Testimony of Richard P. Hall, Head of Washington International School Before the Board of Zoning Adjustment

BZA Application No. 17082

Good Afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the BZA. I am Richard Hall, Head of Washington International School. I have been Head of School since 2001, previous to that I was headmaster of the North Shore Country Day School from 1979 to 1989, and from 1989 to 2001 director of the International School of Brussels. I am pleased to appear before you today, in support of our application for a special exception.

BACKGROUND OF THE SCHOOL

Washington International School was founded in 1966 and has been operating at 3100 Macomb Street, N.W. location since 1978. The School is a private day school that currently offers classes from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade at two campuses. The Macomb Street campus includes students from sixth through twelfth grade, while the second campus, located on Reservoir Road, serves students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The School is co-educational with students primarily from the local international community. Currently, the students and parents represent over ninety countries.

APPLICATION BACKGROUND, COMMUNITY PROCESS AND PROPOSAL

Washington International School appears today in support of its application for a special exception to allow the School to amend Condition Number 3 of the BZA Order in application number 16189, dated February 4, 1997, to reflect the correct current number of faculty and staff. We do not come before you to seek approval of any increase in the number of students, which we have pledged to the community not to increase.

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It has come to the attention of the current administration of Washington International School that the number of faculty and staff members exceeds the total number permitted pursuant to Condition Number 3 of the BZA Order in application Number 16189. That BZA Order stated that the total number of faculty and staff should not exceed 70. Currently, Washington International School has 92 faculty and staff members.[1]

Since this discovery, the administration has searched its records for an explanation of when and how it exceeded the staffing level set forth in the 1997 BZA Order. Unfortunately, the School is unable to accurately explain the increase in the School's staffing level since 1997 -- in part because of recent changes in the Senior Administration and in our Board of Trustees, and in part due to confusion with respect to new construction at the other campus and shifting of students and staff. For example, I assumed my duties as headmaster only 2 years ago in 2001 and Tom Alexander, our director of business operations, joined WIS in 2002. In addition, WIS recently elected a new chairman of the Board of Trustees and a number of new trustees.

However, notwithstanding this increase in the staffing level, the School submits that its current level of faculty and staff has not created any adverse effects on neighboring and nearby properties.

- First, the School provides adequate on-site parking for its staff, faculty and visitors;
- Second, these on-site parking spaces are adequately landscaped and screened from adjacent properties; and
- Third, the vehicular ingress and egress patterns from the School property have not been affected by the current staffing level.

[1] This is a number based on fulltime equivalent faculty and staff members.

For these reasons, Washington International School requests a special exception to allow the School to amend Condition Number 3 of the BZA Order in application number 16189 to (a) reflect the correct current number of faculty and staff and to (b) be in full compliance with all BZA mandates. It should be noted that while the School is seeking a "technical" increase, the application does not seek an "actual" or "physical" increase in the School's faculty and staff because the School has been operating at the current faculty and staff level of 92 for some years.

Since filing the application with the BZA in September, Washington International School has met with both ANC 3-C and the Friends of Tregaron, a community organization which closely monitors any matters that affect the historic Tregaron estate, to discuss the application and explain the School's request to amend Condition Number 3. Annually, the School reports to the Friends of Tregaron regarding matters found in the School's formal contract with them (entered in 1997), including numbers of students and events, and is in full compliance with that agreement. Subsequent to these meetings, ANC 3-C approved our application as part of its consent calendar. The Friends of Tregaron have evidenced their support as well for our application. The School notes that, along with its approval, the Friends of Tregaron has urged the School to keep close watch of compliance with staff and student levels, which the School fully agrees to do.

In order to address the concerns of Friends of Tregaron as expressed in their letter of December 1, 2003, we will offer to make our records available to both the Friends and the ANC, if they wish to confirm that the School lives up to its commitments.

Washington International School submits that this application satisfies the requirements for a special exception pursuant to the Zoning Regulations. The requested special exception to amend Condition 3 of BZA Order 16189 is in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and will not adversely affect the use of neighboring properties. Additionally, the application will not cause additional noise, traffic or other conditions objectionable to adjoining properties or the neighborhood. Finally, sufficient parking is provided by the School for its faculty, staff and visitors.

In response to a request from the Office of Zoning that we review the most recent BZA order from 1997 (Application Number 16189) for the purpose of updating it and making sure that each condition is relevant and applicable to the current situation on the Tregaron property, I attach to my testimony a document that seeks to accomplish this task. As you will see, the attached document lists the conditions from the 1997 order verbatim and, in a "blacklined" format, depicts the revisions that we believe are necessary and appropriate. Thus, for example, we suggest the deletion of all items from the prior order that pertain to the construction of the gymnasium/arts building, such as with respect to construction hours, methods of delivery of materials and the like, since the building has been completed.

Therefore, I ask that the Board of Zoning Adjustment approve the School's application. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

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Proposed Conditions to BZA Order[1]
in Application Number 17082

1. The School shall conduct its regular educational and athletic activities between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

2. The maximum number of students shall not exceed 425.

3. The total number of faculty and support staff shall not exceed ~~70~~ **92**.

4. The grounds of the School shall be maintained at all times.

5. Landscaping shall be ~~provided~~ **maintained** as indicated on the plans identified as Exhibit "27(A)"**of the record in Application Number 16189**.

6. The School shall maintain an on-going liaison with the community of the type contemplated by the agreement with Friends of Tregaron or by equivalent means.

7. The School shall ~~develop and implement~~ **maintain** a traffic management plan which shall include the following:

   a. Identification and encouragement of alternative transportation modes by means of the School's publication of information materials and in conjunction with its recruitment processes;

   b. Designation of a campus transportation coordinator who will have overall responsibility for dissemination of information promoting transit usage and encouraging ride-sharing and alternative transportation means; and

   c. An examination of means to further enhance the efficiency of the morning drop-off and after-school pick-up operations, to include designation of back-up personnel to address contingency situations that may arise.

8. The School shall provide **and maintain** one-way treatment of the access drive at all times, which shall be clearly marked and maintained as one-way. ~~Except as specifically provided below in paragraph 15(a) with respect to construction activities,~~ The driveway to Macomb Street shall serve as an entrance route only and the driveway to Klingle Road shall serve as an exit route only. The School shall ~~install and~~ maintain signs indicating such one-way system and enforce the one-way flow of traffic at all times ~~(except during construction)~~.

~~9. The School shall limit to five (5) the number of living mature trees to be removed in conjunction with construction of the new building.~~

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[1] This document consists of the conditions from the Order in Application Number 16189 (dated February 24, 1997) and revisions to such conditions that are necessary to update and bring them forward from 1997 to 2003.

~~10~~ 9. The School shall ~~install and~~ maintain a stormwater collection quality and quantity control system.

~~11~~ 10. The parking lots shall be **maintained** ~~planned and constructed~~ in a manner that will not result in any increased lighting that could adversely impact neighboring properties. All parking lots shall be **maintained** ~~designed~~ and/or landscaped to prevent the head lights of any vehicles which park on the site from shining upon, or in the direction of, Macomb Street properties.

~~12~~ 11. The School shall limit its athletic events to a number consistent with the number of such events in its 1996-97 athletic calendar and shall limit non-athletic events during the evening hours to fifty-three per year, provided, however, that the School may increase its current schedules of such events by no more than ten percent in the aggregate.

~~13~~ 12. Air conditioning condensers shall **continue to be located** ~~be placed~~ on the roof of the gymnasium and shall at all times be hidden from view.

~~14~~ 13. The School shall require that all students transported to and from the site be dropped off or picked up only on School grounds.

~~15. With respect to construction activities related to the gymnasium and arts/music building:~~

~~a. During construction, all trucks with a gross vehicle weight of approximately five (5) tons or more shall use Klingle Road for the purpose of ingress and egress to the Property;~~

~~b. Ample parking will be provided for construction workers on the School's property or on Klingle Road;~~

~~c. No construction workers, materials supplies or waste containers shall park or be located on or within seventy-five feet of Macomb Street and any construction dumpster(s) or construction sheds/containers shall be so located as to be screened from view from Macomb Street; and~~

~~d. Construction activities shall not commence before 7:00 a.m. and will be concluded by 7:00 p.m.~~

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