avoid the school queue. Because the parking impacts of restricting these spaces are unknown, and there are community concerns that parking may spill over onto adjacent streets, DDOT recommends removing this parking on a trial basis.

Weekday parking, from the north side of Whitehaven Parkway, from the George Washington University Mount Vernon campus entrance to Ginger's Way, will be removed from 7 am to 4 pm from July 1, 2002 through October 31, 2002. DDOT will study parking patterns in the adjoining neighborhood both before and after the changes in order to observe and measure the impact of this change. If the change is found to place an undue burden on the community due to spill over parking in the neighborhood, this element of the plan can be revised. This action will result in the removal of approximately 25 spaces during 7 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday. The removal of this parking is an essential component of the Whitehaven Parkway pick-up and drop-off improvement plan, and DDOT recommends that it be done whether or not the BZA application is approved.

One community concern was daytime access to the pool and tennis courts on the Mount Vernon campus by members, who generally park on Whitehaven Parkway. However, the George Washington / Mount Vernon campus has agreed to allow members to use the internal parking facilities during the summer months.

North Side Parallel Parking, Ginger's Way to West Side of Gym To provide an adequate amount of transition time from two westbound lanes to one, all parking, any time, will be removed from in front of the gymnasium.

South Side Parallel Parking, Front of School To provide an eastbound travel lane after Whitehaven Parkway is striped, all parking, any time, will be removed from in front of the school, between the two entrances to the pick-up / drop-off lane. This area is currently zoned for no parking, daytime 7 am to 4 pm.

South Side Back-in Angle Parking In order to meet requirements for back-in angle parking on a street that is striped for two way traffic, the angle of the parking spaces along the south side of Whitehaven Parkway will have to be changed from 60 degrees to 45 degrees. The change in angle will mean that the school's parking lot will be reduced by about 8 spaces. St. Patrick's will be responsible for the re-painting of these spaces.

A change that must be made in response to the increased volume of traffic that will be generated by the George Washington / Mount Vernon campus is the removal of some of the back-in angle parking on the south side of Whitehaven. For safety, back-in angle parking will have to be removed for approximately 120 feet west from the Foxhall Road intersection. This will result in the loss of about 6 additional spaces.

East Parking Lot To ensure that there will be adequate parking for teachers and visitors to the school, DDOT believes that the parking lot currently located to the east of the school and church must remain. The lot is on land owned by the Army Corps of Engineers, and was originally intended to be temporary. The lot contains spaces for 30 cars.

St. Patrick's has been in conversations with the Army Corps of Engineers about the future of the property. St. Patrick's has shown DDOT a letter from the Army Corps of Engineer's Washington Aqueduct Division, which manages the property, expressing a willingness to allow the school to continue to use the property as a parking lot. St. Patrick's says that it has begun negotiations with the Corps to enter into an agreement that will grant the school an easement. After the Aqueduct Division approves the agreement, it then has to be approved by the Army Corps' Baltimore headquarter office.

Adequacy of Parking After all of the parking is removed from Whitehaven Parkway in the actions described above, and assuming that the east parking lot remains open, approximately 120 parking spaces will remain for teachers and visitors (30 in the east parking lot, 62 in the gym, and 28 angled spaces). St. Patrick's currently employs a total of 100 full- and part-time teachers at the Whitehaven Parkway school. With visitors, DDOT believes that the available parking spaces should be just adequate for the school's needs.

Parking at MacArthur Boulevard Building

Parking Lot A total of 12 full- and part-time teachers will be employed at the MacArthur Boulevard school. DDOT believes that the teachers and any potential occasional visitors should be adequately served by the 15 spaces available at the MacArthur building.

Access Because the MacArthur Boulevard building is in a residential area, teachers and visiting parents should be required to utilize major streets in accessing the building's parking lot. They should use MacArthur Boulevard until turning onto Ashby Street to enter the lot. St. Patrick's has indicated that it will make teachers and parents agree to this condition.

Nighttime Activities Because of the limited parking available around the MacArthur building, during any back-to-school nights or similar events, parents should be instructed to park at the Whitehaven Parkway building and get bussed to the school.

Ashby Street At this time, DDOT does not foresee any need to remove residential parking from Ashby Street, in the area adjacent to the school at MacArthur Boulevard.

Activities of Students at MacArthur Boulevard Building

St. Patrick's proposes that students at the MacArthur Boulevard building should not be allowed to leave the property. Because MacArthur Boulevard is a major, fast moving road, DDOT supports this provision.

Carpooling

DDOT believes that the school can do a better job of encouraging, and if needed, requiring, families to carpool their children. Currently, the average number of students per car is approximately the average number of students per family, indicating that few families carpool.

Increased carpooling will achieve several goals at once. It will help reduce the frequency and intensity of queuing, it will enable the school to develop the MacArthur Boulevard site for 7th and 8th grade students without having a one-for-one increase in trips generated by the school, and it will help reduce the volume of school-related traffic on area streets.

DDOT recommends that a satisfactory carpooling plan be a condition of BZA approval for the new school. At a minimum, the plan should establish as a requirement that the number of trips generated by the school not increase as a result of the increased number of students attending the proposed middle school. St. Patrick's estimates that this would require 1.59 students per car. The plan should include dates for achieving requirements, intermediary targets, incentives for compliance and penalties for noncompliance on the part of parents, and monitoring and evaluation procedures. The plan should also encompass both the pick-up and drop-off periods.

St. Patrick's has agreed in principle to formulate a carpooling plan, but as of the date of this memo had supplied DDOT with only a general, one-page outline that includes no details. The plan outlined by the school includes only dismissal (pick-up) times.

DDOT recommends that the BZA make a satisfactory carpooling plan a condition of issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the MacArthur Boulevard building. DDOT can review and approve the plan, but needs to receive it in enough time before the start of the school year that it will have time to review and approve the plan. Therefore, DDOT recommends that the deadline for a submission of a full carpooling plan by St. Patrick's be June 1, 2002. In addition, we recommend that the BZA, DDOT and the applicant consider mechanisms for ensuring compliance with this condition after the plans are approved.

Other

Striping and Signing For safety, from Ginger Lane to Foxhall Road, Whitehaven Parkway must be striped as a three-lane road, with two lanes westbound and one eastbound throughout this segment. The road must also be signed to accomplish this transition.

Traffic Calming During the times that parking is prohibited along all of Whitehaven Parkway, cars may have a tendency to drive faster than the speed limit, and the street may become attractive to high-speed, cut-through traffic. This would have a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as safety on Whitehaven Parkway. Therefore, traffic calming measures, including a raised crosswalk for students and teachers crossing to the gym and/or one or more speed humps, may be advisable for safety reasons. These measures are recommended in the Palisades Traffic Study, and DDOT recommends that they be looked into further, in conjunction with the ANC and the community. Access for emergency vehicles would be one of the issues looked at during this process.

ACTIONS TO BE MADE BY DDOT TO SUPPORT THE PLAN:

The following are actions that DDOT will make to support the St. Patrick's traffic plan:

Parking

DDOT will remove all parking, at any time, on the north side of Whitehaven Parkway, from between Foxhall Road and George Washington University / Mount Vernon campus driveway.

On a trial basis, DDOT will remove daytime, weekday parking (7 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday), on the north side of Whitehaven Parkway between the George Washington / Mount Vernon campus entrance and Ginger's Way.

DDOT will remove all parking, at any time, from Ginger's Way to the west side of the gymnasium.

DDOT will remove all parking, at any time, on the south side of Whitehaven Parkway, from in front of the Whitehaven Parkway school.

Back-in angle parking will be removed on the south side of Whitehaven Parkway, for approximately 120 feet west from the Foxhall Road intersection.

Other
DDOT will stripe Whitehaven Parkway as a three-lane road, with two lanes westbound and one eastbound throughout this segment. It will also add signs indicating the transition. The westbound transition to one lane will begin in front of the gym. St. Patrick's has submitted a suggested transition plan, which will be modified before it is implemented by DDOT.

With the input of ANC3D, St. Patrick's, and emergency agencies, DDOT will begin exploring traffic calming and safety measures such as speed humps and a raised crosswalk for Whitehaven Parkway.

SUGGESTED CONDITIONS FOR ST. PATRICK'S SCHOOL:

The following are conditions that DDOT suggests the BZA require the school to adhere to as a condition of approval:

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Procedures
St. Patrick's should pick up 7th and 8th grade students from the Whitehaven Parkway building and drop them off at the MacArthur Boulevard building.

Contingent on adequate monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, St. Patrick's should allow only cars containing three or more students to drop students off in front of the MacArthur Boulevard building. St. Patrick's should limit the number of carpooling cars dropping off at the MacArthur Boulevard building to three or four per day.

St. Patrick's should agree to have the shuttle-bus carrying 7th and 8th graders from the Whitehaven Parkway building to the MacArthur Boulevard building follow the following round-trip route: Whitehaven, MacArthur, Arizona, Loughboro, Foxhall, Whitehaven.

St. Patrick's should require parents and teachers to utilize major streets and avoid residential streets in accessing the school buildings.

St. Patrick's should agree to a pickup and drop off location for the shuttle busses that is off of Whitehaven Parkway proper. The location agreed to should be in the gym garage driveway, westbound side.

St. Patrick's should agree to store shuttle busses during the day and night in locations off of any roads. One should be stored in the alley to the west of the school, and one in the east parking lot.

St. Patrick's should hire two off-duty, uniformed police officers, to be posted at the entrance and exit to the lane, during peak drop-off and pick-up times.

Parking
St. Patrick's should be required to re-paint the angle parking spaces on the south side of Whitehaven Parkway, changing them from a 60 degree- to a 45 degree-angle.

St. Patrick's should be required to retain the east parking lot at the Whitehaven Parkway building. Without these parking spaces, St. Patrick's will not have enough to accommodate teachers and visitors to the school.

Because the MacArthur Boulevard building is in a residential area, St. Patrick's should require teachers and visiting parents to utilize major streets in accessing its parking lot. Teachers and visitors should use MacArthur Boulevard until turning onto Ashby Street to enter the lot.

Parents attending back to school night or any nighttime activities at the MacArthur Boulevard school should park at Whitehaven Parkway and be bussed to MacArthur Boulevard.

Activities of students
St. Patrick's should require that students at the MacArthur Boulevard building remain on campus.

Carpooling
St. Patrick's should be required to create, implement, and monitor a DDOT-approved carpooling plan. St. Patrick's should be required to submit a plan for DDOT review and approval by June 1, 2002. Completion of a DDOT -approved plan should be required by BZA before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued for the MacArthur Boulevard building. The plans should include mechanisms for ensuring compliance with this condition.

At a minimum, the plan should establish as a requirement that the number of trips generated by the school not increase as a result of the increased number of students attending the proposed middle school. St. Patrick's estimates that this will require 1.59 students per car. The BZA could also set this level of carpooling as a minimum and encourage the school to exceed it. The plan should include dates for achieving the requirements, intermediary requirements, incentives for compliance and penalties for noncompliance on the part of parents, and monitoring and evaluation procedures. The plan should also encompass both the pick-up and drop-off periods.