



Bridges Public Charter School
1250 Taylor St. NW
Washington, DC 20011
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June 9, 2006

To: Sharon Schellin
Secretary to the Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210 South
Washington DC 20001

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 06-06 FAX

EXHIBIT NO. 41

Dear Sharon Schellin,

We are disappointed by and upset about the Zoning Commission's February 13 emergency set down of the text amendments regarding the location of public charter schools, small private and parochial preschools and day care centers in residential zones. By invoking emergency procedures (without identifying a true emergency), the Commission precluded public input until too late in its process. This departure from your normal administrative protocol ensured that these important and far-reaching changes were adopted without proper input from many of the organizations and families in the greater Washington D.C. community that will be directly affected by the rulemaking.

Many of us who will be impacted by these proposed changes have only recently been made aware of them. The proposed amendments were developed with extremely limited input (and sometimes no opportunity for input) from the numerous stakeholders affected by them. This cannot be considered sound policymaking and, unsurprisingly, has not resulted in sound policy proposals.

We oppose the Commission's rulemaking because it effectively precludes public charter schools, small private and parochial preschools and day care centers from operating in residential neighborhoods in D.C., and that outcome will only hurt children and families, and ultimately endanger our communities.

Allow me to share our personal experience with the difficulties small schools face in seeking to acquire/lease decent quality space in close proximity to the children we serve. Bridges facility search took two years until we were able to find a space that we could afford and would meet our needs. Bridges Public Charter School is a small preschool program for children with and without special needs. In our opening school year 2005-2006 approximately 50% of our students are children who require special education services and therapy. Because the focus

of our school is including children with special needs, we had the added challenge of identifying a space that would meet all of the requirements of the American with Disabilities Act in terms of accessibility and egress. Therefore church basements or the upper levels of a building that did not have an elevator were not an option for us. We are now co-located in a building that also houses a cabinet making shop and a support services center for United States Veterans. We occupy part of the street level and part of the lower level of the building. While we have a great landlord and good relationship with the other organizations in the building, in the future we would like to purchase a facility that would only house our school.

We request that you deny the Office of Planning's request to adopt the proposed zoning amendments. We also request that you ask the Office of Planning to re-start this process in a way that fosters appropriate public and stakeholder participation by establishing a deliberate and inclusive process for the development of amendments to the Zoning Code affecting public charter schools, small private and parochial preschools and day care centers.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Olivia Smith', followed by a stylized flourish or second signature.

Olivia Smith
Founder & Director

1250 Taylor Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011
(202) 545-0515

**Bridges Public
Charter School**

Fax

To: Sharon Schellin From: Olivia Smith, Director
Fax: (202) 727-6072 Pages: 2 + coversheet
Phone: Date: June 9, 2006
Re: CC:

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Letter concerning zoning decision
for Sharon Schellin

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