

Testimony of Alma Hardy Gates
April 4, 2006
Application No. 17383, The Lab School of Washington

Good Afternoon Chairman Griffis and Members of the Board. My name is Alma Gates and I live at 4911 Ashby Street, NW. I am Vice Chair of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D.

Section 206 of Title 11, while broadly written, specifically mentions "traffic." In BZA Application 17383, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D found the existing traffic condition has exceeded the "likely to become objectionable" provision; and, that granting the use of public space for parking would have greater detrimental impact or impairment of the public good. It would also appear to be a reward for noncompliance and encourage continuation of the same. The 6-0-0 vote of the commission taken November 2, 2005, opposing the use of public space for diagonal parking for The Lab School of Washington has not changed.

At its special meeting on March 16, the commission found some positive effort has been made by The Lab School towards the implementation of its Transportation Management Plan (TMP); and, that with continued implementation and enforcement the TMP has the potential to improve current impacts on the community when school is in session. Working with George Washington/Mt. Vernon, Safeway Stores and the use of onsite stacked spaces, the school's traffic expert agreed the school has met the parking requirement for 130 spaces and there is no longer a need to create angled parking in public space on Whitehaven Parkway.

The commission supports DDOT's position that the school's demand for parking spaces can be decreased further with full implementation of a goal driven TMP which would include staff carpooling, greater use of the shuttle bus and public transportation and coordination with other schools in the area that also have shuttle buses. Commitment by the school to further implementation of the TMP must continue once the BZA hearings are complete and the Order has been written.

Another area of the TMP discussed by the commission was the need for the school to establish carpools with an Average Vehicle Occupancy (AVO) rate. Currently parents park and drop off and pick up students on Reservoir Road or Whitehaven Parkway rather than at the front door of the school. Establishing carpools that follow a required path could help eliminate the daily confusion that occurs at arrival and dismissal times and improve safety. The commission's letter of March 17 noted that the school has no goals for establishing carpools and that currently, the formation of carpools is left up to parents who are provided with a zip code list.

Coordination of jurisdictional school buses was also discussed by the commission as similar buses deliver and pick up students at The River School

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Decreasing the number of buses that enter and exit the neighborhood each day, and might carry as few as one or two students to each institution, would help lessen daily school traffic impacts.

The commission found the stationing of a Zip Car at the school to be useful for DDOT but unnecessary as onsite parking is at a premium and a more appropriate location could be found elsewhere in the neighborhood.

The commission and the community have witnessed the successful implementation of the “Wells-designed” TMP at St. Patrick’s Episcopal Day School on Whitehaven Parkway. Three years after its inception, that TMP appears to be functioning effectively because St. Patrick’s has made a commitment to implementation.

On March 16, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D voted 5-0-0 to endorse the TMP of The Lab School of Washington as a good beginning; to require the formation of an implementation schedule with an enforcement and semi-annual reporting mechanism; to encourage continued discussions with offsite parking providers; and, to deny the use of public space for angled parking. The commission recommends the school submit its reports to the BZA and commission beginning with the 2006/07 school year; and, an initial traffic count would be conducted approximately one month after the opening of that school year. The commission also recommends making appropriate areas of the TMP a provision of the school’s contract with both parents and teachers.

A continued commitment by The Lab School of Washington is needed to ensure the successful implementation of its Transportation Management Plan.