BZA Application #16852
(St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School)

Statement of Douglas S. Ormerod
October 8, 2002

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My name is Douglas S. Ormerod. My wife and I have lived at 4901 Ashby Street N.W. for thirty-three years. Our home is within 200 feet and line of sight of the subject premises, 4925 MacArthur Boulevard N.W. We oppose the requested special exception.

Our letter of April 11, 2002, opposing the petition is on file.

Preliminarily, please note that my wife and I do not oppose the idea or the need for this school. We oppose the use of this site for such a school, as both inherently inappropriate to the character of the neighborhood and fundamentally inadequate for the purposes of a junior high school, or any school.

I would like to make three points.

1. With respect to the use of the premises, St. Patrick's has attempted to legitimize its claim that the prior use of 4925 MacArthur Boulevard N.W., as a post graduate school of psychoanalysis is precedent for its proposed use as a junior high school. A look at two critical factors demonstrates the inconsistency of this claim.

    a. Compare the student bodies:

        1) The Institute: practicing psychoanalysts, at least 40 years or older, middle-aged adults.
        2) St. Patrick's: 12, 13 and 14 year olds.

        Totally different groups in attitudes, perceptions, maturity and deportment

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b. Compare program (educational) time on the premises:

1. The Institute: 27 to 31.5 hours a month -- pursuant to BZA Order 7360, July 16, 1963
2. St. Patrick's: 154 to 161 hours per month — "Defining Our Program for Grades 7 and 8 at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard" January 22, 2002

St. Patrick's proposed use of the premises is 400 percent greater or 5 times that of the Institute's.

There is no similarity between The Institute's use and St. Patrick's proposal and thus, no useful analogy.

St. Patrick's claims that, at the time of its proposed daytime use of the premises, most residents are not home. There are 21 permanent residents on our block of Ashby Street N.W. Twelve of them are either retired, work out of their homes and there is one infant. That's 57% who are at home much of this time.

2. St. Patrick's claims that the school will be a benefit to the neighborhood. Since the school announced its intention to open the junior high school in December 2001, neighbors have asked St. Patrick's how many Palisade's students now attend the school, in order to get a precise picture of the current benefit to the Palisades. This question has been asked at every public forum on this issue

St. Patrick's answers have been uniformly evasive, provided in terms of ZIP codes --- 20007 and 20016. But these codes include many other communities besides the Palisades, such as Georgetown, Burleith, Glover Park, Wesley Heights, and Spring Valley.

St. Patrick's now has some 440 students. Identifying the Palisades students from this modest number would seem to be a rather easy task. This could take a reasonably competent staffer about two hours. Yet we have waited, in vain, for six months for an answer.

If the Palisades are in fact important beneficiaries of the school's presence, the school should be able to quantify this benefit, but it has consistently refused to do so.

We hope the BZA can extract this piece of important information from the school.

3. The Office of Planning report on this matter unintentionally provides an overriding reason for rejecting this petition.

   a. It approves the request but qualifies its approval with **18** conditions, two typewritten pages worth. All of these were either suggested by or agreed to by St. Patrick's to ameliorate conditions, which could otherwise have defeated this request.

   b. Many if not most of these conditions are important and limit the operation of the school. The number and importance of these conditions demonstrate the inherent impropriety of this site for this purpose

   c. If adopted by the BZA, and there is real doubt about the ability of the school to enforce the behavioral requirements, the result would be a severe distortion of the classical portrayal of a junior high school, reducing it to a parody in order to fit these premises.

The attempt to insert this distorted proposal into our very densely residential neighborhood is a classic example of forcing a square peg in a round hole. Actually, the hole itself does not even exist.

For these and the many other reasons cited by other neighbors opposed to the petition, this is the wrong site for the school and we ask that you reject the petition.