MARCUS ASSET GROUP, INC

Development ❖ Real Estate Investments ❖ Valuation & Consulting

July 2, 2003

Chairman Geoffrey Griffis
BZA
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210-S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: BZA Case #17022

Dear Geoff:

Hope you are doing well and enjoying the BZA chair position. I don't think I've told you that my son Jacob is a student at Edmund Burke School ("EBS") and has been there since sixth grade. Also, for the past year I've been on the Board of Directors and next Fall I will be the Finance Committee chair and the treasurer of the Board. I'm sure you've read all the pros and cons of the proposed project so I'm not going to go through every detail. I just wanted to relay a few thoughts that may not have been previously submitted to you for consideration..

The EBS proposal is as good as it's going to get for this site in a tight urban location. After the negative BZA vote a year or so ago, I was on a relocation committee that looked for other sites in the city to relocate to and in the close-in Maryland suburbs. I have also worked on numerous school appraisals for both private and charter schools in D.C. It is clear that there are no ideal sites sitting out there. If independent (or charter) schools are to exist in this city in locations people want to bring their kids then there will be issues that have to be overcome from a zoning, planning, neighborhood perspective. That's just a fact. Otherwise, there can be no new or expanded private schools in the city except in unusual circumstances such as a school with plenty of land like Sidwell. I sympathize with the neighbors about traffic issues in the immediate area but the reality is that this project will improve the current situation. Further, most of these neighbors moved to this neighborhood knowing that the school existed and future surrounding development was possible due to the zoning that was in place. Why wouldn't the neighbors want to take advantage of forcing EBS into stringent traffic management when they have the chance? Frankly, I don't fully understand that.

Why does it matter? I personally believe strongly in public school education and both of my kids attended or are attending public schools in D.C. However, my son struggles with organizational issues and, in testing, it's clear that he has real issues that can only be addressed in a small class setting. He does not need to be in a special ed school like Lab and we were told by professionals to forget about sending him to a large public school like Deal and Wilson because the infrastructure isn't there. EBS has ended

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District of Columbia
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up being the perfect learning environment. He still has his struggles at this difficult school but as he put it in 6th grade, he feels he "..got a new brain when I went to Burke."

The last thing I'll mention is the concept of community. In my development project areas I make an effort at building community through helping the non-profits with space needs and local community initiatives like farmer's markets. The reason I love Burke is that it completely buys into the concept of giving to the community and learning through the process. It's really a jewel in that sense. In the same vein of community, I feel the ANC and some of the neighbors have been mean-spirited in their approach to the school and have not shown a similar holistic (sorry, can't think of another, less organic word!) approach to their surrounding community.. Many of the hard core opponents made no effort to meet with the school this go around. They simply jumped in at the ANC meeting level, avoiding the many other attempts at meeting them.

I sincerely hope the BZA will consider the merits of the application. I can't think of any other school that would go to this amount of trouble and cost to add a handful of students for the purpose of expanding the quality of the education of the school through this new facility. Without this facility, the education of these kids will suffer in its current cramped quarters.

Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,

Ernie Marcus