

6008 Utah Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20015

March 7, 2022

Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson Appointee  
D.C. Bureau of Zoning Adjustment

Dear Chairperson Hill:

I have already written one letter, largely for Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3/4G (ANC), but after the ANC's Resolution Regarding Proposed Maret School Sports Field on Feb. 28, 2022 (ANC Resolution), I feel compelled to write another solely to the Bureau of Zoning Adjustment (BZA).

The ANC—largely because of its sworn oath to serve the city as a whole (page 7, item 21, ANC Resolution)—almost by necessity overvalues the benefits to sports leagues, Maret's students, and other elementary schools and undervalues the substantial impact this field will have on the neighborhood.

I am writing BZA, which has jurisdiction over these issues, because I am concerned that—unlike what would happen if the land were used for residential housing—proposed changes will result in:

- Shuttling students and sports team in and out of the neighborhood for daily practice and a sequence of games;
- Adding new retaining walls and require 20 foot fences that abut other properties;
- Taking every possible square inch out of a fallow field to squeeze in multiple fields;
- Installing artificial turf that raises the temperature of the area and raises questions about drainage into Rock Creek and other environmental issues, such as disposing of the turf when it is time to be upgraded or replaced; and
- The addition of significant noise that may not break any ordinances but will be a hardship for those who live within blocks of the field.

The traffic report also understates the challenges the neighborhood will face. It curiously does not consider the changes to Beach Drive that daily brings in hoards of Marylanders into the city. Soon all the traffic from Maryland that used to take that route into the city will have to find new ways to enter. Many will be cutting across on Western Avenue to get to Nebraska Avenue or Connecticut Avenue through the very streets where this field will be developed.

In addition, from looking at the traffic report, the front of the school will be a parking lot and overflow parking will fan out on many of the streets where children regularly play.

While the ANC argues that some of the changes to traffic and other factors cannot be known at this time, there are many factors that can be expected.

Is it likely that we'll get storms and water runoff that are far greater than what has happened once in every 25 years or even 50 years? Experts would say—given climate change—the answer is Yes.



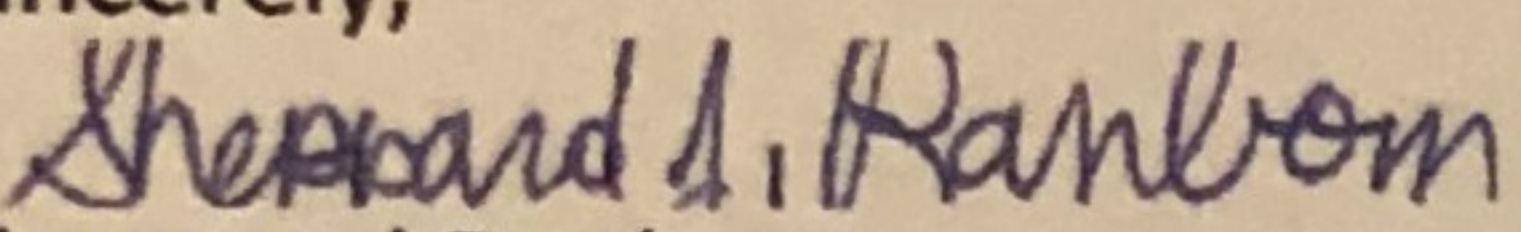
Is it likely that we don't know all the problems that can come with ripping out a grass field and replacing it with turf in a city that is too hot already in summer, for the environment, and the athletes themselves? Experts are divided on this, but many communities (including Bethesda) are actively seeking to prohibit turf fields for these reasons.

Is there likely to be more traffic coming through with any change that is expected with Beach Drive? More than likely the answer is yes.

Will the changes caused by multi-field used by Maret and community sports teams have a significant negative impact on the community?

That is the ultimate question. For the reasons described above, I firmly believe it will, and I hope the Bureau of Zoning Adjustment will take these factors into consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Sheppard Ranbom