

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Karen Thomas, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: April 28, 2017

SUBJECT: BZA Case 18715A - Request for special exception at 3000 Cathedral Avenue, NW (Maret School)

I. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval, with conditions**, of:

- A. Special Exception pursuant to Subtitle X § 104 and U § 203.1 (l) for the Maret School's continued operation as a private school use in the R-1-B and R-3 Districts; and
- B. A modification of significance pursuant to Subtitle Y § 704.1 for modification of:
 - An approved 1-story, at-grade addition at the South Activities Building approved in Order No. 18715 (Exhibit 9); and
 - Amendments which remove the term limit (Condition #1) and, in accordance with the ANC recommendation, amend the reporting requirement (Condition #3), so that the conditions are as follows, with revisions from the previously approved conditions highlighted:
 1. ~~Approval shall be for a period of THREE YEARS from the final date of this order.~~
 2. The maximum number of students shall not exceed 650 and the number of faculty and staff shall not exceed 135 employed for any one period of the day
 3. ~~The applicant shall submit a report every other year to ANC 3C and the District Department of Transportation. The report shall provide enrollment and staffing figures and a description of the school's performance related to the transportation management plan from the preceding year.~~
 4. The applicant shall provide a total of 141 parking spaces onsite, of which a minimum of 10 shall be dedicated to visitor parking.
 5. The applicant will prohibit vehicles from making a left-hand turn onto the campus from Cathedral Avenue during school drop-off and pick-up times;
 6. The applicant will instruct parents not to park on or queue on Cathedral Avenue to wait for their children at school drop-off and pick-up times;
 7. The applicant will continue to provide traffic control personnel at both ends of its driveway during school drop-off and pick-up times to facilitate on-campus traffic flow and enforce drop-off and pick-up procedures;
 8. The applicant will distribute a policy manual to all families prior to the start of the academic year that explains all relevant policies and procedures regarding its transportation management measures including, but not limited to, carpooling, parking, pick-up, drop-off, and penalties for noncompliance. This information shall be posted on the school's website;
 9. **Beginning with the 2017-18 school year, at least once per school year, Maret will advertise and host a community meeting to discuss any concerns about Maret's operations that affect the**

III. AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	3000 Cathedral Avenue, NW
Legal Description	Square 2113, Lot 843
Ward	3
Lot Characteristics	7.9 acres; 597' wide
Existing Development	Private school, grades K-12
Zoning	R-1-B and R-3 – Single-family residential and row houses; private schools permitted by special exception
Historic Designation	The entire campus is a historic landmark with several contributing buildings including the Woodley Building, cottage, and carriage house/stable.
Adjacent Properties	North, South, and West: Single-family detached homes; East: Swiss Confederation building.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	Single-family detached residential structures; institutional uses including an embassy.

The subject property is located within Square 2113, which is bounded by Cathedral Avenue on the north, 32nd Street on the west, Garfield Street on the south, and 29th Street on the east. The campus is located on the South side of Cathedral Avenue, NW and extends south to Garfield Avenue, NW. The surrounding blocks contain primarily residential and institutional uses. Neighboring districts include an R-1-A district to the north of the site along Woodley Road and a TSP/R-1-A district to the south of Cleveland Avenue.

The property has no alley access. Vehicular access to the property is provided via three driveways from Cathedral Avenue. The faculty and staff parking lots are located at the east and west ends of the site, each served by its own curb cut. Travel through the campus is facilitated by a semi-circular, two-lane driveway entered via the East Gate. The East Gate is located immediately west of the east faculty parking lot, and allows one-way travel through the site and access to two visitors parking areas. The driveway is used for student drop-off and pick-up within a prescribed schedule that varies by grade level. Vehicles exit the driveway using the curb cut at the west end of the site, or the West Gate.



IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and REQUESTED RELIEF

The Maret School is located within two districts, the R-1-B, which accounts for the majority of the site, and the R-3, which is located at the northeast corner of the property. The purpose of the R-1-B Residence District is to protect and stabilize existing single-family detached residential areas. The R-3 Residence District is designed for row dwellings but also includes single-family detached and semi-detached dwellings. Private schools are allowed within both districts pursuant to special exception relief.

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

An analysis of the project against the relevant special exception criteria is provided below.

Special Exception Criteria - Subtitle U §203.1 (l) and X §104

U § 203.1 (l) Private schools and residences for teachers and staff of a private school, but not including a trade school, subject to the following conditions:

(1) Shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions;

The Maret School is an independent, coeducational institution serving grades K-12 and is classified a private school at this location for 65 years. It operates under an approved order and the changes proposed would not likely change the material facts upon which the case was decided.

The applicant requested a 5.2% increase to the existing square footage of the school buildings under the existing order. The completion of this expansion would now include 1,991 square feet including a one-story addition to the activities building and a lobby addition to that building. It would not change the function of the existing buildings on site. Currently, the school buildings are located at the center of the site, providing ample distance to buffer noise from surrounding residential and institutional uses.

(2) Ample parking space, but not less than that required by this title, shall be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile; and A total of 141 off-street parking spaces are currently provided on the campus, where a minimum of 125 spaces for the private school use is required. No increase in students, faculty, and staff are proposed. The current off-street parking is divided into 4 areas, including two lots for faculty and staff and two visitor parking areas at the east and west ends of the site. Fifteen spaces are reserved for students, some of whom already carpool. The school provides ample off-street parking, to accommodate students, faculty, and visitors to the site, in excess of the zoning requirement.

(3) After hearing all evidence, the Board of Zoning Adjustment may require additional parking to that required by this title;

OP does not recommend additional parking for the site as it currently exceeds the required parking spaces.

X § 104 Private School Plan

104.1 Education use by a private school shall be permitted as a special exception subject to review and approval by the Board of Zoning Adjustment after its determination that the use meets the applicable standards of Subtitle X, Chapter 9 and conditions of this section.

104.2 The private school shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions. As noted above under U § 203.1 (I), the school use has been approved and operates under an existing order which includes an approved TDM plan, which mitigates any objectionable conditions due to traffic. The physical location of the buildings on the site mitigates any noise that may be derived from school activities.

104.3 The development standards for a private school shall be those of the zone in which the private school is located.

The campus has lot occupancy of 19.9 % on a lot area of 344,376 square feet. The building height is 42 feet maximum. According to information provided by the applicant, it satisfies all yard, parking and loading requirements for the structure. The school plan currently satisfies the development standards for both the R-1-B and R-3 Districts.

104.4 In calculating density, the land area shall not include public streets and alleys, but may include interior private streets and alleys within the school boundaries.

The land area of the school does not include public streets and alleys. It includes private drives to access parking areas within the school boundaries.

Special Exception Relief - §3104

(a) Will the special exception be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Maps?

The requested special exception will remain in harmony with the purpose and intent of the zoning regulations. Private schools are permitted by special exception in the subject property's zone districts.

The Maret School has been in operation at the existing location for 65 years. The continued use of the school is not proposed to change and the requested expansion of the school's facilities was originally approved and the modification is minor. Further, future changes to school enrollment for staff increases would require Board approval. Therefore, OP does not object to the removal of the time period for renewal of the school's continued operation.

(b) Will the special exception tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Maps?

The proposed expansion would not significantly increase the intensity of the use or reduce green space and yard areas. The use would remain compliant with its off-street parking requirement. Maret has not proposed enrollment or staff expansion with this application. The requested modification including the amendments to the order would not adversely affect the use of neighboring property as traffic impacts have been satisfactorily managed under the agreed upon transportation management plan between the school and community (ANC 3C Report (Exhibit 33)). The community has requested the following condition in place of the reporting requirement that is currently included in the order:

“Beginning with the 2017-18 school year, at least once per school year, Maret will advertise and host a community meeting to discuss any concerns about Maret’s operations that affect the

neighboring residential community. In addition, Maret's website will include directions for the community members wishing to raise concerns or offer feedback to the school.

Approval of the requested special exception should not have an adverse affect on neighboring property.

The Merits of the Request for Modification of Significance

The proposed modification of significance does not alter the facts upon which the case was originally decided. Pursuant to Subtitle Y § 704.1, any request for a modification that does not meet the criteria for a minor modification or modification of consequence² requires a public hearing and is a modification of significance. The Applicant's request complies with 11 DCMR Subtitle Y § 704, which provides the Board's procedures for considering requests for modifications of significance. Further, the application as amended has satisfied the requirements of Subtitle U § 203 (l) and Subtitle X § 104.

VI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The subject property includes the former Woodley Estate and is listed as an individual landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites. The Historic Preservation Review Board reviewed the proposed expansion to the buildings on December 19, 2013 and concluded that the proposed additions raised "no preservation concerns" and approved the concept as compatible with the landmark and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act. (BZA 18715 Exhibit 26 – OP Report)

VII. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

Comments were not received from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to date. DDOT's report would be issued under separate cover to the Board.

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

At its regularly scheduled meeting on April 17, 2017, ANC 3C issued its report recommending approval of the special exception request. (Exhibit 33)

Attachment: Prior Decisions.

JL/kt
Karen Thomas, Case Manager

² See, Subtitle Y §§ 703.3 and 703.4.

BACKGROUND of PRIOR DECISIONS

The Maret School moved to their current location in 1952. Since that time, the school has requested zoning relief to accommodate the expansion and growth of the school before the Board on several occasions. The following table summarizes BZA applications for the Maret School since 1952.

YEAR	ORDER	REQUEST	BZA DECISION
1952	2960	Establish a private school for 300 students.	
1968	9594	Construct new arts and science building, with main house reserved for library and administrative uses. 400 students, 35 teachers and 16 staff.	Granted w/ conditions
1979	12821	Phase H of arts and science building.	Granted
1985	14300	Classroom and gym, with 500 students and faculty/staff cap at 75.	Granted w/conditions
1991	15527	Special exception to construct school bus and lawn storage garage.	Granted w/ conditions
1998	16313	Variation to size of parking spaces and special exception to allow alterations, repair, and additions to school buildings.	Granted w/ conditions for two phases of construction
2004	17098	Special exception to allow placement of five temporary trailers and relocation of parking off-site during construction	Granted w/ conditions
2008	17826	Request to increase student enrollment (600 to 635) and faculty/staff (125 to 129).	Granted
2014	18715	Request to increase student enrollment (635 to 650); faculty and staff (129 to 135) and to expand the athletic, classroom and atrium spaces.	Granted