Memorandum

To: ANC 3D

From: Residents in the Vicinity of 4925 MacArthur Boulevard

Date: February 6, 2002

Re: Establishment of a Jr. High School at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2002 MAR 26 AM 10: 09

The 1966 edition of "A Community History" contains the following passage, "With each stage of development, our area has become a better, more comfortable, more convenient, more desirable place in which to live and to raise a family. None of us need to move to the booming suburbs. Our environment here is greener, more rural, more scenic, more wholesome, more friendly, and has less traffic than many of the sprawling new developments far removed from the center of our Nations's Capital." Harold Gray's description of Palisades is precisely why the residents of Ashby Street and the surrounding MacArthur Boulevard area moved to that location.

About the same time the previous passage was being written, St. Patrick's School proposed expanding its program to include grades four, five, and six. Their plan was not viewed by the Foxhall community as an expansion of community service, but rather as a magnet for traffic and congestion which would have a negative impact on the neighborhood. At the hearing before the Board of Zoning Adjustment there was emphatic protest by the Foxhall community to the school expansion, and the requisite special exception was not granted by the BZA. The school applied again after an interval. Again, community opposition and no special exception. The result was to move the church and its school to its present location at 4700 Whitehaven Parkway. In the 25 years since St. Patrick's moved to Palisades there has been significant growth in the size of its campus and the number of students attending grades K through 6.

In 1999 St. Patrick's Campus Master Plan was presented to and endorsed by ANC 2E and 3D. It states, "The positive ANC and other community responses to the Campus Master Plan reflect, in part, St. Patrick's decision not to add any students, grade levels, or faculty as a result of the plan, and therefore not to increase traffic and parking demands on the Foxhall Road-Whitehaven Parkway area. While the wider community has expressed concern about other institutions' plans for the area, St. Patrick's has been able to demonstrate its determination to maintain the current scope of its program, albeit in the context of a significantly enhanced physical plant."

The "assurance of its determination to maintain the current scope of its program" appears to have been St. Patrick's means to gain the support of ANC 2E and 3D, the Palisades Citizens Association and the wider community to assure passage of its 1999 application before the BZA for the addition of a gymnasium and an addition to a classroom building.

The campus plan that was to end any further expansion changed in September of 2001 with the establishment of a seventh grade housed in rented space on MacArthur Boulevard. In December of 2001, St. Patrick's appeared before the Palisades general membership meeting and announced that it's "Vestry and Board had reversed themselves, and decided to move quickly to open a small

BZA Case # 16852

BZA
Case No. 16852
Exhibit No. 41

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16852
EXHIBIT NO.41

program for Grade 7 in September of 2001." In a period of less than two years 1999 to 2001, St. Patrick's determination to maintain the program cited in its Campus Master Plan changed but St. Patrick's made no courtesy calls at community meetings to inform, or ask for approval, of the Jr. High School. The school finds itself in a difficult position as it is occupying rented space and in September of 2002 a seventh and eighth grade will be in full operation. A permanent home for the Jr. High School must be found. As a result of this backdoor approach, students of the seventh grade are unable to use the Whitehaven campus during the school day because they put the school over its approved BZA student cap and the BZA has not been informed of the addition of a seventh grade.

The addition of a junior high school with 60 students and 12 faculty and staff in the midst of a residential neighborhood will have considerable impact. Ashby Street is one block long–to be exact, 400 feet long and 25 feet wide. Seven of its nineteen residents are retired. These are long-time residents living in a very settled, quiet community. None of the houses consist of more than three family members. Placing 72 individuals in a house at MacArthur and Ashby Street, albeit larger than the surrounding houses, is extreme and does not fit with the character of the neighborhood. The proposed establishment of St. Patrick's Junior High School in the midst of Palisades' residential core is hardly a continuation of current property use. The Washington Psychoanalytic Institute meets twice a week for four hours per session. Adult psychiatrists are very different from 60 full-time early adolescent students.

St. Patrick's has been unable to control and unwilling to change the traffic congestion that results from its 440 elementary students being dropped off and picked up on Whitehaven Parkway. It is not uncommon to have cars backed up onto Foxhall Road in the afternoon. In addition, Engine Company 29 recently informed St. Patrick's that it no longer uses Whitehaven Parkway, the most direct route to Foxhall Road, because it is not accessible for most of the day. The safety of St. Patrick's students is in jeopardy as are students at Mt. Vernon and residents of the Foxhall Road area.

The traffic plan presented by Wells and Associates, LLC is an attempt to ameliorate the community and smooth over the impact of the new campus site. The fact remains, there will be **500 students attending St. Patrick's in grades K-8 (9)**. Those 500 students must get to school and get home from school. The potential exists for 500 cars to travel through the Palisades area twice daily. In St. Patrick's directions for parents it is suggested that parents use W Street to access Foxhall Road and Whitehaven Parkway. Their new buses might also follow the same route when leaving the driveway on Ashby Street. Again, it doesn't matter how cars and buses access Whitehaven Parkway. They use neighborhood streets.

The science lab and math classes will continue to be located two blocks away on MacArthur Boulevard in the rented space until 2003 when the lease ends. An obvious need to transport 60 students to different campus sites at various times of the day in a timely manner will necessitate

the use of buses. Regardless of whether they intend to walk between campuses, escorted by a teacher, time and weather are important factors. Bus trips from the 4925 MacArthur campus will increase as the need increases to move students around the community and the city. It is naive to believe that with continued growth at St. Patrick's there will not be an increase in bus traffic, pollution and noise in this community.

St. Patrick's maintains that there is ample parking at the 4925 MacArthur location. Full use of the parking lot by teaching staff and visitors as well as trash dumpsters will impact outdoor student activities on the black top surface which occupies one-third of the outdoor space. As a result, Ashby Street will be used by St. Patrick's for overflow parking. Already, the school has informed the neighbors that by law an area from MacArthur Boulevard to the driveway of the property on Ashby Street will be marked by the School Safety Inspector with "no parking at anytime" signs. Adjacent neighbors should not be forced to find alternative parking on a street where only one house uses a garage. Parking adjustments should not be made by residents so a private school can occupy this site. Neighbors of the site should not have to compete with staff and parents of St. Patrick's for parking spaces on a street that currently accommodates its resident's needs.

It is not clear how trash removal at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard will be handled. A large trash dumpster is currently located at the back of the property on the parking lot. If faculty begin arriving at 7:00 am access to the trash dumpster will be impeded. The proposed student lunch program will require an increase in trash collections as remains or student lunches will be left in the dumpster. Recycled soda cans, glass containers and paper are also a consideration. Where will additional dumpsters be parked and how/how often will they be removed?

The assertion that sixth and seventh graders will not be noisy is patently absurd. Not only are they noisy, they should be! Early adolescence is a time of enormous change and pressure. Boys, in particular, need opportunities to discharge pent-up energy and should not be hampered in their pursuit of healthy expression of that energy. School representatives are being disingenuous in their assurances that sixty or more students in the house and on the grounds will not be disruptive to the surrounding neighborhood.

The Palisades community currently supports complexes occupied by St. Patrick's School, The Lab School of Washington, Rock Creek International School, Georgetown Day School, the Field School, Our Lady of Victory, River School and George Washington University at Mt. Vernon. Each institution brings additional traffic, congestion and students from neighborhoods outside the Palisades and Washington, DC. Several of these institutions currently have plans to increase their student cap and physical plants. The fact that there is some open space remaining in the Palisades area is precisely what makes it so appealing to any institution that is looking to expand. However, this community cannot continue to sacrifice R-1-B zoned property for educational institutions that must expand to meet increases in salaries and equipment needs.

It is time that residents ask, "what are these exclusive private schools contributing to the Palisades community besides traffic congestion, pollution, noise, loss of trees, light and green space?" It is time to recognize that these institutions are businesses and that they are tax exempt.[1] It is time to say, " no" to St. Patrick's and the establishment of a junior high school at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard. Experience has shown that with each stage of development at St. Patrick's Elementary School, the Palisades area has not "become a better, more comfortable, more convenient, more desirable place in which to live and to raise a family."

The neighbors immediately adjacent to, and near the proposed site of St. Patrick's Jr. High School at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard oppose granting a special exception to the zoning for this residential property based on the following objectionable conditions: noise, traffic and the number of students. These neighbors would support the construction of two additional residences on the property. The issue of special exceptions would be permanently put to rest and this residential core of the Palisades would be preserved. **We ask that ANC 3D not support St. Patrick's request for a special exception to the Zoning Code for the property located at 4925 MacArthur Boulevard.**

---

[1]An aggregate of tuition and required fees from St. Patrick's School, The Lab School of Washington, Washington International School, Georgetown Day School, Rock Creek International School, Field School, Our Lady of Victory and River School is $40 M a year. Not one cent of this money is taxable. Not one cent of this money is returned to the community.