

January 17, 2022

I am writing this letter to state my serious concerns regarding the noise levels that will be produced in my neighborhood if the Maret School Sports Complex should be completed as designed.

My name is Paul Fisher, and I live at 5935 Utah Avenue NW. My house is adjacent to the Utah Avenue alley which is adjacent to the Episcopal Children's School (ECC) property. The edge of my property is only an alley's width from the field in question.

It is important to note when we discuss noise, that I – and the Friends of the Field, of which I am a member – are only asking Maret to keep noise within the District's existing guidelines and regulations. As I am sure you are aware, the District of Columbia Noise Control Act (available at <https://eservices.dcr.dg.gov/DocumentManagementSystem/Home/retrieve?id=Noise%20Regulation%20Handbook.pdf>) specifically states that daytime (7a – 9p) noise levels within Residential Zones should be no more than 60dB. According to the CDC ([https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing\\_loss/what\\_noises\\_cause\\_hearing\\_loss.html](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/what_noises_cause_hearing_loss.html)), 60db is the sound of "normal conversation" or an "air conditioner". Also, according to the CDC, sporting events are typically measured at 100dB, which is 16x louder than an air conditioner. In contrast, gas powered leaf blowers, which are now illegal in the District in part due to their sound volume, are typically only 80-85dB.

At the ANC meeting on Monday, January 10, 2022, Trey Holloway of Maret indicated that noise by the children playing on the field was not counted under DC noise regulations. That is simply untrue. There is a noise exception for volumes up to 80db in non-commercial situations, but the circumstances on the Maret field will be anything but non-commercial. Maret's planned business model for leasing the field to sports clubs is very much revenue producing. The sub-lessees are paying Maret to lease the field. This is a huge commercial endeavor with a huge financial windfall to Maret. It makes no difference that the participants may not be paying DC taxes.

Truthfully, the noise of the children on the field will be less than half of the issue, as the crowds in the bleachers have the potential to be even louder. We understand that this was such a significant concern with the neighbors at American University that the BZA order included the reorientation of the bleachers so as not to face the adjacent homes, although their location was approximately 450 feet from the nearest property line.

Another concern is that Maret pushes the fallacy that they can control some of the noise with vegetative barriers. Most obviously, this will do nothing on the Nebraska Ave side of the field where they have proposed placing a parking lot. Similarly, the vegetation on the 28<sup>th</sup> Street side of the field will be on the back of the retaining walls, where it will also have zero effect on noise. On the other two sides, the proposed vegetative barriers are way too small to actually make any difference. I direct you to the Arbocultural Advisory and Information Service, which is supported by the United Kingdom's Department of the Environment, Transport and the Region. Their specific findings can be found here: <https://www.trees.org.uk/Trees.org.uk/files/8c/8c69f212-a82e-424b-96d1-c8ff6dc02403.pdf>. They have some very detailed conclusions, but the summary is that:

"In order to achieve a significant noise reduction of say, 6dB ... a barrier consisting of trees and shrubs needs to be relatively wide (between 20-30m)...Nevertheless, a narrow

strip of densely planted trees and shrubs of about 10m wide could still give significant reductions in traffic noise level on the order of 5dB”.

Nowhere on the current Maret plans are they intending to plant vegetation at even this minimum width or density.

In all honesty, the expected noise levels on the field could be determined before a single blade of grass was removed. This would be done by an appropriate acoustic study of the Maret proposal across the entire site. This should include, but not be limited to, consideration of the retaining walls which will be around the football field. These retaining walls, which could be between 8 and 15 feet high on the northwest side of the field, could actually exacerbate the issue and cause echoes that are louder than the original noise signal.

Will this occur? That’s hard to say as Maret has said that they have not done any kind of noise study and that, in fact, they do not know how they will control and mitigate sound on the site, nor of what materials the retaining walls will be constructed. It is incredulous to think that they are proposing a multi-million dollar construction project to the District, where the retaining walls could be one of the highest landmarks on the field, and yet they do not know how these will be built. It boggles my mind. As far as why they will not say what materials will be used, well, your guess is as good as mine.

After the Sports Complex is built, Maret should be required to continuously monitor sound levels on the field to confirm that all regulations and requirements are met. I implore you to take a position to require Maret and the ECC to submit noise studies of their proposal so that the adjacent residences will not be impacted and that the District codes and regulations for this zoning (R1-B) are fully met. If they cannot do this prior to March 9, then the ANC should ask the BZA for a delay until this information is supplied. In fact, one could almost say that the ANC has a duty to find out this information before making a decision which will affect the neighbors they are sworn to represent. There is no reason that the ANC needs to work to any timeline but their own, if the appropriate information – needed to make an informed decision -- has not been supplied.

Thank you for taking the time to read this far and thank you for your consideration.

  
Paul S. Fisher

17-JAN-2022

5935 UTAH AVE NW

PAUL@SNAPFISHER.NET

(202) 494-1527