

February 3, 2022

Frederick L. Hill
Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Chairperson Hill,

We are writing to offer comments in support of the proposed lease of land by the Episcopal Center for Children (ECC) to the Maret School to create new athletic fields at the site. In advance of the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) hearing scheduled for March 9, 2022 to consider Maret's application, we wanted to share our perspective about the proposed partnership as long-time members of the community.

We recognize that the application Maret filed with the BZA covers in detail the scope and magnitude of the proposed project, including renderings, information on community outreach, and requests for special exceptions for private school use in a residential zone and the creation of parking spaces on a portion of the property.

Our focus is on the overall impact of the proposed partnership. The agreement would drive two positive outcomes – ECC would be able to reopen, after being forced to shut down for financial reasons, and Maret would have fields that it could use for its diverse students to be active outdoors as well as for the broader community. That seems like an exceptionally good use of five acres.

Through its lease of the Jelleff Recreation Center, Maret has proven itself as a responsible, inclusive, and thoughtful community partner, providing opportunities for young people throughout the city to use those facilities. Maret has acted as an intentional steward for both their own students and more broadly for other young people. Building on its track record, we are confident that Maret would seek out opportunities to provide the ECC fields to other youth organizations consistent with the concerns and needs of the neighboring community.

In this case, Maret is simply trying to provide fields, so its high school students have a place to play soccer, lacrosse, football and baseball. Nearby schools Wilson and St. John's, for example, have such fields. Maret does not.

The effects on neighbors of converting the current space to a playing field seem limited and could bring more vitality and new possibility to the neighborhood. The laughter, cheers and sounds of play offer opportunities to bring new energy. On the more practical side, Maret does not plan to install either lights or an amplified sound system. So, games and practices will not occur at night nor cause major traffic issues or inconvenience to the neighborhood.

While there may be some cheers here and there, the reality is that most high school sports games do not draw huge crowds. And who knows, it is possible that young people playing sports there would infuse the neighborhood with fresh intergenerational energy and opportunities for connections.

The potential benefits to the proposed project detailed in the application before you seem substantial. Maret has taken numerous steps to solicit input from neighbors and the broader community and worked to address their questions and concerns. The renderings show a project that will fit nicely within the neighborhood while enabling young people at Maret, youth sports organizations in the community, and neighbors to use the fields at various times.

Again, we support this application and appreciate your consideration of our views.

Regards,

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