

March 3, 2022

Mr. Frederick L. Hill, BZA Chairman,

RE: BZA case # 20643

Dear Chairman Hill,

Forward thinking is a critical bulwark to climate change. As indicated in the Maret Schools (Maret) athletic field proposal, Maret plans to exceed the current requirements of a 15 year storm and meet the requirements of a 25 year storm. This is a laudable move. However, this “upgrade” does not realistically incorporate the current intensity of rainfall DC is experiencing. We are requesting the design requirements be for a 50 year storm.

“Looked at over the long term, rainfall totals in D.C. have not increased significantly. What is expected to change, however, is the frequency and intensity of storms. What was once considered a 100-year storm is expected to be a 25-year storm by 2050 — in other words, four times as likely to occur in any given year. Historically D.C. gets an average total of 11.78 inches of rain in the summer months. This summer, 18.82 inches fell, according to the National Weather Service. In August, 3.25 inches of rainfall is the norm, while this year, 9.07 inches fell, according to the NWS.” *dcist, “This was D.C.’s rainiest August since 1967,” Jacob Fenston, September 3, 2021*

The proposed location of the Maret field is in the Rock Creek Watershed. There have been significant efforts to minimize storm water run off to Rock Creek. such as the public rain gardens along our neighborhood streets and the ‘experimental’ alley system at Utah and Nebraska Avenues that absorbs, stores and drains rainwater. The neighborhood is already witnessing the positive effects of these stormwater management interventions.

Yet Maret is planning to sweep clean a 3.7 acre portion of the fields and replace it with plastic turf and remove 14 heritage trees and over 40 special trees. The removal of the filtering top soil and the water absorbing vegetation runs counter to the very mechanics of the work that has been done to date to adequately capture rainwater in the neighborhood. In Maret’s plan for the use of artificial turf, stormwater does not percolate into the ground, rather it is captured in pipes below the surface and sent away. Runoff is not minimized, but rather increased and sent to Rock Creek Park, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

Stormwater runoff erodes urban stream banks and scours the bottom, channelizing and lowering the stream bed and hindering beneficial floodplain actions. Scouring also brings more sediments into the Chesapeake Bay. Phosphorus attaches to sediments along the way, further increasing pollution in the Chesapeake.

The heat island effect created by both the loss of trees and vegetation (and the introduction of plastic turf) contributes to climate change, the concerns of which, are

well documented including the DC government in their *Climate Ready DC*. plan which says,

“NC 13.2

Reduce the heat-island effect and related increase in outside air temperatures with cool and living roofs, expanded green space, tree planting, and tree protection efforts, prioritizing hotspots and those areas with the greatest number of heat vulnerable residents. Incorporate heat-island mitigation into planning for green infrastructure, tree canopy, and public space initiatives.”

https://doee.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/d DOE/service_content/attachments/CRDC-Report-FINAL-Web.pdf

Maintaining trees is in keeping with DOEE’s goal to achieve forty percent healthy tree canopy in the District by 2033. DOEE writes on their webpage:

Trees help:

Absorb and reduce stormwater runoff

Improve air quality

Save on energy bills

Create shade

Cool the city/reduce heat

Help us clean up the Anacostia River

Create a more diverse ecosystem so wildlife can thrive

It is important to note, that the proposed fields will be fenced, gated, locked and completely under the control of Maret, a private institution. The stormwater concessions received for a public field do not appear to be valid, although it is our understanding that Maret is seeking these. I remain concerned about this project and the lack of long term environmental thinking and sensitivity in the removal of vegetation. In addition, the design and planning for the present and current climate implications for the community and its future must be brought to bear now including designing for a 50-year storm. I oppose this project in its current state.

Regards,

Claudia Russell, a member of Friends of the Field,

an alliance of Chevy Chase neighbors, families, and concerned citizens, cares about safety, environmental stewardship, and quality neighborhood life. We work for transparent due process, inclusiveness, and thoughtful use of precious green space.

Address: 5860 Nebraska Ave. NW.

cc: Ms. Julienne Bautista