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Letters to the Editor
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January 29, 2002

When I attended the Palisades Citizens' Association meeting in December, I was eager to hear what Peter Barrett and Katherine Bradley of St. Patrick's School had to say about the intended use of the property on the corner of MacArthur and Ashby streeets as a junior high for their school. As a resident of the Palisades since 1987 (on Ashby Street close to the property under discussion), I have enjoyed living in my quiet, green neighborhood in the midst of a busy city. I was reassured by their apparent sincerity and openness, their promises of slow growth to a limited number of students, no addition of high school students, no summer school, and small staff that would park in the existing lot, and felt that the school could possibly be a good use for the property.

Imagine my surprise when, in an information packet left at our front door at the end of January, their story had changed. Although our neighborhood had gotten together after the first meeting and drawn up a list of questions for St. Patrick's outlining our concerns, we had not received answers until the indirect ones given in the packet under the guise of St. Patrick's offering information. Nor had Barrett or Bradley to met with us to discuss these concerns as they had indicated they intended to do; in the packet we were given several dates they could meet with us individually, not as a neighborhood group. Now there might be summer school classes, and if there weren't enough junior high students to fill the school to capacity, students in ninth grade students would be allowed to stay on, although addition of high school wouldn't be "permanent," whatever that meant. Doors were left open for St. Patrick's to change its mind, to "move quickly" to respond to demand for more private schools from parents in the Washington area, not the neighborhood. I realized then that we had not been told the truth. We had been told whatever it took to get community support for the school, which then could do whatever it wished. How much will St. Patrick's story change when they present to the BZA? Is this the example the leaders of the school are setting for their students? I can't support location of this chameleon in my neighborhood.

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BZA Case # 16852

BZA
Case No. 16852
Exhibit No. 49

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16852
EXHIBIT NO.49