14 July 2005

Office of Zoning
441 - 4th St., NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

17342

Sirs:

The purpose of this letter is to provide information relating to the limit on students at Aidan School located on the corner of 27th Street, N.W. and Woodley Road, N.W. A great deal of misinformation regarding this matter has been circulated by a small but very vocal minority of our neighborhood citizens. Their objective is to force this excellent school to leave our community.

I would very much like to testify at this hearing but conflict with an important matter that I cannot reschedule prevents my doing so. Therefore, I request that the enclosed copies of two letters be entered into the record and that the information they contain be considered in your deliberations regarding this matter. These letters clearly reflect that the majority of Woodley Park citizens support a limit of 210 students without any scheduled reduction in subsequent years and without imposing restrictive fines for unintentionally exceeding that number.

Sincerely yours,

Richard E. Jones

Richard E. Jones
2832 28th St., NW
Washington, DC 20008-4110

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BZA
Case No. 17342
Exhibit No. 31

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17342
EXHIBIT NO. 31

13 July 2005

Editor
The Northwest Current
5185 MacArthur Blvd., NW
Washington, DC 20016-0400

Dear Editor:

Reference your articles on the Aidan enrollment question, an attempt is being made to present the question of limits on enrollment at Aidan school as a disagreement between the school and the community. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The majority of the community supports the school's position.

At a well-attended meeting of the Woodley Park Community Association, a large majority of those attending voted to raise Aidan's student limit to 210. We did not vote to reduce that number in subsequent years or to assess fines should the allotted number be exceeded. Such provisions were not even presented at the meeting. They were added by those "negotiating" the agreement and were never approved by a community vote.

The proposed agreement as it is presently worded will result in Aidan moving to some other location. This is something that a small but very vocal minority has been trying to achieve for several years and which would not be in the best interest of the community at large.

Be assured that the present situation is not a disagreement between the school and the community. A large majority of the community support the school. The present situation has come about because of a small minority's attempts to dictate to the community and the community's attempt to resist that subversion of basic democratic rights.

Yours truly,

Richard E. Jones

Richard E. Jones
2832 28th St NW
Washington, DC 20008

12 July 2005

Dear Madam Chairman and ANC Commissioners:

I write to you about the proposed agreement covering the limits on enrollment at Aidan Montessori School. I am the elderly man who made several comments regarding this matter at your June 20 meeting. I wish to add some important facts that it did not seem diplomatic to state at that time.

First: I related at that time that at a well-attended meeting of the Woodley Park Community Association about two-thirds of the citizens attending voted to establish a limit of 210 students for Aidan. No proposals for reductions in subsequent years or for penalties for exceeding that limit were discussed or even presented at that meeting.

What I did not relate is that before the vote at the community meeting our neighborhood commissioner stated that regardless of how the community voted she would <u>not</u> support raising the student limitation (above 180). Following the large majority vote to raise the limit to 210, she stated that she had the right to promote whatever limits she chose when the question came before the ANC Commissioners. Considering the provisions of the agreement presented at your meeting on June 20, it seems clear that she did not at all represent the will of the community as indicated by our vote, and therefor probably cannot be expected to support the will of the community in the future.

That is symptomatic of a problem that we citizens of Woodley Park expect to solve in an appropriate way at the appropriate time. But in the meantime, we can only appeal to you, Madam Chairman and the other Commissioners, to carefully consider our democratically expressed position rather than to support what in this case appears to be the results of an exercise in "penny-ante dictatorship."

Second: There is sound circumstantial evidence that a small group

of very vocal activists has been, and still is, trying to drive Aidan from our neighborhood. Regretfully, our commissioner appears to have chosen to support them rather than the majority of her constituents. That small group is clearly on the verge of being successful. No private school can operate efficiently in the environment represented by the currently-worded agreement. The process of application for admission, offers of acceptance, and actual enrollment simply cannot be controlled to the precision required by the penalty provisions of the agreement without reducing offers of acceptance to a level that in most years will result in enrollment significantly less than the allotment.

These provisions alone are enough to justify a conclusion that the objective is to drive the school from our neighborhood. Consider, in addition, the schedule for yearly decreases in enrollment. What is the school to do - tell 15 students who successfully completed kindergarten in 2005-2006 that they will not be allowed to return for first grade in 2006-2007? Would you risk that happening to your child?

As soon as I learned that Aidan was expected to accept this agreement, I told my wife it must mean tha the school planned to move at the end of the 2005-2006 school year. And that is at least partially true! I have learned that the school is actively looking for another facility large enough to accommodate the number of students needed to operate efficiently. If that effort is unsuccessful, the school will move older children to another facility and continue to each the younger ones at the present location. It does not require "rocket science" to realize that would be only a temporary arrangement.

The "bottom line" is that a small group that would dictate what happens in our community will have been able to subvert the will of the majority. We will lose a valuable educational institution that we particularly need. We appeal to you, Madam Chairman and Commissioners, not to let this happen.

Some may say that I am biased because my grandson is a student at Aidan/. Perhaps I am, but that is not my primary concern. He is entitled to "legacy consideration" for admission at two other excellent schools.

Others claim that Aidan has not been a "good neighbor" because a 1995 agreement has not been fully satisfied. Based on what I have been told by some who are familiar with that negotiation I think it is more than a little disingenuous for us to wrap the cloak of "good-neighborliness" about ourselves regarding that agreement. I have no personal knowledge of what occurred, but as I understand, because a nearby school suddenly decided to eliminate certain classes, Aidan found that among the students to whom it had offered acceptance, 19 more wanted to enroll than the 180 that had been expected to do so. The school asked the community to allow the enrollment of those 19 extra students. The community agreed to do so, provided the school would arrange to have the allotment of 240 students that it had "inherited" from St. Thomas School permanently reduced to 180. I am told the school agreed but never actually did so. It seems to me that in the financial world this would be analogous to saying "I will lend you 19 dollars if you will repay me 60 dollars," an amount equal to the principal plus more than 200 per cent interest. But wait, the repayment is not for just one year but in perpetuity. The principal is never repaid but "every year henceforth you must pay me 60 dollars," more than 300 per cent interest. In the financial world there is a name for that kind of deal - Usury - and it is illegal! At any rate, one even requesting such a deal doesn't sound very good-neighborly to me. Frankly, it sounds more like the dealings of a loan shark than the behavior of a good samaritan.

Perhaps the information I have is incorrect. Perhaps, the interpretation above is skewed or not appropriate. Regardless, the undisputed fact is that the agreement occurred in 1995 - ten years in the past. Most of those in the community and most of those now at Aidan were not involved. And certainly, the students, who should be our first consideration, were not involved! Frankly, whatever we think about what happened ten years ago, it is the future we should be concerned about

now. It is unjust and unwise to impose conditions that will force the school to leave out neighborhood. It is unjust because it punishes the innocent, particularly the children. It denies them the opportunity for excellent early education at a convenient location. It punishes the parents of the community because of the impact on their children. It is unwise because it degrades our community. It drives away a greatly needed, excellent institution for early education and thereby provides an opportunity for the facility to be acquired by some far less desirable establishment.

Therefore, in the interest of the majority of the citizens of Woodley Park, I appeal to you to support the community's democratically determined position, to establish a fair agreement with Aidan that provides a student limitation of 210 without requiring reductions in subsequent years, and to reject penalties that would make efficient operation of the school impossible. If you do so, I hope and believe that we can keep the school in its present location. I assure you that by doing so you will have earned the sincere gratitude of the majority of the Woodley Park citizens.

Hopefully and respectfully yours,



Richard E. Jones
2832 28th Street NW
Washington, DC 20008-4110

cc: The Northwest Current
The Washington Post
The Examiner
President, WPCA
D.C. Councilmember Kathy Patterson