

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Arthur Jackson, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: October 23, 2012

SUBJECT: **BZA Case 18426** – Request for variance and special exception relief to allow expansion of The National Presbyterian (private) School at 4120-4124 Van Ness Street NW

I. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) **recommends approval** of special exception relief requested in accordance with § 206 to increase the enrollment and staff at The National Presbyterian School, subject to the following conditions:

1. Student enrollment shall not exceed 320 from nursery school through sixth grade.
2. The number of staff shall not exceed 70.
3. School hours and days of operation shall be Monday through Friday from 7:30 to 8:30 AM for before-school care; from 8:30 AM to 4:15 PM for academic purposes; and from 3:15 to 6:00 PM for extracurricular classes and after-school care. Interior athletic facilities may be used until 9:00 PM as authorized by the school. Occasional school related evening events are otherwise permitted on campus after 6:00 PM.
4. A minimum 47 parking spaces shall be allocated on-site for school staff and employees.
5. Generally students shall be dropped off between 7:30 and 8:30 AM and picked-up between 3:15 and 3:30 PM with the following exceptions: children in the half-day program shall depart between 12 noon and 12:15 PM; children in an extracurricular class activity shall depart between 4:15 to 5:30 PM; and children in after-school care shall depart between 3:15 and 6:00 PM.
6. The school shall implement the following Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies:
 - a) Designating a TDM coordinator.
 - b) Educating parents on TDM measures available at the beginning of the school year.
 - c) Incentivizing car-pooling through faster drop-off and pick-up.
 - d) Adding a ride-matching component to the school website that integrates Google maps with the School's directory to show ridesharing opportunities. The school may supplement this effort with SchoolPool from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (MWCOC) which allows parents to create on-line profiles that can be used to find other parents for trip-sharing.
 - e) Subsidizing public transit and walking/cycling for employees which include:



- i. SmarTrip Cars valued at 50% or 100% of the commuting cost via Metrobus or Metro rail, depending on how much the recipient employs transit in their commute.
 - ii. Equivalent stipends for walkers and cyclists.
 - f) Participating in the District’s Safe Routes to Schools program.
 - g) Incorporating “semi-regular” walk/bike to school days that incentivize biking and walking for students.
 - h) Monitoring vehicle trip generation and the mode split for students and employees independently, and providing this information to the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) on an annual basis.
7. The use of school play areas and athletic facilities shall be limited to activities supervised and run by the school and/or The National Presbyterian Church.
 8. Proposed school construction shall generally be in accordance with the architectural plans approved under (this application). ...

Approval of variance relief to reduce the required side yard setback per § 405, from 8 to 0 feet along the southern property boundary, in order to locate a modular structure within that required side yard setback is also recommended, subject to the following additional conditions:

9. Placement of the planned 36 x 60-foot modular structure shall be in accordance with the approved plans.
10. No more than 30-60 days after issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for the final phase of the approved construction: the temporary modular building shall be removed from the required side yard setback along the southern property boundary; and the variance relief approved under (this application) shall expire.

II. AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Address: | 4120-4124 Van Ness Street NW |
| Legal Description: | Square 1724 Lot 0805 |
| Ward: | 3E |
| Lot Characteristics: | An irregularly shaped property with an approximate area of 540,900 square feet (12.4 acres) located immediately southeast of the signalized intersection of Van Ness Street with Nebraska Avenue, NW. |
| Existing Development: | The property is developed with the National Presbyterian Church, the National Presbyterian Church School, several accessory buildings and extensive paved parking areas with a total of 407 parking spaces (refer to Exhibit 1). |
| Zoning: | <i>R-1-B</i> – a private school is allowed by special exception in accordance § 206. |
| Historic District: | Grover-Archbold Park |
| Surrounding Neighborhood Character: | Predominantly low-density residential and institutional. |

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Adjacent Properties: | One-family detached dwellings to the north and west; a Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) substation and undeveloped property to the east; offices and antennas of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC-4) studios to the south; and the US Navy Security Station on the Federal lands to the southwest. |
|----------------------|--|

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION IN BRIEF

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Applicant | The National Presbyterian Church, the property owner of record. |
| Proposal: | <p>To authorize National Presbyterian School to expand its enrollment, staff and facilities. Previous Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) special exception approvals on the church property include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeal No. 3570 in 1953 allowed an existing City Orphan Asylum building to be used as a school for no more than 55 children ages 3-10 years; • Appeal No. 10396 in 1971 allowed mutual use of the accessory onsite parking facilities by the church, school and NBC-4 located on the neighboring property at 4001 Nebraska Avenue, NW; • Application No. 14681 in 1987 allowed enlargement of the private school subject to current capacity limit of 260 students with 40 faculty and staff; • Application No. 16169 in 1996 allowed another addition with no change in enrollment; and • Application No. 17602 in 2007 established a child development center in a multipurpose building onsite at 4101 Nebraska Avenue NW. <p>The current application would increase the 1987 authorization from 260 to 320 students and from 40 to 70 teachers and staff. The existing education building would expand to accommodate the additional classes and programs offered through the school’s “Nursery through Grade 6 Model.” This expansion would be accomplished by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • filling-in the existing open courtyard with a new three-story wing; • constructing a third floor above the two-story wing; and • renovating an adjacent church building for educational use (refer to Exhibit 1). <p>Since portions of the education building would be unavailable during construction, a 36 x 60-foot temporary modular structure would be positioned against the southern (side) property boundary immediately south of the education building. No setback would be provided and seven existing parking spaces would be unavailable while this temporary structure is in place.</p> <p>Once the required relief is secured, the school will begin fund raising to pay the cost of construction which could begin in as early as 2014.</p> |
| Relief Sought: | § 206 – special exception approval to enlarge the private school from 260 to 320 students, and 40 to 70 teachers and staff; and variance relief to temporarily reduce the required side yard setback to 0 feet. |

IV. OP ANALYSIS

Compliance with § 206

206.1 *Use as a public school that does not meet the requirements of chapter 4 of this title or as a private school, but not including a trade school, and residences for teachers and staff of a private school, shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this section.*

206.2 *The school shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions.*

The application stated that The National Presbyterian School has operated with minimal impact on surrounding community since 1969. The school does not generate a substantial amount of traffic: most afternoon vehicle trips do not coincide with the peak evening rush hour; as an elementary school, few major events are held that draw many visitors; and the few events that are held occur during mid-day, at night or on weekends. Ample on-site parking also reduces the potential for objectionable impacts on neighboring properties. Increases in the existing noise and traffic congestion are not anticipated to result from this proposal.

The traffic statement prepared by transportation engineers Gorove/Slade on September 5, 2012, and provided in the applicant’s Pre-Hearing supplement dated October 16, 2012, outlined the school’s proposal to institute Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Measures and monitoring of trip generation and mode split for both students and employees. The monitoring would show whether the TDM measures are effective in reducing site vehicles trips.

This information would be shared with the DDOT on an annual basis. Both the TDM measures and monitoring were acceptable to DDOT (refer to the Agency Comments section below).

206.3 *Ample parking space, but not less than that required in chapter 21 of this title, shall be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile.*

The table below confirms that ample parking is available onsite for the proposed land use mix:

| R-5-B District Parking Requirements | | Spaces Provided | Remaining Surplus |
|--|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Elementary School (70 employees <i>proposed</i>) | 47 spaces (2 spaces/3 employees) | 47 spaces | |
| Church Sanctuary (1,260 seats) | 126 spaces (1 space/10 seats) | 126 spaces | |
| Television Station (shared per Order # 14681) | 188 spaces | 188 spaces | |
| Child Development Center (5 employees) | 2 spaces (1 space/4 teachers, staff) | 2 spaces | |
| Future Requirement | | 363 spaces | |

The Gorove/Slade traffic statement concluded that this proposal would have no detrimental impacts on the surrounding traffic and parking facilities.

Compliance with § 3103.1:

- **Property uniqueness or exceptional conditions:** The very irregular shape of the subject property is unique. The land use mix onsite adds to its uniqueness as does the placement of the church and school buildings, parking areas and vehicle circulation components of the site. The

existing development also largely dates from the 1950's, prior to the current Zoning Regulations.

- **Peculiar or exceptional practical difficulty resulting from the referenced uniqueness or exceptional condition:** The irregular shape of the property combined with arrangement of structures on the campus present a practical difficulty with respect the placement of future additions. The education building is located in the southwest corner of this 12-acre tract, close to the southern boundary. As explained in the application, The National Lutheran School expansion would require phased expansion of the education building but expansion of the current building footprint is *not* desirable because:
 - expanding to the west would place students closer to the busy Nebraska Avenue;
 - expanding to the south would *permanently* encroach into the required side yard setback; and
 - An addition to the north, away from the existing education building and beyond the church, or east in undeveloped portions of the site, would not be conveniently accessible to students who also would still need to utilize facilities in the renovated education building.

The challenge of filling-in and constructing additional floors onto the existing education building is that portions of this actively-used structure would be unavailable. Sufficient floor area must be maintained for current school programs. The temporary modular building would address that need.

The modular building must be placed so that it is easily accessible from the education building without disrupting existing outdoor recreation space and vehicle circulation routes. The side yard immediately south of the building is the most suitable location.

Based on these facts, the required side yard setback presents a practical difficulty in regards to the most appropriate placement of the temporary modular school building.

- **Can this relief be granted without substantial detriment to the public good?** Yes. Temporary placement of the modular building next to the antenna field of the neighboring television station would not impact the neighboring property. An on-site parking surplus would still remain in spite of the short-term loss of 7 parking spaces.
- **Can it be granted without substantially impairing the intent, purpose and integrity of the Zoning Regulations and Map?** Yes, because the requested variance would be consistent with the Zoning Regulation standards for variance approval.

Based on this review, the OP also conditionally supports the requested temporary variance relief. Most special exception and variance conditions recommended in this report were reviewed and accepted by the applicant (as noted in the Pre-hearing Supplement). TDM measures were added at DDOT's request and based on the applicant's traffic study.

V. AGENCY COMMENTS

The applicant shared the architectural plans with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as a courtesy and SHPO did not express any concerns.

In its memorandum to the Board of Zoning Adjustment dated October 18, 2012, DDOT expressed no opposition to the requested relief provided that the school implements the TDM measures listed in the above conditions of approval and conducts the performance monitoring. The agency also indicated that the TDM measures and monitoring should be made conditions of approval.

VI. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

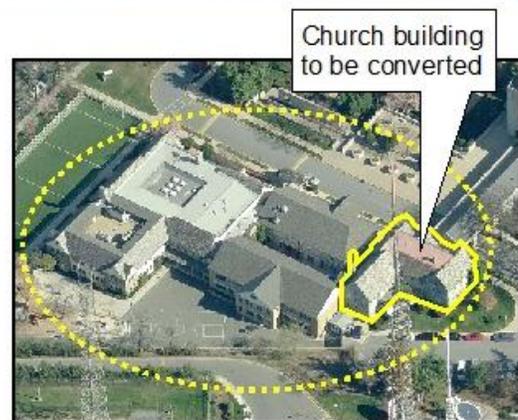
The Pre-hearing Statement reported that Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 3E unanimously voted to support this application during a scheduled meeting on October 11, 2012.



BZA Application No. 18426



Government of the District of Columbia
Office of Planning ~ September 10, 2012
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Education Building