

[EXTERNAL]April 7 Planning Commission - SUP 2021-00128 Potomac Crescent Waldorf School

jon rosenbaum <hrosenbaum@comcast.net>

Mon 3/28/2022 9:40 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

You don't often get email from hrosenbaum@comcast.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

I write to request that SUP # 2021-00128 be removed from the Consent Calendar.

BACKGROUND

My name is Betsey R. Rosenbaum. I have resided for 46 years in the 400 block of North Saint Asaph Street: 13 years at 424 North Saint Asaph (Lee Mews) and 33 years at 421 North Saint Asaph (Bulfinch Square). I am well acquainted with the daily traffic patterns affecting the 400 block of North Washington Street. For 13 years I used the Lee Mews parking lot exiting into and out of traffic in the middle of the 400 block of North Washington Street. I am also a daily walker on the 400 block. Lastly, I spent a career concerned about the health and safety of children and youth. I was an executive at the American Public Human Services Association responsible for child welfare policy and practice.

My comments reflect my knowledge of the traffic flow on the 400 block of North Washington Street as it affects the safety and well-being of the children who will be attending the proposed school. Having read the Staff Report, I believe that its principal conclusion is faulty and dangerous. Namely it reports that the Applicant's Plan would safely accommodate the transfer of children to and from the entrance of the proposed school located at 424 North Washington Street. This conclusion is described the Applicant's pick-up and drop-off plan.

PICK UP AND DROP OFF PLAN

First, some information about who will be attending the Potomac Crescent Waldorf School. Its main entrance fronts Washington Street, a busy commuter street. According to the Staff Report up to 155 children from toddlers (in day care) to 12 year olds in grades Kindergarten to 5th will be in daily attendance at the school. The school will operate Monday-Friday with hours staggered from 7:30 am to 3:15 pm. The staff will consist of 15 part-timers and 20 full-timers.

The challenge confronting the school is how it will transfer the children into and out of school at 424 North Washington Street. (As is noted later, the private alley behind the school is unusable for this purpose.) The Applicant's proposed plan will require military precision to daily off load and on load 155 children on a busy commuter road in unrealistic increments of time. The provision of five (5) parking slots will somehow, for example, allow drivers to quickly remove children from the passenger side of the cars and allow them to be escorted to the building entrance. This type of activity will occur through out the day when, as noted in the

Report, at 4:00 pm this on/off plan must cease to exist as southbound Washington Street reverts to a HOV lane. Should there be stragglers who fail to leave school by 3:15 pm their pick-up in front of the school will put them at a serious traffic risk.

Even on paper the Staff report for the Applicants Off Load/On Load plan reads as barely feasible. In real life its execution reads like a waiting disaster. In fact, a review of Staff recommendations address multiple measures to assure compliance with the poorly conceived plan. Worse still there are no penalties for failure to successfully implement the plan on a daily basis. The provision of 5 parking spaces for the this Pickup and Drop off plan is a terrible and dangerous use of the SUP request procedure. It is putting the lives of young children at risk of harm on a daily basis.

THE ALLEY

The Staff Report notes that the Applicant has no plans to use the private alley behind the school building. Of course not! Only a single car at any time can navigate the narrow alley. This raises a serious question of the suitability of the schools location. Just how will EMT vehicles reach the back of the school should there be an emergency on the postage stamp size playground or in the building?

LITTER

I note the staff Report writes that the school will produce no more than four (4) pounds of litter a day. Considering that as many as 190 people may use the school daily this ia a remarkable achievement. Should there be more than this amount of litter how will it be disposed?

CONCLUSION

I believe that in light of these serious flaws in the Applicants' request that the SUP request should be denied. I also hope that despite the fact that renovation of 424 North Washington Street into a school building is already underway, this will not stop serious consideration of these significant flaws.

Betsey R. Rosenbaum
brrosenbaum@comcast.net
703-836-7877

[EXTERNAL]Comments for April 7, 2022 hearing on 424 N. Washington St.

Leander Wick <lwicko@aol.com>

Thu 3/31/2022 11:17 AM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Cc: Leander Wick <lwicko@aol.com>

 1 attachments (17 KB)

School 424 N. Washington.docx;

You don't often get email from lwicko@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I have attached my comments regarding the above. Thank you.

Leander Wick

429 N. Columbus St.

Alexandria, VA 22314

**DISCLAIMER: This message was sent from outside the City of Alexandria email system.
DO NOT CLICK any links or download attachments unless the contents are from a trusted source.**

Comments for the Planning Commission on April 7, 2022

SUP for proposed school at 424 N. Washington St.

My name is Leander Wick 429 N. Columbus Street. Thank you for this opportunity to express our concerns that this building on Washington Street will be used as a school. As a way of introduction my wife and I have lived at this address for almost 13 years and the back of our property is across the private dead end alley from the proposed playground of the proposed school at 424 N. Washington Street. The narrow nine foot wide alley and our parking space are all that separates us from the proposed fence of the school playground. Though nine homes will be affected by the fence on the property line of the current parking lot, 6 owners (429, 427, 425, 421, and 419 N. Columbus also including one carriage house garage) could suffer the loss of 7 parking spots .

When the parking lot was in use by 424 N Washington St., the middle between the parked cars was open, allowing for cars in 429, 427 and 425, as well as cars of owners in other homes on the alley, to turn around to egress the narrow alley onto Oronoco. With the proposed fence on the property line this will not be possible. I don't know the particulars, but I understand that there is an easement for emergency vehicles to turn around when 424 N. Washington was built. If a playground fence is built, it would be impossible for an emergency vehicle to turnaround.

With the proposed school and fence, it should be noted that the original purpose of the office building and parking lot will change. With the change, 14 parking spots will be lost to a playground. As North Alexandria is experiencing great growth, parking availability is an issue for residents. Also the SUP does not indicate if the 20+ staff parking in the public garage is guaranteed.

While this may be a great school, we do not think this is an appropriate location for children to be educated for these reasons:

1. Effect on the neighborhood curtailing the use of parking spaces on their home lot.
2. Inability for utility trucks or smaller emergency vehicles to enter the narrow alley and turnaround since there is a proposed fence. Two or three years

ago there was a fence & house **fire** at 423 N. Columbus which was successfully extinguished from the alley.

3. Easement in the middle of the parking lot needed for emergency vehicles and utility trucks to turn around to turn around. There are two poles in the alley with electric lights, neighborhood power, and comcast.
4. Trash and recycled material equaling 20 lbs. for a week for 20 (eventually 150) students and 20 staff does not seem realistic, since activities such as baking and parent/infant classes are described.
5. Dropping off and picking up 20 children, including unbuckling seat belts of younger children, in the allotted time may be a goal, but doing it for 50 or 100 or 150 requires much more time. The drivers are not to get out of the car.
6. The safety of the children and parent drivers is a paramount issue with traffic whizzing by, jumping in that parking lane when it's open. (I should know as I walk the dog down Washington in early morning and afternoon.) From my experience rush hour on Washington St. starts at least an hour earlier than advertised rush hour.
7. I don't know the particulars, but I understand that there is an easement for emergency vehicles to turn around when 424 N. Washington was built. If a fence is built, that would make it impossible for an emergency vehicle to turn around.
8. Turning the parking lot into a playground means the loss of 14 parking spots, something Alexandria really needs. It seems likely that parents and some staff will park on the neighborhood streets, denying residents precious spots.
9. I saw that there are three reserved spots for parents, but not for the many teachers and part time staff'.
10. As neighbors we thought we were to receive notice of the construction for the school, especially the elevator. We have received nothing as of 3/28/2022.

We would ask the board **not** to approve this SUP as it stands.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 7, 2022

TO: CHAIRMAN NATHAN MACEK
AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: KARL MORITZ, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

SUBJECT: DOCKET ITEM #3 – SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2021-00128,
424 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

The purpose of this memorandum is to recommend an amendment to add condition #16 for the Special Use Permit request for a private academic school at 424 North Washington Street.

Staff recently learned of the possibility of a 22-foot wide Emergency Vehicle Easement (EVE) in the center of the existing rear parking lot at 424 North Washington Street. Preliminary deed research is inconclusive as to the existence of the EVE. The presence of the EVE noted in a 1999 plat could affect the design of the proposed playground at the back of the property and the fence at the rear property line. Although the playground equipment locations may change and access to the EVE beyond the fence may need to be addressed, the applicant would still be able to include these features in its plans. Staff would like to recommend a condition that if an emergency access easement exists, the play area design and fencing allows emergency vehicles to access the site and complies with Fire Department access requirements.

16. **CONDITION AMENDED BY PLANNING COMMISSION:** The applicant shall provide documents to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Zoning to confirm the existence of an Emergency Vehicle Easement in the parking lot. If an easement exists, the applicant shall consult with the Fire Department on a playground design and on rear fencing that comply with Fire Department requirements for emergency vehicle access (PC)

Staff continues to recommend approval of SUP #2021-00128.