

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Brandon Newlands <brandonnewlands22@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 4, 2022 3:52 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Cc: Brandon Newlands
Subject: BZA Application No. 20643: Maret School Athletic Fields Project

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Dear Mr. Hill:

My name is Brandon Newlands and I reside at 5606 Nebraska Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20015. My wife and I have no children and no connection with Maret.

I am writing to the Board in support of Maret's BZA application for the development of athletic fields on the Episcopal Center for Children (ECC) and provide the following comments in support.

As a resident of the neighborhood, it is evident that the proposed project will bring a much needed improvement to our community while supporting Maret's mission and the long-term viability of the ECC. Due to financial difficulties, the ECC was compelled to shutter its doors temporarily and re-evaluate its ability to remain viable. For ECC to generate operational funds its plan was to lease out a portion of its land. In response, many developers proposed various projects, many of which involved dense urban development. After careful consideration, however, the ECC elected to lease its land to Maret to assist with their need for athletic facilities. As a consequence, the rents received from Maret's lease will permit ECC to once again provide educational services for DC residents with behavioral issues. Significantly, this prudent decision by ECC has relieved the neighborhood of more intrusive alternatives by financially driven developers seeking to construct apartments, condominiums, town homes, or larger projects.

Moreover, the project provides the neighborhood with a substantial benefit. Indeed, in addition to providing Maret students access to the field, DC Youth Sports and neighborhood residents will be able utilize the facilities. Currently, the only open space in the Chevy Chase DC neighborhood east Connecticut Avenue is Lafayette Park. However, the park has limited facilities based on the size of the neighborhood and is designed for elementary age students. The Maret fields will offer a much wider range for community usage.

Additionally, the proposed area for development is completely being underutilized and is in decrepit condition. The field is essentially fallow, consisting of dead and rotting trees surrounded by an unwelcoming rusted fence. Moreover, the field currently floods, transforming into a soggy marsh after any substantial rainfall. Undoubtedly, as a top-tier private school with a stellar reputation, I trust that any project Maret commits to will be of first class quality and a great improvement to the neighborhood.

I am also aware of the concerns some neighbors have expressed. Based on the comments I heard at the January 12, 2022, ANC meeting these concerns - many of which were unfounded - are limited to those residents with property that is contiguous with the field (e.g., water run-off, noise, parking, and environment concerns). However, it appears Maret is to be commended for working diligently with these neighbors to address their concerns. Since the beginning, Maret has been fully transparent in its plans and extremely accommodating in addressing any concerns.

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.20643
EXHIBIT NO.142

In conclusion, I support the Maret project and its joint partnership with ECC. The Plan should be passed for the benefit of both schools and the neighborhood at-large.