



McLean Citizens Association Resolution
2232 Review 2232-D16-28
Mt Daniel Elementary School Expansion
2328 North Oak Street
Tax Maps 40-4 ((1)) 22, ((15)) A, ((19)) (A) 41
July 6, 2016

Whereas, Falls Church City Public Schools (FCCPS) operates Mt Daniel Elementary (Mt Daniel) school on a 7.31-acre property located in a residential neighborhood at 2328 North Oak Street in the R-4 residential district, and

Whereas, FCCPS has operated an elementary school on this property since 1952, and expanded the school by 4 classrooms in 2005; and

Whereas, the subject property is currently developed with a 1-story elementary school comprising 15 classrooms, and 2 trailers providing an additional 3 classrooms; and

Whereas, Mt Daniel has a current enrollment of approximately 348 kindergarten and first grade students, and 67 employees; and

Whereas, in 2015, FCCPS filed a 2232 Review application proposing to expand Mt Daniel to 36 classrooms with an enrollment of 792 students, and 84 employees; and

Whereas, FCCPS further proposed repurposing Mt Daniel by adding 2nd grade education relocated from Thomas Jefferson Elementary school; and

Whereas, on June 6, 2015, the McLean Citizens Association Board of Directors adopted a resolution opposing the 2232 Review application based on:

1. The deficiency of North Oak Street, a 26-foot wide roadway, as the sole access to the school property,
2. The impacts of schools operations on the use of North Oak Street by its residents, and in particular the impact of school use-related parking on North Oak which, given the R-4 lot widths, is limited,
3. The extent of the Mt Daniel expansion being excessive and incompatible with the neighborhood,
4. The inability to condition the approval of the 2232; and

Whereas, Fairfax County, at the request of FCCPS, indefinitely deferred 2232 application FS-D14-53; and

Whereas, Fairfax County requested FCCPS submit a Category 3 Special Exception application to gain approval of the proposed school expansion; and

Whereas, a Special Exception permit would allow approval of any expansion to be conditioned while addressing impacts; and

Whereas, the FCCPS School Board voted against filing a Special Exception application and chose instead to file a new 2232 application; and

Whereas, the applicant explained to the McLean Citizens Association that the FCCPS School Board considers Mt Daniel a public use and not subject to the Special Exception process; and

Whereas, Article 20 of the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance defines a Public Use as:

“Any area, building or structure held, used or controlled exclusively for public purposes by any department or branch of the Federal Government, Commonwealth of Virginia, or the Fairfax County government under the direct authority of the Board of Supervisors, the Fairfax County School Board or Fairfax County Park Authority, without reference to the ownership of the building or structures or the realty upon which it is situated.”

and by this definition, Mt Daniel Elementary is not a public use; and

Whereas, on April 18, 2016, FCCPS submitted the subject 2232 application which reduced the proposed number of classrooms from 36 to 32 and the student enrollment from 792 to 704; and

Whereas, on June 29, 2016, FCCPS amended the 2232 application further reducing the proposed number of classrooms by 2 to 30, and the student enrollment by 44 students to 660; and

Whereas, 660 students would be a 90% increase over the current enrollment of 348; and

Whereas, the height of the addition would remain at 41 feet; and

Whereas, the proposed gross floor area (GFA) would be 79,491, an 82% increase over existing GFA; and

Whereas, 105 parking spaces would be provided; and

Whereas, the modified parking lot configuration would no longer encroach into the existing conservation easement; and

Whereas, FCCPS submitted a traffic study conducted by Wells and Associates (Wells); and

Whereas, on October 8, 2015, Wells conducted a 1-day vehicle and pedestrian trip count on North Oak Street, a day described as a typical day; and

Whereas, instead of reporting the number of daily vehicle trips, the analysis reported the number of trips during three peak periods (AM, mid-day and PM) and characterized the impact of these vehicle trips in terms of vehicle delay on a local subdivision street; and

Whereas, the sum of the peak vehicle trips is far below the number of daily elementary school trips computed by number of students, gross floor area or the number of school employees per the 9th Edition ITE Trip Generation Manual, and there is no discussion of this statistical difference; and

Whereas, North Oak Street, a 26-foot wide roadway, has inherent capacity constraints; and

Whereas, the traffic impacts generated by current Mt Daniel school operations on North Oak Street are problematic and the traffic problems are not only confined to the student drop-off and pick-up times, and

Whereas, the expansion would exacerbate these traffic and parking impacts; and

Whereas, the Wells study assumed that off-site parking would be provided for special events; and

Whereas, Wells recommended Fairfax County work with the Virginia Department of Transportation to consider restricting on-street parking along North Oak Street from North West Street to the school during bus arrival and departure times; and

Whereas, such parking restrictions would be onerous on the 35 property owners on this segment of North Oak Street and would reduce their property values; and

Whereas, Wells further recommended FCCPS implement a Transportation Management Plan to increase bus ridership and encourage carpooling of students and faculty, and additionally institute a monitoring program to verify its effectiveness; and

Whereas, while such recommendations confirm traffic mitigation would be needed, there is no mechanism for conditioning the 2232 approval on their implementation; and

Whereas, the applicant asserts that annotating the 2232 plat with the maximum school enrollment would constitute an enforceable condition of the 2232 approval; and

Whereas, without commenting of the validity of this assertion, it would still leave unconditioned the aforementioned impact mitigation strategies; and

Whereas, if requested by Fairfax County, the applicant would execute a Public School Use Covenant to limit the school enrollment to 660 students; and

Whereas, executing such a covenant would be outside the norm for land use approvals and the efficacy or the enforceability of a covenant is far from clear; and

Whereas, additionally, the Fairfax County attorney's office has stated that it would not accept a covenant to limit enrollment to 660; and

Whereas, the guidance provided by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), recommends 4 usable acres as a baseline for new elementary schools, plus an additional acre for every 100 students; and

Whereas, under these non-binding recommendations, an enrollment of 660 students would require 10 usable acres; and

Whereas, while the Mt Daniel property comprises 7.31 acres, 2.5 acres consists of conservation easement and transitional screening areas leaving less than 5 usable acres; and

Whereas, when permanent additions are made to an existing school facility, VDOE guidelines recommend that the minimum usable area of the site be in reasonable compliance with the recommendations for new school sites; and

Whereas, Objective 8 of Fairfax County Policy Plan, under Character and Extent for Public Schools, calls for locating schools on sites which meet or exceed minimum state size standards; and

Whereas, in an Ellison Heights/Mt Daniel Civic Association survey conducted before the June 29 amendment was filed, 18 of the 22 respondents opposed the 2232 application; and

Whereas, the extent of the Mt Daniel expansion remains excessive and incompatible with the neighborhood;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the McLean Citizens Association opposes the proposed expansion of Mt Daniel Elementary School and recommends the Planning Commission deny 2232 application 2232-D16-28.

*Approved by the MCA Board of Directors
July 6, 2016*

McLean Citizens Association, PO Box 273, McLean, Virginia 22101

cc: John Foust, Dranesville District Supervisor
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