Paul and Frances Kane

2900 Upton Street, Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20008 202-244-1584

E-mail: pkfk@cs.net

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2003 JUL -7 PM 3:39

July 1, 2003

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210-S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Application No. 17022: Application of Edmund Burke School

Dear Board Members:

We write in support of the application of Edmund Burke School for a special exception to allow the construction of a new school building at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Upton Street, Northwest, which would connect to the existing structure on Upton Street via a bridge over an intervening alley, and to increase its enrollment from 270 to 320 and its faculty/staff to 70.

We live at the corner of 29th and Upton Streets, at the far end of the block from Burke School. We have lived there 30 years, raising two children who were educated in other independent schools in the city. We have found Burke to be a good neighbor and believe it to be a fine school that turns out well-educated, productive and high-achieving graduates.

We understand that some of our neighbors have various objections to Burke's expansion plans. One objection is that such a school should not exist in a residential neighborhood. We do not feel it is within our purview to say where a particular school should or should not be located, but we firmly believe that an urban setting is quite appropriate for a school. We believe that the city should welcome fine schools, such as our children were able to attend--without the need to be driven there. Burke offers a good education to all its students, a great many of them coming by public transportation.

We reject the notion that this is solely a residential neighborhood. When we moved in, we recognized it as a mixed neighborhood of single residences, institutions, apartment buildings and commercial operations, near to churches, libraries, theaters, restaurants and other necessary urban amenities. We valued it for those very reasons, in addition to its access to excellent public transportation. We are incredulous that anyone could have stayed or moved into the neighborhood during those 30 years without recognizing the same virtues. For this reason, we reject the argument, made by some, that the presence of the school devalues their properties. It could just as well be an added value.

There is general concern in the neighborhood about traffic congestion, overcrowded parking, and undue speed on our streets and in our alleys. We share those concerns, and appreciate meaningful efforts to resolve them. We do not believe that these conditions are Burke School's

BZA
Case No. 17022
Exhibit No. 55

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17022
EXHIBIT NO. 55

sole responsibility, yet it is the only institution in the neighborhood that has made any effort to resolve traffic problems. In the past two years Burke has implemented policies to relieve traffic and parking problems to the extent that Burke's faculty and student traffic contributed to them. Burke's traffic control plan would be incorporated into the Zoning Board's approval and the proposed expansion plans would further alleviate congestion and parking problems. If Burke's expansion plan were rejected, Burke would neither be under an obligation to continue enforcement of the traffic control plan that has worked so well, nor to provide additional off-street parking for its staff and students.

A related issue has been blockage of the VanNess-Upton alley by trucks servicing Burke's dumpster and other service trucks. We traverse that alley once or more daily, sometimes on foot and sometimes by car and have never found it to be a lasting or serious problem. After all, the alleys are there to serve for trash collection and other services, as well as access to private parking space. We note also that when we have encountered a service truck stopped in the alley, it is not always serving Burke. There is a small apartment house which offers service vehicles no other option but to stop in the alley, so that trucks of all sorts stop there to serve that building. Again, if Burke's expansion plan is approved, this problem, to the extent it is related to Burke, will be alleviated by removal of the dumpster from its present location to a location within the school's own property. If Burke's plan is not approved, we assume the dumpster will remain where it is. The same holds true for ventilation equipment, troublesome to certain neighbors, which would be moved if the expansion plan is allowed.

We have heard concern that the new building would require curb cuts which would be an added pedestrian hazard and that the presence of a lonely institutional building on the corner would be threatening in the dark hours. Of course, there could be evening activity in the building, except that opposing neighbors insist that off-hours activity be strictly limited. In any event, these hazards are no different from those posed by the many apartment and office buildings that abound in the area, another one of which would likely sprout on that corner if the school building is rejected.

Finally, we have heard expressions of discomfort about students' appearance, behavior and sheer presence in the neighborhood. Burke students' behavior has never been a problem to us. We find them generally agreeable and friendly. Their appearance is what is to be expected of their age group. As to their presence, our children and others' children are our future. We urge that Burke's expansion plan be approved so that it may continue to educate our young people in a modern, well-equipped plant.

Sincerely,

Paul L. Kane

Frances F. Kane