

November 18, 2005

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2005 NOV 21 PM 4:47

DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Washington DC 20001

Attention: Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman

Dear Board Members:

For the past 23 years I have lived in the Palisades- Foxhall neighborhood near the intersection of MacArthur Boulevard and Reservoir Road. I actually live about 2 blocks from the Lab School and I consider it to be my Neighborhood School. I have closely watched the Lab School grow and make improvements since they moved here from their old location. I welcome all that they have done over the years to create an appropriate learning environment for children with special needs. I have never been put out or inconvenienced in any way by the activities at the school, either during the school days or in the evenings and weekends when they also have programs for the general community. I consider the Lab School to be a very good neighbor and I hope to have them continue to be a part of my neighborhood.

I know that this school fills a very unique void in the field of special education in the Washington metropolitan area. My son went to the Lab School in elementary and junior high school and was given the chance to learn and progress in spite of his inherent learning disabilities. He also later attended the night school and was able to receive his GED. As a parent of a child who would have had a terrible educational experience without the expertise of the staff at the Lab School, I am forever indebted to this school.

I also have a connection with the Lab School in my professional life. As a clinical social worker working for the Fairfax County Public Schools, I am part of the student support team that helps identify children with all types of learning difficulties. I collaborate with the parents and teachers in the eligibility process and help determine the appropriate educational programs so that each child can reach his or her potential. I have worked in the special education field since 1968 and I never found a program as unique and appropriate for children with specific learning disabilities as the Lab School.

Naturally, I am interested in any article I see about the Lab School. On November 9th the Northwest Current had an article about the Lab School on the front page, which I read. I was upset by the article and kept asking myself "What is this really all about?" The facts and implications don't seem to be very valid in my opinion. I drive by the Lab School daily as they dismiss the students. I have not observed parking or driving problems, in fact it all appears to move quite smoothly. I must say that it is easier to get by the Lab School at dismissal than to drive by St Patrick's at the end of the school day.

When St. Patrick's added staff parking by allowing angled slots along Whitehaven I don't recall any neighborhood input. It just happened. One day they appeared with no big controversy. It seemed to make sense to me. I don't understand why the Lab School is being turned down for wanting to do the very same thing.

I know that the traffic on Whitehaven can be impossible, but it is cars picking up elementary students at St Patrick's. In fact, often parents waiting to turn onto Whitehaven block the right lane on Foxhall Road. I have observed that the Lab School parents use the front entrance to pick up their children and do not typically add to the confusion of cars on Whitehaven.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 17383
EXHIBIT NO. 43

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17383
EXHIBIT NO. 43

I am also perplexed about the implications for the students at Our Lady of Victory. I have observed that these children are picked up behind the school, in the church parking lot that is off of U Street behind the CVS. This doesn't seem to have anything to do with traffic on Whitehaven or with the Lab School situation.

I know nothing about the current number of staff and students at the Lab School. I do know that these children require much adult intervention and the staffing ratio should be very high in order to help children make progress. I realize that the Lab School typically has long waiting lists of children needing its service and that they cannot take them all. It is a shame because I know that the children who are passed over are considered "at risk" if they do not receive the appropriate education for their needs. Unfortunately, not many public school systems in this area can offer the type of intensive assistance the Lab School offers.

Some of the other points brought up in the article are also invalid. I can't imagine where intelligent community activists get their information. I have never seen a fire truck turn up Whitehaven to get to Foxhall Road, I think that trees don't have anything to do with parking on the street, I do not have Lab staff parking near my house and I have never witnessed traffic jams because of the students or staff at the Lab School.

I sincerely hope that when any further decisions are made regarding the Lab School that they are made with informed observation and actual facts. I would love to have input as I feel it appears to be a critical issue facing the Lab School. I would also hope that somewhere in the discussion of cars, trees, sidewalks, numbers, trucks and garages people would have some understanding that the Lab School holds a unique place in the field of education and is known worldwide as a model of successful techniques in helping students with a wide range of learning disabilities. We should be really focusing on continuing to change people's lives and we should be thinking of ways more schools could address the needs of our special education population.

I wholeheartedly support the Lab School's application to the BZA and I hope that the Application number 17383 is approved.

If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Zearley". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

Jean Zearley
1840 47th Place NW

Washington DC 20007 202 965-3957