DA: Tuesday, November 3, 2003

TO: Members of the D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment

FR: Stuart Sotsky MD
3067 Ordway Street NW
Washington, DC 20008

I regret that I am ill and unable to attend the hearing today personally, though I have attended previous hearings without having had the opportunity to speak, so this will be short and bitter. This matter has already dragged on for several years in the community and for months before this Board in a manner that has taken considerable time, effort, and money for the vast majority of Cleveland Park neighbors who oppose the audacious expansion of NCRC pre-school in a historically designated residential neighborhood. The process alone has had a substantially "adverse impact" on the community, dividing neighbor from neighbor.

What this matter is not about is race, or class, or diversity, or, really, even children, though the pre-school representatives have introduced inflammatory statements to appeal to the Board on those grounds, that I hope the Board will properly disregard as offensive. The residents of Cleveland Park are already a quite diverse mix of people, and the parents and board members of the school appear to represent equally privileged, highly educated and politically connected groups. The neighbors, however, are residents of Cleveland Park and tax payers in DC, while the parents, in a departure from the school's history as a neighborhood pre-school, now live largely outside the neighborhood or even in Maryland or Virginia, and the school pays no city taxes. What this is about is an expansive and grandiose plan of a new NCRC director and board of trustees to create something that has never existed previously on that property, a regional center for early childhood education. If NCRC wishes to remain in Cleveland Park, it must accommodate the limits of the historic residential character of the neighborhood. If it feels that expansion is essential, it should seek a more suitable site that can accommodate the ambitions of its adult leadership.

BZA
Case No. 16970
Exhibit No. 281

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.281

It is my understanding that, unlike residential property owners, NCRC exists in Cleveland Park solely on the basis of an exception to zoning regulations conditioned on it causing no substantial negative impact on the neighborhood. In my judgment, more than sufficient evidence and testimony has been provided to this Board to substantiate that the NCRC already has created a significant enough adverse impact on the Cleveland Park neighborhood, and Ordway Street and Highland Place in particular, that the overwhelming majority of adjacent neighbors are strongly in opposition to the proposed expansion. This has largely occurred because NCRC has disregarded its neighbors and the regulations of the District of Columbia. In 1994 NCRC proceeded to make alterations to the property without HPRB approval or appropriate building and licensing permits. In 1998 NCRC misrepresented to the Board of Zoning Adjustment that they had no intention of increasing enrollment or building new facilities, but within only 4 years violated their own commitment.

Traffic, parking and safety, which have been issues in the streets surrounding NCRC for years, have worsened, and could only reasonably be expected to deteriorate further if the proposed expansion were allowed. The Board's ruling that NCRC not be required to provide adequate parking space for the new non-historic building and additions, was seriously flawed in its reasoning and will only serve to push additional parking of vehicles onto adjacent streets. I believe that the only conclusion that the Board can reach, if it is faithful to its responsibilities to the residents of Washington and reasonable in its evaluation, is disapproval of the proposal for expansion by NCRC.