4901 Ashby Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20007-1046

April 11, 2002

Application No.: 16852

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To The Board of Zoning Adjustment;

This states our opposition to the effort of St. Patrick's School to obtain a special zoning exception to the residential status of 4925 MacArthur Boulevard NW, the corner of MacArthur Boulevard and Ashby Street NW, in order to locate its junior high school at that site. It complements our request for party status in this matter, dated March 31, 2002

I (Douglas) have been well acquainted with this neighborhood since 1956, and we have resided in the immediate neighborhood of 4925 MacArthur Boulevard N.W., at the above address, for 33 years, since 1969. We are within 200 yards and line of site of the premises in issue.

We purchased our home primarily because of the residential character of the immediate neighborhood. The portion of MacArthur Boulevard, N.W. from V Street NW to Dana Place NW and its off-streets such as Ashby Street have always been residential. Reaffirming the residential nature of this area is the fact that the only material change in this immediate neighborhood, in the last ten years, has been the reversion of the former St. John's Development Center site, at MacArthur and Chain Bridge Roads NW, from educational to residential status.

Our block of Ashby Street is narrow. The intrusion of 60 twelve/thirteen year olds plus twelve faculty proposed by St. Patrick's would cause irremediable harm to our quiet area in terms of overcrowding, traffic, loss of parking, noise and trash, and clear violations of the concept of residence.

While each request for an exception stands on its own, St. Patrick's School has, in its proposal, cited the exception granted the present owners of this property, The Washington Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, as precedent for its (St. Patrick's) application. Its supporters have repeated this assertion at every meeting on this matter.

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District of Columbia
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EXHIBIT NO.159

This is demonstrably wrong. The only similarity is in the number of persons to inhabit the premises, 60 student plus twelve faculty members. The similarity ends here.

The Institute's exception, contained in Appeal #7360, Order entered July 16, 1963, limits it to a "... post graduate school of psychoanalysis for physicians." - adults, --- people of 35 years or older. St. Patrick's proposes to teach 12/13 year olds, at a junior high school, hardly a comparable population.

Moreover, the Institute's exception specifically limits the class use of the premises, in monthly terms, to four and half-hours on Saturday mornings, plus two nights a month. This provides a tentative monthly use of the premises to from 27 to 31.5 hours a month depending on the number of Saturdays in the month. Making reasonable allowance for faculty meetings and preparation of eight hours a month and the total class time usage for the Institute is from 35 to 39.5 hours per month.

This usage only concerns the regular academic year. The Institute does not run summer classes.

Contrast that with the St. Patrick's usage as detailed in its proposal and many supporting documents. For the regular school year, it proposes to use the premises five days a week, from student arrival at 7:30 AM to at least 4 PM and possibly 6:00PM. Of course, the faculty must be on hand when the students arrive, providing for a minimum of an additional half-hour on each end of the student use. Thus, there is a minimum 9.5-hour day, five days a week. Using 22 days per month as the usual school time, there will be a total of 209 hours a month use of the premises, at a minimum.

In other words, St. Patrick's plans to use the premises over 5 times as much as the Institute use --- 209 hours a month compared with 39.5 hours a month.

Viewed another way, the 22 day school month contains 528 hours. St. Patrick's proposes to use the premises 209 hours, almost 40 percent of the time, as compared with the Institute's seven- percent monthly usage.

St. Patrick's has not stated whether and how it plans to use the premises on weekends.

St. Patrick's has left open the possibility of using the premises for summer school activities. As noted earlier, the Institute does not run summer classes.

There is no reasonable way the Institute's exception is a precedent for St. Patrick's. This proposal will cause overcrowding, overuse and their attendant problems of traffic, parking, noise and trash.

The inappropriateness of this requested exception is also evidenced by the experience of the owners of these premises prior to the Institute, The German School. On June 21, 1961, the Board of Zoning Adjustment granted the school a limited exception, for a trial period of two years, to operate a school for 25 students with an adult couple resident on the upper floors of the building. There was no community opposition. The Palisades Citizens' Association voted against the idea but elected not to oppose the proposal.

One year later, on July 18, 1962, the school asked for an expansion of the exception by 50 students. This request was denied because of, "... noise, traffic, and number of students. Further, the Board is also of the opinion that the granting of this exception would not be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and maps, and would tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with said zoning regulations and maps." The Board further stated, "... (2) There was considerable opposition to the granting of this appeal registered at the public hearing."

On the present issue, other letters from immediate neighbors have detailed the problems of traffic, parking, noise and trash. We agree with the substance of those complaints.

A petition opposing this proposal has been signed by 31 of the 34 property owners listed in St. Patrick's request as the most affected. Additionally, about 150 other nearby neighbors have signed as well, for a total of about 180 and we're still adding signatures. Moreover, please note that, of the 22 residents on this block of Ashby Street, 10 or 45 percent, are either retired or work out of their homes and are thus home significant portions of the day.

On another aspect of this proposal, until a week ago, I was chair of the Palisades Citizens' Association Planning Coordination Committee. It was one of the four PCA committees involved with this issue, the other committees being Zoning, Traffic and Environment. Planning and Zoning issued reports but made **no** recommendations: Traffic and Environment recommended against the proposal. At the PCA Board of Directors Meeting on this issue, on March 13, 2002, thirteen of the fifteen Board members voted to recommend against St. Patrick's proposal.

On April 2, 2002, the PCA voted against the Board's recommendation, 168 to 99, and for St. Patrick's, 124 to 44. In interpreting these votes, please note that no one from the immediate neighborhood supported the school. Moreover, of those explicitly supporting St. Patrick's, very few have the Zip Code, 20007, which surrounds 4925 MacArthur Boulevard NW. On the other hand, as noted earlier, we have approximately 180 signatures opposing St. Patrick's, almost exclusively from 20007.

Additionally, the above negative factors, overcrowding, traffic, parking restrictions, noise and trash, are the same factors that have a negative effect on nearby real property values. While this is not a "zoning element" it is nontheless very real to us immediate neighbors. It has been said that a nearby school can increase property values. That is only true for public schools. High priced private schools do not carry the advantage of no cost enrollment. As a former member of the Board of Real Property Assessment and Appeals, I (Douglas) have some experience in such matters.

The situation of the neighborhood has not changed. It is still residential. For these reasons, we urge the ANC to vote to deny St. Patrick's request for an exception.

Sincerely,

Ana R. Ormerod

Douglas S. Ormerod

Board of Zoning Adjustment
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