NCRC
National Child
Research Center

Susan L. Piggott
Director

October 21, 2003

Ms. Susan B. Taylor
3301 Highland Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Susie:

Felix Sanchez shared with us your letter to him and we would like to respond to a few points. First, we want to reaffirm Felix Sanchez's testimony and restate that several parents have raised valid concerns with NCRC over certain tactics of some of the opposing neighbors. This is not a new issue. An edited version of a letter from one of our parents appeared in the Northwest Current in November 2002, and a letter signed by several of our parents, including Mr. Sanchez, was filed with the BZA in February 2003. We have enclosed copies of both these letters. Many families have lived and breathed this project over the last year and a half, and feel strongly about the views they want to share. While we cannot know what motivates the extraordinary opposition to our project, we are a mission driven school and part of that mission is to support the right of our community to express such views.

Second, while of course you had the right to copy members of the BZA on your letter to Mr. Sanchez, it is unfortunate that you chose to do so. To the extent that you disagree with his testimony, you obviously have ample opportunity to respond at the next hearing. By copying BZA members in this fashion and including (as demonstrated below) inaccurate information about the history of this project, you put NCRC in a position where it has no choice but to submit a response to the BZA.

In your letter, you refer to the history of this project. As you correctly state, we contacted you to begin a discussion about our plans

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BZA
Case No. 16970
Exhibit No. 253

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.253

and to enlist your views. We invited members of the community to a meeting on February 2, 2002 to present our preliminary plans ***and to solicit their feedback***. You suggest in your letter that you were interested in forming a committee to address traffic issues. In fact, at our February 2nd meeting NCRC provided sign-up sheets for traffic, design and landscape committees, but vocal opponents urged people in the room not to sign up for these committees. Regrettably, from that day forward, the lines were drawn and we have seen very little interest from the organized opposition to explore possible solutions. Instead, the opposing neighbors seem to have focused all their efforts on finding ways to thwart the project (including disruptive videotaping of our young children and selectively putting forth traffic issues in a way that distorts the impact on the neighborhood of NCRC-related traffic).

In spite of this disappointing response from the neighbors, we took the initiative to retain a traffic consultant to fully assess any traffic issues. In addition, we have tried to respond to neighborhood concerns as best we could understand them (frankly, this task would have been much easier with the benefit of constructive community input, which was not generally forthcoming). To that end, NCRC scaled back the size of the construction project, reduced proposed enrollment, and made immediate improvements to a transportation management plan (TMP) that was, frankly, already effective. We had hoped that these unilateral steps would be properly understood as sincere efforts by NCRC to be a respectful and responsive neighbor.

Your letter makes it clear that the opposition is against NCRC unless it remains just the way it is now. This more than anything explains why we have been unable to reach agreement. NCRC strongly believes that it needs to change for the future. This includes new classrooms and a modest increase in enrollment. It has become increasingly clear to us that no matter what we do, no matter what changes we make to the TMP, no matter how hard we try to find ways to improve the situation, the opposition simply will not accept any change compared to what exists today in terms of enrollment and buildings.

We believe as you do that the history of NCRC's relationship with the community has been supportive and cooperative and that many neighbors have had the opportunity for their children to receive an excellent education. We hope you understand that we want to continue providing that opportunity to new students with improved facilities.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Piggott

Alexa Halaby

cc: Geoff Griffis
Curtis Etherly
Anthony Hood
David Zaidain

Nov. 6, 2002

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Preschool expansion is worthy of support

My husband and I have two children attending the National Child Research Center. I am concerned about what I perceive to be a small group of people using self-serving statements and scare tactics against the school.

Neighbors opposed to the school's plans have made references to wanting to keep more outsiders away. In one letter that an opponent sent to our parent body, the author warned school parents of the negative implications of having more students coming into Cleveland Park from the outside.

These neighbors argue that their primary concern is traffic. They long for the "good old days" when the school was filled primarily with children from streets immediately surrounding the school. The preschool has never been just a neighborhood school. For 75 years, the preschool has been dedicated to the development of young children. It is central to the preschool's mission that the benefit of the school experience not be limited solely to Cleveland Park children. The school's attempts to diversify have brought both typically developing children and those with special needs from all parts of Washington.

The school has undergone various efforts to be inclusive of the broader urban environment of Washington, D.C., and the world. In the 1930s, Japanese diplomats sent their children to the school. In the 1930s, the school provided training for public school teachers. In 1965, the school received a Schaefer Project grant to provide a summer Head Start program. The school received support from the Donner Foundation for scholarships for inner-city boys. The school was an early member of the Black Student Fund founded in 1964 and is currently a member of the Black and Latino student funds.

There are some truths. The National Child Research Center is a great school. There is a lot of traffic in Washington. People don't like change. School expansion is often seen as inconvenient and even trouble to anyone not immediately benefiting from it. On the other hand, students, parents and staff of a longstanding, worthwhile institution shouldn't have to feel unwelcome in its neighborhood. The school is striving to implement its strategic goals, including the goal of providing a safe, secure, supportive and nurturing environment for a diverse student body that is reflective of the city and society at large. This goal deserves community support.

Victoria Baecher Wassmer
Mount Pleasant

Planned Parenthood should show candor

After reading about Planned Parenthood's gala honoring some local women and some not-so-local men (The Current, Oct. 30), I couldn't help but note that the selection of honorees was more about Planned Parenthood than about the honorees themselves.

In choosing to honor the director of the very admirable Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Planned Parenthood attempted to bathe in the reflected glory of the center. Mary's Center provides crucial services to pregnant women and their children. Planned Parenthood provides no services to women who will not abort.

In choosing to honor an obscure professor who trumpets abortion as an accepted viewpoint in "all of the world's major religions," Planned Parenthood sought to justify its business as religiously approved.

The chief executive officer of Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington stated, "People are always surprised" to learn that abortions are "only" 10 percent of Planned Parenthood's services. But Planned Parenthood is our country's largest abortion provider, and abortions continue to be its major money-making business. Why isn't Planned Parenthood paying tribute to that?

Maura Mudd
Cleveland Park

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Current publishes letters representing all points of view. Letters should be signed and must include the writer's home and business telephone numbers, as well as home address. Because of space limitations, submissions should be no more than 400 words and may be subject to editing. Letters intended for publication should be addressed to: Letters to the Editor, The Current, Post Office Box 40400, Washington, D.C. 20016-0400. You may send e-mail to current@erols.com.

February 2, 2002

Mr. Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: BZA application #16970

Dear Mr. Griffis:

We are parents of children that either currently attend or recently attended NCRC. We are also city residents that are concerned about what we perceive to be a small group of self-entitled people using a variety of self-serving statements and scare tactics to foment opinion against the school and its modest plans for the future.

In various statements, neighbors opposed to the school's plans have made references to wanting to keep more outsiders away from the Cleveland Park enclave. In one letter that the opposition sent to our parent body last spring (unethically using the school's directory) the author warned parents at the school of the negative implications of having more students coming into Cleveland Park from the outside. The code words used in the correspondence were those known to any familiar with the campaign tactics of opponents to civil rights and desegregation. It is of little surprise then that NCRC school's director received many calls from upset parents who felt the neighbor was exclusionary in his letter, or worse. As to scare tactics, it also is not surprising, given the tone of this letter and its wide dispersal, that people of a variety of racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds that come to the school would find it offensive to be videotaped and monitored on a routine basis by neighbors for the past year. What exactly are they trying to prove and to whom?

Most recently, in public statements to the Historic Preservation Review Board hearing January 23, 2003, the historian, Ms. Kathy Wood, hired by those opposing the renovations, continued the exclusionary rhetoric, she stated that:

> The National Child Research Center as a neighborhood nursery school complements John Sherman's vision of the Cleveland Park as a cohesive community with amenities enhancing the quality of life of resident familes and individuals.
>
> NCRC, as an institution promoting confereces and drawing participant and students, all who arrive from outside the area, does not coincide with John Sherman's vision.

Of course, these neighbors argue that their primary concern is traffic. They long for the "good old days" when the school was filled primarily with children from streets immediately surrounding the school. In fact, NCRC has never been just a neighborhood school. For 75 years, well prior to the creation of the Historic District, NCRC has been dedicated to the development of young children. Indeed, it is central to the school's mission that the benefit of an NCRC experience not be limited solely to Cleveland Park children. The school's attempts to diversify in all ways have brought to NCRC both typically developing children and those with special needs from all parts of Washington and the school is very proud of that.

The school has undergone various efforts over the years to be inclusive of the broader urban environment of Washington, DC and the world. From its inception, NCRC's student body was ethnically diverse. In the 1930s, Japanese diplomats sent their children to the school. Also in the

1930s, the school provided training for public school teachers, including African-American teachers. In 1965, NCRC received a grant from the Schaefer Project to provide a summer Headstart program at the school that served disadvantaged children. And, NCRC received support from the Donner Foundation for scholarships for inner-city boys to attend the school. Furthermore, NCRC was an early member of the Black Student Fund founded in 1964, and is currently a member of the Black and Latino Student Funds.

Last fall NCRC hosted a one day conference on early childhood education entitled, Building Scaffolding for the Future. The school successfully raised funds from private foundations for this conference so that it could host interested DC area public school faculty as well as its own teaching staff. NCRC received numerous calls and letters of support from the attendees on the quality, depth and usefullness of the conference for early childhood educators. Shervin Malekzadeh, an early childhood teacher at Bancroft Elementary School in Mount Pleasant, wrote a letter to the Nortwest Current supporting the school's outreach to the broader community:

> Sharing its expertise in early childhood education is very much related to the function of the National Child Research Center. As a teacher in a school that serves mainly lower-income and immigrant students, I feel encouraged that the National Child Research Center is reaching beyond its typical student population. The improvement in our community comes only when we consider the needs of all its members.
>
> The District of Columbia has limited resources for continuing teacher education. The fact that those attending could benefit from the expertise found at this nationally recognized preschool - without having to leave the city - is a wonderful thing for us and the children we work with. ***The Northwest Current,*** January 15, 2003

There are some truths. NCRC is a great school. There is a lot of traffic in Washington. People don't like change. School expansion is often seen as inconvenient and even trouble to anyone not immediately benefiting from the expansion. On the other hand, it should not be the case that students, parents and staff of a long-standing and worthwhile institution should come to feel unwelcome in its surrounding neighborhood. The school is striving to implement its strategic goals, including the goal of providing a safe, secure, supportive and nurturing environment for a diverse student body that is reflective of the city and society at large. We believe this is a goal worthy of community support.

Sincerely,

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