

#29-7 McDonald House
French Internatl Schl Spec Exeprt

29/7 McDONALD ARE

French School hearings delayed

by Popsy Kanagaratnam
Staff Writer

3/30/94
POTOMAC GAZETTE

A hearing on the French International School's request to build a campus in Potomac has been delayed until May.

The decision by the Board of Appeals came after opponents of the school's plan asked the board on Wednesday to dismiss or postpone hearings scheduled for April 6. The opponents said when the school submitted a scaled back proposal for the River Road campus in February, it did not file all of the necessary papers in a timely manner. While those papers were later given to planning board staff, the school did not supply all of the information to the opposition in a timely manner, according to a motion filed by attorney Steve Orens.

The French school's lawyer Harry Lerch, said the school would agree to the delay.

When the scaled-back plan, which reduced the size of the size of the planned 1,500 student campus by nearly half, was filed in

February, the architects had not completed drawings of the building, Lerch said. The new elevations are exactly the same as the old ones, he said.

The architects submitted packages including reduced color photocopies of the drawings to the opposition on March 15, Lerch said. "We had nothing else to give," he said.

Opponents of the school plan, Potomac residents Bob Beckman, Robert and Anne Younes, Donald Shive and the River Road Citizens Coalition, have argued that a campus at River Road near Norton Road would create too much traffic near rush hours and damage the environment.

The decision by the appeals board to postpone action forced the cancellation of a Montgomery County Planning Board hearing scheduled for Thursday, March 24. The planning board hearing has been rescheduled for May 5. The planning board makes a non-binding recommendation to the Board of Appeals which will hear the case at its meetings on May 23 and 26.



Photo by Dan Gross

The French International School has scaled back its plans for a Potomac campus, but neighbors of the proposed location on River Road still do not like it.

13

members call document an 'advocacy report'

by Audrey Osborne
Staff Writer

12

Two County Council members say they are disappointed with the Intercounty Connector Purpose and Needs draft study and are calling the document an advocacy report.

The County Council's Transportation and Environment Committee was briefed last week on the draft report and also had an opportunity to listen to citizens' concerns. The report, released March 2, is the first step in the Environmental Impact Statement process.

Alan Strauss, ICC project manager, briefed the committee on traffic forecasts and economic reasons as to why the ICC is needed. The route would connect Inter-

state 370 in Gaithersburg to Interstate 95 in Laurel.

Councilman Bruce Adams (D-At Large), a committee member, says he is disappointed that tax money was being spent on a document that was so much of an advocacy report.

"I wanted a balanced judgment on the pros and cons of the ICC, but it read like an advocacy report," Adams said in a telephone interview this week. "I know there are environmental and fiscal problems associated with this road, but they were never even mentioned in the report."

Adams added he felt the draft was a "a bad first step," and he will be looking to the ICC Citizens Advisory Committee to keep the study and process on track, open and honest.

Councilman Isiah Leggett (D-At Large), another committee member, said he also hoped the draft report would have been more balanced.

"They've established a series of assumptions that haven't been thought through, Leggett said Monday. "They have totally overlooked projects in master plans that would alleviate traffic conditions in the area such as the Route 198-28 connector. They assume this (the ICC) is the only improvement available."

Leggett added that the report didn't appear to be objective because it reads as though the assumptions in it are true, rather than being only assumptions. "I have serious concerns with that," he said.

Both Leggett and Adams said they do not have an official stance on the ICC.

Several residents also spoke out against the report at the meeting. Frank Vrataric, A Wheaton activist, likened the draft report to buying a car.

"The study is akin to the proverbial used car salesman who tried to palm off a clunker he had on his lot for the last 30 years (the ICC). No one would buy his pitch so he tried a new approach, telling us how bad our car is - it is unsafe, a gas guzzler, it will break down at the most inopportune times and its continued use will hurt the state of the economy."

Aside from the comic relief it provided, Vrataric displayed a chart showing his reworking of the raw data used in the draft report. His conclusions are that the travel times from Gaithersburg and Rockville to Laurel have decreased since 1980 and there are slightly fewer vehi-

cles in 1994 than there were in 1980 traveling across the county.

He also said the accident data did not take into consideration the improvements made to some local roads since the data was collected. Vrataric claims accident rates have actually decreased.

Strauss said he could not comment on the validity of Vrataric's comments because he has not had an opportunity to go over the numbers with Vrataric.

The Sierra Club also urged the council to remove the ICC from master plans.

In responding to the Purpose and Needs report, Sierra Chairman Randy Slovic said it was "a reorganization of the same tired arguments. The report vastly overstates the need for the \$1 billion and vastly understates the amount of environmental damage that would result."

Advocacy group forms to defend funding for local park system

by Bill Borda
Staff Writer

3/30/94
SS GAZETTE

Ever since he moved to Montgomery County in 1961, Jack Neal has been an avid user of parks.

Over the last three years, though, Neal has witnessed a slow deterioration of the county's park system, which has been recognized several times as one of the premiere systems in the nation.

When county budgets grew tight during the recessionary years of the early 1990s, the cuts borne by the Parks Department spawned increased trash, vandalism, graffiti and unkempt ball fields in county parks, according to Neal.

To stop the drain on the park's budget, Neal has launched a coalition to fight for

funding. Among the members of the Montgomery County Park Advocates Coalition are several countywide recreation groups, such as Trail Riders of Today (TROT), Montgomery County Road Runners and Montgomery Soccer Inc.

"The budget share has slipped, and it has slipped seriously," said Neal, who acts as the group's chair. "They (the parks) have taken the biggest budget hit of any county service in the last three years."

The Parks Department is responsible for the development, maintenance and management of 27,763 acres of parkland in 330 county parks. Over the last few years, the number of dollars spent on parks has remained stagnant.

In 1992, the department received \$31.2 million, while the following year its share

inched up slightly to \$31.7 million. In 1994, the department received \$33.1 million, and for 1995, the county executive has recommended spending \$34.7 million on parks.

Neal said he believes the budget for parks has slipped because there have been no advocates, like the groups fighting on behalf of the libraries and schools.

"I really feel other groups have made their views known and have been listened to," he said.

This year, Neal stated, the coalition will testify at budget hearings and lobby County Council members on its three-point agenda.

The coalition wants the council to restore the Parks Department's capital budget to 1991 levels. The proposed capital budget, used for acquiring park land and renovating equipment, has been sliced from \$100 mil-

lion in 1991 to \$50 million this year.

The group wants 12 park police positions restored, which would add about \$300,000 to the parks budget, Neal said.

Also, the coalition is asking the County Council to increase the portion the parks department receives from property tax revenues. Neal said in 1991, parks received 17.2 cents out of every \$100,000 of assessed property value, while today that amount has dropped to 14.6 cents.

Neal, who uses the parks to jog, in-line skate and play tennis, said he fears that park facilities will further deteriorate if dollars continue to be squeezed from the budget.

"If we let it go too long, it will be difficult to get it back to a first-class parks system," he said.

April 20, 1994

TO: French International School Team
FROM: Denise Boswell *Denise*
SUBJECT: FIS Special Exception with the Planning Board

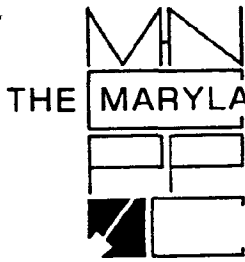
The French School is scheduled to go to the Planning Board on Thursday, ~~Feb.~~ ^{May} 5. I don't know what time yet. For now, mark your calendars for the afternoon and evening. I'll let you know just as soon as I find out.

For the staff report, I will be using the same one we wrote for the last hearing that was postponed with a cover memo updating the Board on any progress or developments.

Please read the attached letters from Bill Hussmann to Harry Lerch and Steve Orens and their responses to him. Pay particular attention to page 2, paragraph 3 of S. Orens' letter. If one of those 6 "unresolved issues" is in your area of expertise, be prepared to discuss with the Planning Board how you believe the proposed plan has addressed "your" issue.

I will be away from the office April 27 until May 3. Let's meet Tuesday afternoon, May 3 at 2:00 p.m. to go over the plan and refresh everyone's minds. I'll let you know where later, but mark your calendar's now for an hour.

A bientôt.



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

(301) 495-4605

Montgomery County Planning Board
Office of the Chairman

March 30, 1994

Harry Lerch, Esq.
Lerch, Early & Brewer Chartered
Suite 380
3 Bethesda Metro Center
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

Stephen J. Orens, Esq.
Conroy, Ballman & Dameron
Suite 402
Six Montgomery Village Avenue
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20879

Dear Mr. Lerch and Mr. Orens:

It has been brought to my attention that the French International School special exception request was not reviewed by the Planning Board on Thursday, March 24 because the Board of Appeals' hearing had been continued to May 23 and 26. This delay was in response to your request, and I would like to acknowledge your efforts to work concurrently on this issue. I understand that this proposal has been ongoing for several months now and that the Planning Board discussed the original plan on November 4, 1993. I assume the concerns that were expressed at that hearing by the Board, staff and the community have been incorporated into the plan we would have discussed last Thursday.

I encourage you to use this additional time that has been granted by the Board of Appeals productively to continue to work on any outstanding issues. Hopefully when the Planning Board does discuss the French School in early May, you will have resolved most of the pending differences. I appreciate your willingness to attempt to resolve remaining issues.

Sincerely,

William H. Hussmann
Chairman

DB/WHH/emb

William H. Hussman, Chairman
April 5, 1994
Page 2

available to the public and the Parties of Record and then to the staff for review.

Since the applicant chose not to follow that process and did not provide copies of revised architectural renderings even after they had been submitted to staff, we were compelled to request a postponement in order for our consultants to have an opportunity to analyze those plan revisions.

I appreciate your desire to see the issues which separate the parties amicably resolved prior to the Planning Board's consideration of this application. I regret to say, however, that that is not likely. Contrary to what you may have been told, the revised plans do not resolve the issues which are important to the community and which still form the basis for the community's strenuous objection to this application.

Issues which remain unresolved include: a) traffic, b) compliance with the Potomac Subregion Master Plan, c) need d) intensity of use, e) compatibility with surrounding land uses, existing and planned, and f) environmental impact.

In addition, there are other issues which remain unresolved. It has always been my preference, representing either developers and builders or community interests, to seek a consensus where consensus is possible. It appears from your letter that that is your preference in this case. However, I do not believe that consensus is possible. My clients, which include families who have resided in this area for over 15 years, have relied on the Potomac Subregion Master Plan, which contains site-specific recommendations for the subject property, that this property would be developed with residential uses similar to those that have been approved and which surround it. They relied on the Master Plan's strongly worded recommendation that any increase in density on the property which adjoins the subject property to the east using TDR's would be buffered from the existing two-acre residential property by a residential development with lots larger than the one-unit per acre density approved for the adjacent property or with two-acre lots if the property were not developed as a TDR subdivision. Needless to say, they do not view an institution with an auditorium, soccer field and dining hall designed to accommodate 850 students and 150 faculty and staff on 2.5 acres of ground as anything similar to the larger lot, residential, transitional uses recommended by the Master Plan. That issue and traffic impact, if no other issues existed, would not be resolved prior to the Planning Board's next opportunity to consider this application.

William H. Hussman, Chairman

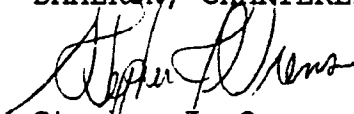
April 5, 1994

Page 3

I do want to thank you for your personal interest in this matter and for taking the time to write to us about it. If there were a way to resolve this matter, I would pursue that course. Regrettably, the only way for this matter to be resolved is for the French International School to find a different, larger, and more appropriately situated site for its use. I pledge that I will work with the French International School to find such a location but I cannot agree that the subject property is the appropriate site.

Very truly yours,

CONROY, BALLMAN &
DAMERON, CHARTERED



Stephen J. Orens

SJO/tc

cc: Harry Lerch

wp\tacer\hussman.ltr

French school to revise campus proposal

BETH GAZETTE
by Popsy Kanagaratnam
Staff Writer

2/2/94

French International School officials say they will file a substantially revised proposal for its controversial River Road campus Friday.

The new plan removes one of the two gymnasiums, dormitories for 36 students and a two-story lower school building. The plan also calls for relocation of the tennis courts and activities building in order to screen them from the surrounding neighborhood, according to the school's lawyer Harry Lerch said Tuesday.

It retains three buildings: a high school, junior high school and administration building, Lerch said. It also keeps an auditorium, gymnasium, cafeteria. As in the earlier plan, the school proposes to keep the McDonald house on the property as a historic building.

Lerch said he did not have information on the size of the buildings that are left.

"We took the concerns of the neighbors and those of the Park and Planning staff very seriously," said French school

Headmaster, Pierre Hudelot. "With the new revised proposal we are confident we have answered the questions," he said.

Neighbors say the new proposal does not resolve the key issues of overcrowding and traffic.

The French School wanted to consolidate its two campuses on the 25-acre site across River Road from Norton Road. It however faced opposition from hundreds of Potomac residents who fear the school will create environmental and traffic problems.

In November, 1993, the Montgomery County Planning board voted to recommend that the Board of Appeals deny the special exception the school needs to build on the site. The board was expected to begin considering that request in April.

The cornerstone of the new plan is a proposal to cap the number of students who attend the school at 850 by using the site only for the upper school. The earlier proposal would have brought up to 1,500 students to Potomac from the school's two campuses, one in Bethesda and one in Chevy Chase.

Although she had not seen a copy of the final plan, Denise Boswell of the Planning Board staff confirmed that the overall square footage was reduced in the new plan.

"There is less impervious surface and the buildings are still spread out," Boswell said.

rive by bus, the other half by car.

"Traffic is going to be a major problem," said Steve Orens, attorney for the River Road Coalition, a group of neighbors opposed to the French school move.

"The road is at the peak of its ability," said coalition member Bob Younes. "It is an inappropri-

"We took the concerns of the neighbors and those of the Park and Planning staff very seriously. With the new revised proposal we are confident we have answered the questions."

Pierre Hudelot, French International School Headmaster

"Changing the orientation to just the upper school reduces the density from 60 students per acre to 34 students per acre," Boswell said. Lerch said the density would be in line with other private schools in the area.

By comparison, Holton-Arms has about 10 students per acre and The Bullis School has about 6 students per acre on its 80 acre campus.

Earlier proposals said about half of the school's students would ar-

ate use of the property."

Critics of the school say they fear the reduction may be a ploy to get onto the site and that the school could apply for permission to expand later.

"Looking at the layout, there is no space for further extensions," Boswell said. "They're using bigger setbacks from the road," she said.

Lerch said the school would be willing to sign covenants regarding further expansion.

New zoning amendment proposed for Bethesda

BETH GAZETTE 2/2/94

The Montgomery County Planning Board will hold a public hearing on several issues involving Bethesda on Thursday, Feb. 3, starting at 7:30 p.m. at 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. They will include:

- A proposed zoning text amendment to establish a retail preservation zone for Bethesda's Arlington Road district

- A proposed amendment to add three new high-density planned development zones, as recommended in the Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan

- A proposed zoning text amendment to modify land uses, lot requirements and public use space requirements in transit station zones.

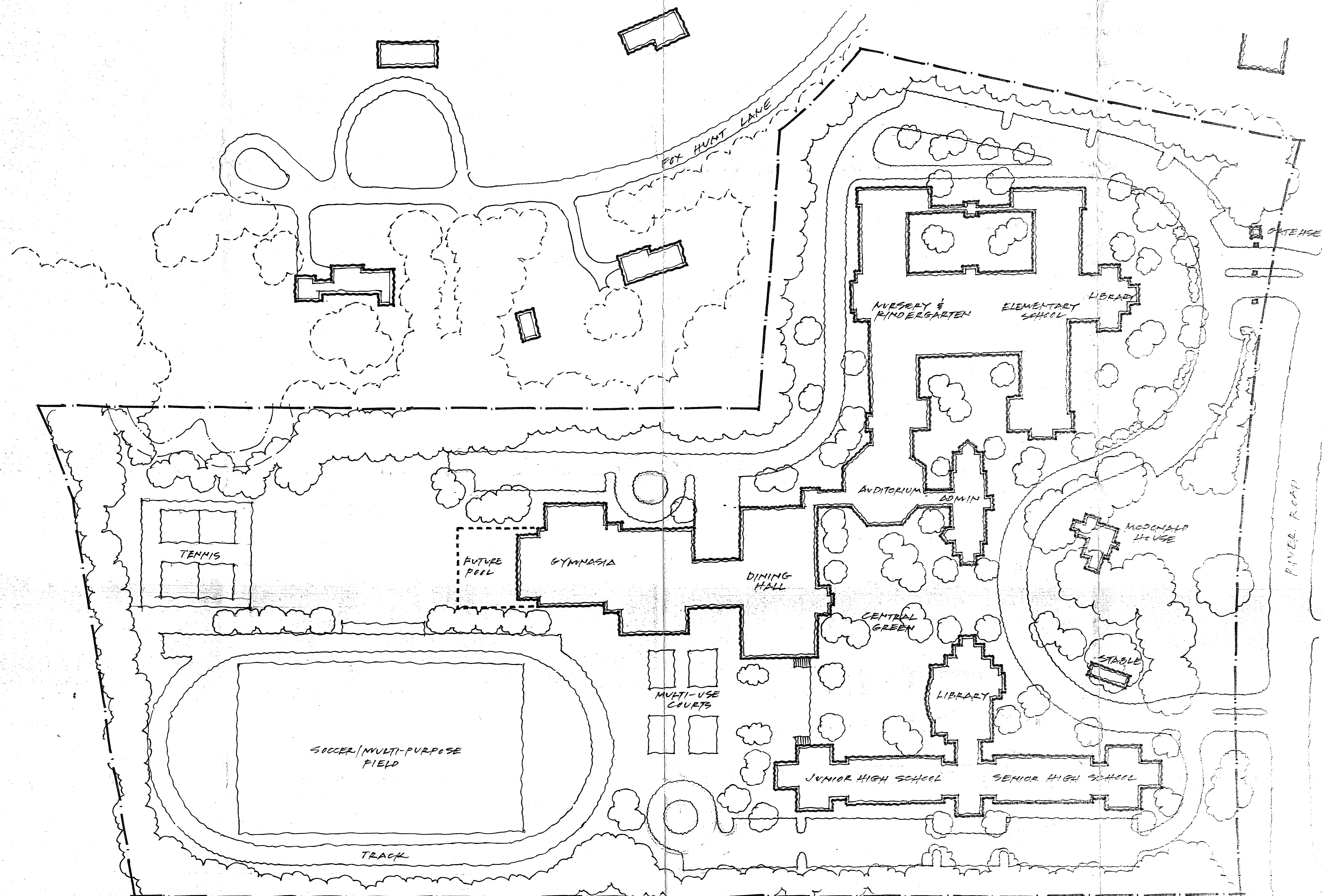
- Exxon Corporation's re-

quest for a special zoning exception needed to reconstruct its station at 7340 Wisconsin Ave., and add a Tiger Mart store.

- Planning Board comments on the master plan for the National Institutes of Health's Bethesda campus will be transmitted to NIH and National Capital Planning Commission.

For information, call 495-4600.

22



SCHEME "J,"
SBRA

FRENCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
8 SEPTEMBER 1993

SITE PLAN
SCALE 1"=50'-0"
PROJECT NORTH

March 15, 1994

MEMORANDUM

TO: Denise Boswell, Zoning Specialist

FROM: Clare Lise Cavicchi, Historic Preservation Planner

SUBJECT: Board of Appeals Petition No. S-2012
Special Exception Request: French International School
10600 and 10620 River Road, Potomac

The special exception request for the French International School affects historic resource #29/7, the McDonald House, located at 10600 River Road, which is identified on the **Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites**. The McDonald House has recently been designated on the **Master Plan for Historic Preservation** as part of the Potomac Area Historic Resources Amendment.

A two-acre environmental setting is included with the designation of this property, which contains the house, stable, and mature trees. Staff was concerned that the previous plan submitted by the French School did not respect the environmental setting since interior roads encroached upon it. Staff finds that the revised plan for the French International School is an improvement and we are satisfied that relocation of the roads has preserved the designated setting.

June 22, 1993

MEMORANDUM

TO: Denis Canavan, Zoning Coordinator

FROM: Clare Lise Cavicchi, Historic Preservation Planner

SUBJECT: Board of Appeals Petition No. S-2012
Special Exception Request: French International School
10600 and 10620 River Road, Potomac

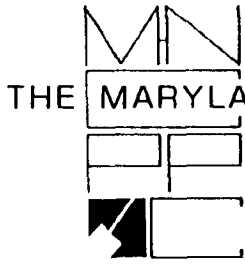
The proposed plan for the French International School affects historic resource #29/7, the McDonald House, located at 10600 River Road, which is identified on the **Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites**. The McDonald House is currently in the process of being evaluated for historic designation as part of the Potomac Area Historic Resources Amendment. It has been recommended by both the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Board for inclusion on the **Master Plan for Historic Preservation**. The County Council is scheduled to hold a public hearing regarding the designation of this and other Potomac historic resources on July 24. They will make the final decision as to whether the McDonald House is added to the Master Plan or not.

The Planning Board has recommended an environmental setting of approximately two acres which includes the house and a small barn or stable. This proposed setting is the result of dialog with the applicant who has agreed to respect the setting in the development plans for the property.

Staff finds that the proposed plan for the French International School does not respect the 2-acre environmental setting (see attached plan). Much of the setting has been disturbed by the proposed road system which includes a divided road entering from the north and an east-west thoroughfare which separates the stable from the house.

Staff recommends that these roads be located outside the perimeter of the environmental setting.

McDONALD.WP



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

October 22, 1993

MEMORANDUM

TO: Denise Boswell, Zoning Analyst

FROM: Clare Lise Cavicchi, Historic Preservation Planner
Gwen Marcus, Historic Preservation Coordinator *CLC*

SUBJECT: Board of Appeals Petition No. S-2012
Special Exception Request: French International School
10600 and 10620 River Road

The proposed plan for the French International School affects historic site #29/7, the McDonald House, located at 10600 River Road. This site has recently been evaluated for historic designation as part of the Potomac Area Historic Resources Amendment, and the Montgomery County Council has added the McDonald House to the **Master Plan for Historic Preservation**, bringing it under the jurisdiction of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code.

In a memo to Denis Canavan, Zoning Coordinator, dated June 22, 1993, historic preservation staff expressed concern about the applicant's proposal as it affected the 2-acre environmental setting of the site. We found that much of the setting had been disturbed by the proposed road system which included an east-west thoroughfare which separated the stable from the house and a north divided road entrance. Staff recommended at that time that these roads be located outside the perimeter of the environmental setting.

After studying the revised plans submitted by the applicant, which include moving the entrance to the eastern boundary of the setting and the interior road loop to the southern boundary, staff is satisfied that this new configuration will preserve the relationship between the stable, the house and the grove of mature trees.

However, staff still has concerns about the impact that grading for new road construction will have on the environmental setting. In particular, improvements to River Road should be done in such a way as to avoid damaging the grove of trees in front of the historic house. This may involve construction of a

retaining wall. In addition, the interior road - behind the house - may come close to some large trees. It should be moved and/or other measures should be taken to protect these trees.

Staff is pleased that the applicant's plans call for reuse of the McDonald House as the headmaster's quarters. We recommend that a compatible use also be found for the stable to ensure its viability.



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

September 10, 1993

MEMORANDUM

TO: Denise Boswell, Zoning Analyst

FROM: Clare Lise Cavicchi, Historic Preservation Planner

SUBJECT: Board of Appeals Petition No. S-2012
Special Exception Request: French International School
10600 and 10620 River Road

The proposed plan for the French International School affects historic resource #29/7, the McDonald House, located at 10600 River Road, which is identified on the **Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites**. The McDonald House is currently in the process of being evaluated for historic designation as part of the Potomac Area Historic Resources Amendment. It has been recommended by both the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Board for inclusion on the **Master Plan for Historic Preservation**.

The PHED Committee of the County Council is scheduled to hold a worksession regarding the designation of this and other Potomac historic resources on September 27. The County Council will make the final decision as to whether the McDonald House is added to the **Master Plan** or not.

In a memo to Denis Canavan, Zoning Coordinator, dated June 22, 1993, historic preservation staff expressed concern about the applicant's proposal as it affected the 2-acre environmental setting recommended by the Planning Board. We found that much of the setting had been disturbed by the proposed road system which includes an east-west thoroughfare which separates the stable from the house and a north divided road entrance. Staff recommended at that time that these roads be located outside the perimeter of the environmental setting.

After studying the revised plans submitted by the applicant at yesterday's meeting, staff is now satisfied that there will be no adverse effect on the environmental setting. The entrance has been moved to the eastern boundary of the setting and the interior road loops around to the southern boundary, which has the effect of preserving the relationship between the stable, the house and the grove of mature trees.

Staff is pleased that the applicant's plans call for reuse of the McDonald House as the headmaster's quarters. We recommend that a compatible use be found for the stable to ensure its viability.

Oct 28 } → report Oct 15
or Nov 4 } PBd → report Oct 22

Nov 18 Bd Appeals
Dec 9

YOTMAC: MCDONALD, WP

June 22, 1993

MEMORANDUM

TO: Denis Canavan, Zoning Coordinator

FROM: Clare Lise Cavicchi, Historic Preservation Planner *CLC*

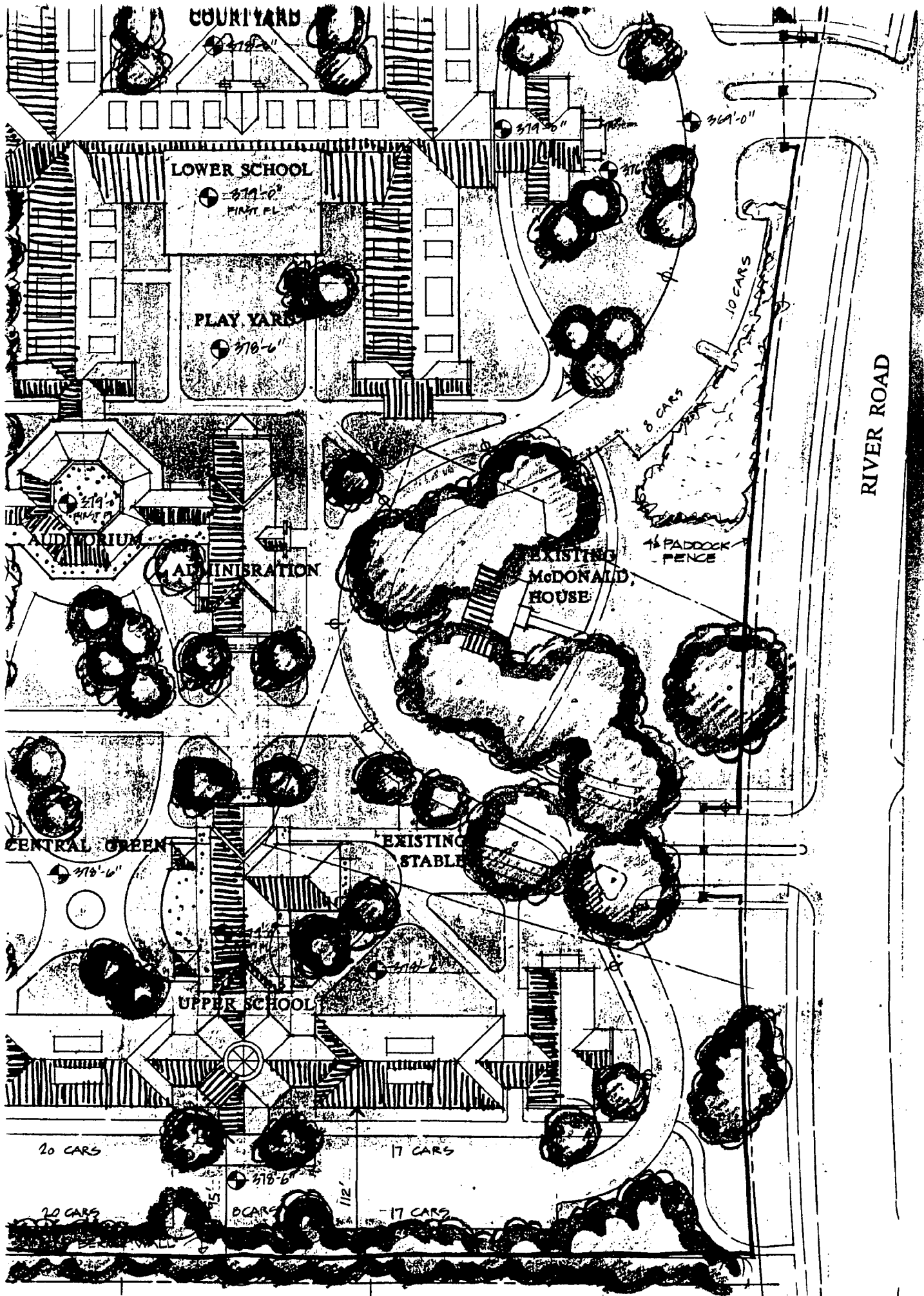
SUBJECT: Board of Appeals Petition No. S-2012
Special Exception Request: French International School
10600 and 10620 River Road, Potomac

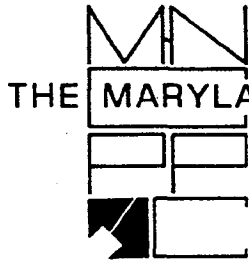
The proposed plan for the French International School affects historic resource #29/7, the McDonald House, located at 10600 River Road, which is identified on the **Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites**. The McDonald House is currently in the process of being evaluated for historic designation as part of the Potomac Area Historic Resources Amendment. It has been recommended by both the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Board for inclusion on the **Master Plan for Historic Preservation**. The County Council is scheduled to hold a public hearing regarding the designation of this and other Potomac historic resources on July 24. They will make the final decision as to whether the McDonald House is added to the Master Plan or not.

The Planning Board has recommended an environmental setting of approximately two acres which includes the house and a small barn or stable. This proposed setting is the result of dialog with the applicant who has agreed to respect the setting in the development plans for the property.

Staff finds that the proposed plan for the French International School does not respect the 2-acre environmental setting (see attached plan). Much of the setting has been disturbed by the proposed road system which includes a divided road entering from the north and an east-west thoroughfare which separates the stable from the house.

Staff recommends that these roads be located outside the perimeter of the environmental setting.





THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

Date: June 4, 1993

NOTE: All files are kept in the Design, Zoning, and Preservation Division and may be signed out to individuals for review.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief, Community Planning Division
Chief, Transportation Planning Division
Chief, Environmental Planning Division
Chief, Development Review Division
Chief, Park Planning and Development Division

FROM: Denis Canavan, Zoning Coordinator *DC/ds*
Design, Zoning, and Preservation Division

SUBJECT: Board of Appeals Petition No. S-2012
Request for Comments and Recommendation
SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST: Private Educational Institution
(French International School)
LOCATION: 10600 and 10620 River Road, Potomac
ZONE: RE-2

*Affects 29/7 McDonald Hse
10600 River Rd*

In order that a staff report may be prepared, it will be necessary that one of the planners on your staff review this petition and that this office receive your written comments and recommendation by Friday, July 2.

In addition to any other observations you might wish to make, it would be helpful if you would direct your comments to the following:

Community Planning: Comment on (1) consistency with master plan, (2) whether the special exception will adversely affect the surrounding area, and (3) any information or recommendation concerning relevant master planning studies or other government action now under way.

Transportation Planning: Evaluate any traffic impact and adequacy of road network because of the request.

Environmental Planning: Evaluate (1) any environmental impact because of topographic or other factors which may cause problems, and (2) conformance with tree preservation legislation of Chapter 22-A of the County Code.

Development Review: Comment on any applicable subdivision requirements.

Park Planning and Development: Comment on any impact on existing or proposed park areas.

DC:ds\c:boa-memo

cc: John Carter, Design Coordinator
Gwen Marcus, Historic Preservation Coordinator

road around 3 sides of house

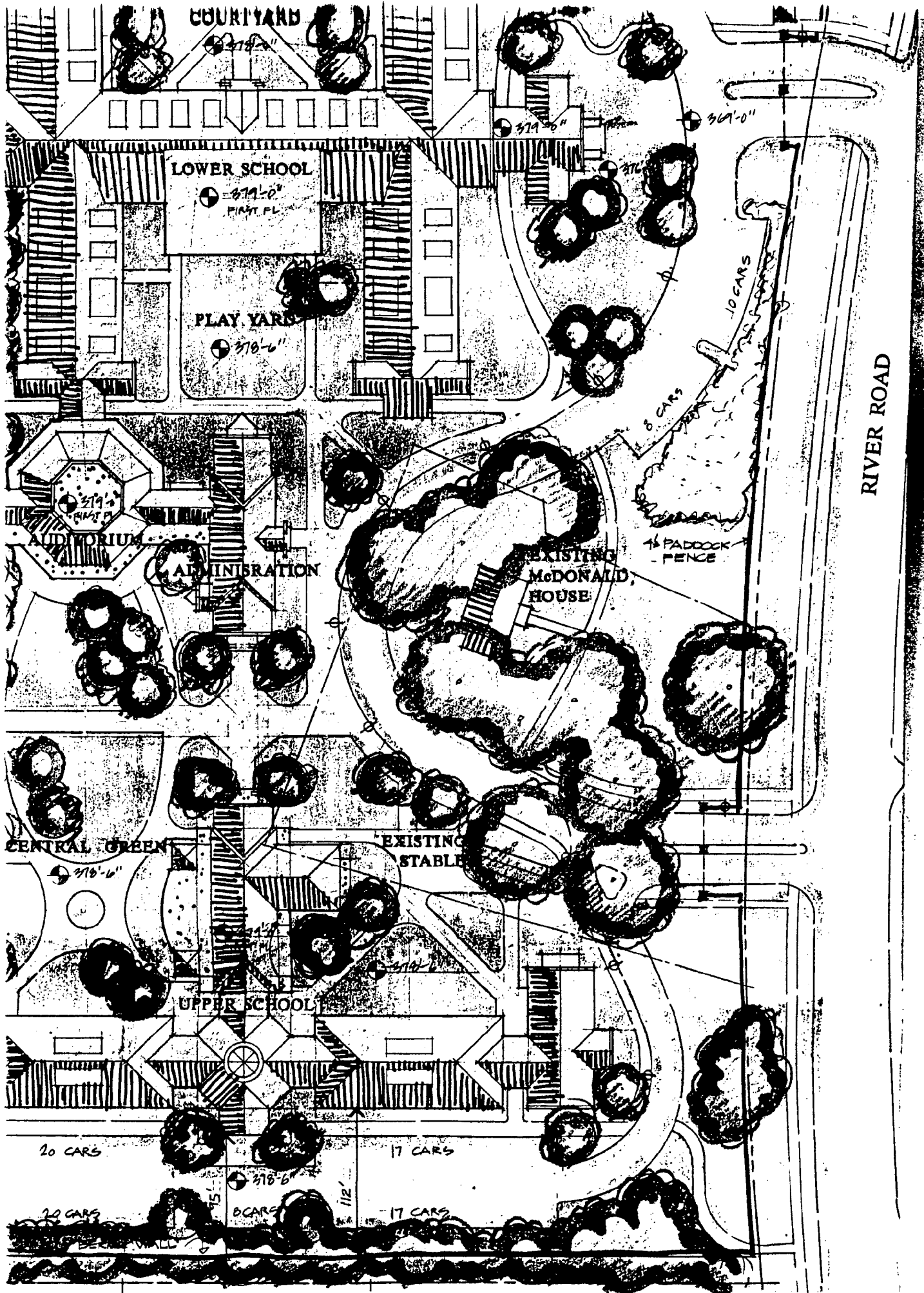
westernmost side of house surrounded pavement

Ursuline Academy
Finch Rd Bethesda

Cut-de-sac scheme

- Reduce width of entrance + road behind house to one lane (10-15')
- Move entrance south of barn
- Move road east of barn to eliminate dividing bar from house
- Alternative road treatment: gravel, cobblestone, no curbs to minimize visual impact + maximize tree preservation

8-31-93 Bob Good
undergraduate
my w/
DENISE
JOHN
MARTIN
CLARE



COURTYARD

LOWER SCHOOL

379'-0"
FIRST FL.

PLAY YARD

378'-6"

379'-0"
FIRST FL.

AUDITORIUM

ADMINISTRATION

EXISTING
McDONALD
HOUSE

8 CARS
10 CARS
PADDOCK
FENCE

RIVER ROAD

CENTRAL GREEN

378'-6"

EXISTING
STABLE

UPPER SCHOOL

20 CARS

17 CARS

378'-6"

20 CARS

10 CARS

17 CARS

BERM WALL

8/10

10 AM Meeting on French Int. School

1. Marly Clemens MNCPPC 995-4572
2. Clare Kise Cavicchi Historic Preservation MNCPPC 495-4570
3. Richard A. Weaver Environ. Plan. Div. 495-4540
4. Ki Kim Transp. Plan. Div. 495-4525
5. Marsha Kadesch Community Planning 495-4561
6. **JOHN CARTER** M-NCPPC 495-4570
7. JAMES HUNNEWELL SHEPLEY BULFINCH ARCHTS (617) 423-1700
8. C. Craig Hedberg Integrated Transportation Solutions 410-740-8784
9. **BOB GOOD** landscape architect **STEPHENSON & GOOD** 202 ~~864~~²²⁷ 0846
10. JOSEPH HUGHES CHESTER ENVIRONMENTAL (301) 840-1030
11. Cindy Ben Couch, Early & Brew, (301) 946-1300
12. Gary Ferrel " "
13. **Denise Boswell MNCPPC 495-4731**



#29/17 McDONALD HOUSE
FRENCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Dentise
Marilyn
Rich Weaver

Maria Kadech
John Carter
Clare

- Sept 23 - Planning Bd Report due Mon Sept 20.
 - Aug 10 - ^{Tues} 10am? mtg w/ staff + applicant
- ↓
to Dentise by Sept 8, if possible

Designation process - Sept 27 PHED committee

- too much pavement w/in environmental setting
- no separation bet house + stable - need visual connect
- ~~the~~ mature trees are part of setting
- what grady planned - arch. rendering looks flat - affect on trees + ^{house setting} ~~appearance~~ ^{appearance} ~~improved~~
- OK to remove non-historic additions

Lech: Concern re: HIP issues
Jan + June mtgs w/ Lech re: env. setting.
plan submitted w/ testimony
McD house chimney 4/4.13 elevation

French School HIP report

- Potomac WFS plan → UPDATE AMENDMENT
- Create proper HI report
- ~~Demerita~~ / ~~Nova~~ research + recommendations
- ~~Demerita~~ / ~~Nova~~ published - context Potomac region
- Pre-imp workshop
- Curtis House demo.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

The project site is currently farmland and pasture, covered with a moderately heavy growth of grass and underbrush, with a variety of mature trees interspersed throughout the property. A number of structures currently occupy the site. The existing residential house and part of the associated barn are structures of historic significance identified in the Potomac Subregion Master Plan as the Captain John McDonald House, and are listed in the Montgomery County Atlas of Historic Places Inventory. The house, barn and their curtilage will be preserved as a component of the French International School in cooperation with recommendations and guidelines of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Prior to purchase of the subject properties by the French International School, Phase I Environmental Site Audits were performed by Kamber Engineering. Historical information and records research, and thorough site walkovers were conducted by KE staff to determine the presence or absence of areas where environmental contamination may have occurred. As part of the investigation, two underground residential fuel oil storage tanks and one underground gasoline tank associated with prior farming operations were identified on the property. Based on soil auger investigations, no evidence of any leakage or soil contamination in the vicinity of the tanks was observed. The underground tanks will be further evaluated and either retrofitted or removed during the construction project in accordance with applicable Federal, State and County regulations governing underground storage tanks. No evidence of any environmental contamination was identified on the site during the Site Audit. The potential for prior contamination of the property is therefore considered to be very low.

The French International School development will not result in any significant quantity of air pollutants which would measurably degrade air quality and therefore will not adversely affect surrounding areas. No chemical or other fumes will be generated by activities within the school. Heating and air conditioning systems will be electric or natural gas powered, and will be designed and maintained in compliance with Federal and State emission standards. The School will be served by the public sewer system for liquid waste disposal without odor potential. Solid waste will be collected on-site in closed containers and will be handled through scheduled collection by licensed commercial haulers for off-site disposal, so that no objectionable odors will occur at the site.

The planned use will not generate dust, since all areas, including playing fields, will be completely landscaped or stabilized by paving following completion of construction, and will be regularly maintained by school staff.

The proposed development will also be designed to be visually and aesthetically compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Reflective glass or similar materials that could cause excessive glare will not be used in the construction of the School facilities. As required by the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance and insurance requirements, security and safety lighting will be provided along walks and parking areas. This will be

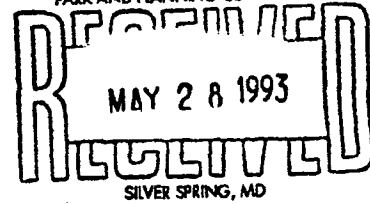
Prepared for

Lycee Rochambeau
French International School

Potomac, Maryland

for

NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN & ZONING
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION



*Engineering Evaluations Report
For Special Exception
Application No. S-*

Submitted by

Kamber Engineering
a Chester Environmental Company
818 West Diamond Avenue
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878
(301) 840-1030

92082.00

March 10, 1993

low intensity lighting, consisting of bollard fixtures or cutoff-type luminaries on approximately 12-foot high poles which will be designed to prevent the spill of light beyond the rear of the fixture to avoid glare. The athletic fields and courts will not be lighted and therefore will not be subject to nighttime use. Appropriate screening will be provided along virtually the entire site perimeter, consisting of fences, walls and berming combined with moderate to heavy landscaping with deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. Such screening will substantially reduce the visibility and associated sound levels of activities on the School site from the neighboring properties and will further reduce the potential for any objectionable glare from the proposed structures and lighting.

The proposed School will not generate any objectionable noise which will be disturbing to the abutting property owners. Heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment will be located either in enclosed, interior mechanical rooms, or will be directed away from abutting residential properties, making maximum use of the building structure to block noise. Deliveries and refuse collection activities will be infrequent and will occur during normal working hours. Deliveries will be restricted to an enclosed service area. Noise and activity levels will be similar to normal residential garbage and recycling collection activities or deliveries, without impact to neighboring properties. The school bus parking area will be heavily buffered from adjacent residences by a solid masonry wall and dense landscape screening to minimize both visual and noise impact from the bus activities at this location.

Based on the proposed program of operation which accompanies this application, the majority of school activities will occur in the daytime during normal working hours when noise would not conflict with normal sleep hours, and many neighboring residents will be absent from their homes. Activity and noise levels associated with School operations will be characteristic of those found at any public recreation area, neighborhood playground, or public or parochial school facility permitted by right within a residential area. Such uses are typically found in close proximity to and are generally considered compatible with residential areas. Perimeter landscaping and screening will minimize visibility of on-site activities from neighboring properties and will serve to reduce the transmission of sound from such activities. Activity and associated noise levels from the School are not expected to be excessive or objectionable and will not constitute a nuisance to the neighboring residences.

It is therefore concluded that the French International School will not be detrimental to the peaceful enjoyment, or development of the surrounding properties and the general neighborhood, and will cause no objectionable noise, vibrations, fumes, odors, dust, glare or physical activity which would be objectionable to the abutting residents.

percent. Thirty-nine percent of the French International School students who took the "bac" last year passed with honors.

In addition to fulfilling the stringent requirements of the French Ministry of Education, the Lycee also offers a strong English language and American History program from nursery school to high school. Upper-level courses in English and American history enable the School's students to meet the standards of the Maryland State Department of Education for an American high school diploma. Many French International School students who continue their studies at American colleges receive advanced placement credit for course work completed at the Lycee.

Student Supervision/Discipline

Students will be effectively supervised by staff members during school hours. To the extent students fail to follow the school rules and guidelines they will be appropriately disciplined.

Density

The applicant requests approval for a special exception for up to 1500 students. Currently the school has approximately 1,100 students at its two campuses. The school requests approval for 400 additional students to meet anticipated growth needs over the next 10 to 15 years. Particularly with increased demand from American students the School expects its enrollment to grow 25 to 40 students per year.

The proposed school campus comprises 25 acres. If the school grows to 1500 students this would result in a maximum density of 60 students per acre. This is lower than the current density of the Forest Road campus (66 students per acre), and is well below the 87 student per acre density contained in the Zoning Ordinance.

School Facilities/Architecture

The school campus has been planned as a collection of independent buildings arranged around a central green space, all connected by enclosed corridors. All buildings will be one and two story pitched roof structures (other than the gymnasium which will have a flat roof). They are set in a village-like arrangement intended to relate to the residential character of the surrounding neighborhoods. The historic Captain John McDonald house facing River Road will be preserved. The McDonald house will be renovated as a staff residence and will remain as the focal structure as seen from River Road. It may be restored to its original form by removal of non-historic additions. The

FRENCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PROPOSAL

Special Exception Application No. _____

May 24, 1993

Lerch, Early & Brewer, Chtd.
3 Bethesda Metro Center
Suite 380
Bethesda, Maryland 20814
301-986-1300

non-historic additions to the stable will also be removed to recapture the historic context of both buildings.

The two story central administration building is located at the center of the property to the south of the McDonald House, and is flanked on the west by the Lower School and on the east by the Middle and High School complex. Connecting corridors flow out of the central administration building to connect to the 400 seat sloped floor auditorium, and then on to the central dining and athletic facilities farther to the south. (For ease of description, River Road is assumed to be the North side of the property, although actual directions are somewhat diagonal.)

The larger buildings that make up the central facilities are grouped toward the center of the property, and are set back from River Road so that they can better blend in with the scale of their surroundings. In addition to the auditorium, these facilities include a central food preparation area surrounded by three dining areas that will serve the three basic student age groups, and two gymnasiums with associated locker and storage areas. An indoor pool is also part of the long term master plan for the School. The School's outdoor athletic areas, composed primarily of a soccer field, running track, tennis courts, and multi-use play courts, are all grouped at the south (back) of the property adjacent to the indoor athletic facilities.

The Lower School, at the northwest portion of the property, will look essentially like a one-story structure since the second floor is buried in the roof with dormers. This part of the campus is designed around an outdoor play area on the east (interior) side and a more passive outdoor area on the west side. Both courtyards are framed by the wings of the building, and features an attached library which will be an architectural feature as viewed from River Road.

The Upper School is expressed as three building volumes: the High School, the Middle School, and the common space which includes a library. Treating the upper school as three connected volumes helps to keep this part of the campus consistent with the residential scale of the campus. The Upper School forms one boundary of the central green which is also flanked by the auditorium and the dining building. The central green is a quadrangle that permits views into the center of the campus, provides space for passive outdoor activities, and organizes the various buildings of the campus into a coherent masterplan.

All buildings are designed to have brick facades with pre-cast concrete trim and bandings. All pitched roofs will be standing seam metal, and the roofs of the athletic complex are designed with a reduced slope to control the height of the ridges. The galleries and corridors that surround the central

green and flank the central facilities will be expressed as colonnades of pilasters and glass to further reduce the apparent scale of the building volumes behind.

The entire campus has been designed to conform to all applicable current codes, and will contain four elevators located at strategic points so as to make the entire complex fully accessible to handicapped individuals.

Residential Component

The John McDonald house will be renovated and utilized for the headmaster's residence. Two other apartments for faculty or staff are also planned to be located on the second floor of the central administrative building.

In addition to the classroom facilities, and other support facilities, the School is also including a very small residential component in its plans. Traditionally, a few students in the upper classes from outside of the Washington area attend the School to study for the baccalaureate. The School would like the ability to house up to 36 students on its campus to fill this need. In addition, two apartments will be added to the student dormitory for faculty/staff members who will act as supervisors. These facilities are to be located on the upper floor of the lower school classroom facility.

In addition to performing important administrative or maintenance functions for the School, a residential component on the campus will add to the School's security.

Landscaping

The landscaping of the new campus has been planned by Stephenson and Good, a leading local landscape architectural firm. The primary goal of the landscape architects is to reflect and enhance the overall landscape character of the neighborhood and community. Broad lawns and groupings of large shade trees, particularly along the River Road frontage of the property, will establish the image of the campus. Existing healthy trees near the historic McDonald house will be preserved and maintained, as will trees along the perimeter of the property.

The campus boundaries will be defined by a combination of fencing, walls and berms suitable to existing conditions and desired goals. The privacy of neighbors will be further enhanced by a dense landscape buffer primarily of evergreens with mixed deciduous trees. Several areas of the site will be designated for reforestation to strengthen and expand existing wooded areas off the campus, particularly along the southern property boundary.

As part of the overall campus, elements associated with landscaping will be carefully selected. Fencing along River Road will be a paddock type in keeping with other properties on River Road. Walls and privacy fences on the other three sides will reflect the materials and character of the architecture, and will be enhanced with vines and ornamental plantings. Light fixtures will be low in scale and carefully integrated into the landscape to ensure that there will be no objectionable glare.

Access

There will be two entrances to the School from River Road. In response to area residents' concern, there will be no vehicular or pedestrian access to the School through the adjacent neighborhoods. The walls and fences will preclude entry to or exit from the School through any adjacent yard. The School will construct a middle turn lane on River Road as well as an acceleration\deceleration lane at the east entrance and an acceleration lane at the western entrance to the campus. The School will utilize a guard to help facilitate left turns in the morning. These measures will facilitate a smooth traffic flow on River Road.

Enclosed with the application is a traffic study prepared by Craig Hedberg of Integrated Traffic Solutions. The report concludes that the School has developed a program which will ensure that the School traffic will operate safely and that the road network is adequate to serve the School.

Traffic Circulation

Once bus and automobile traffic has entered the campus, it will be carefully controlled by the School and distributed to various points on the site. Faculty and staff will proceed to parking spaces in the parking areas that most closely relate to their primary work location. These parking areas exist at the east side of the Upper School, the west and south sides of the Lower School, and the west side of the gymnasium complex.

Parents dropping off or picking up children will go to one of two separate areas. Lower School children can be dropped off and picked up on the west side of the Lower School. Upper School children can be dropped off on the River Road side of the Upper School and picked up again on the east side. Since, as outlined earlier, the majority of students will be travelling by bus, it is expected that the amount of parent car activity will be limited.

When buses arrive in the morning through the west entrance, they will form a queue along the serpentine road that separates

the McDonald House from the central administration building. They will first drop off students at the Lower School before proceeding to the front of the Upper School where the rest of the students will be dropped off. The empty buses will then use the turn-around at the east side of the Upper School before ending up at the bus staging area on the west side of the campus. In the afternoon, buses will pick up students in a similar fashion in front of the Lower and Upper Schools. The length of the roadway along the front of the campus will allow generous bus stacking during drop-off and pick-up activities.

Traffic Mitigation Measures

As stated previously, the School has engaged in major efforts over the past few years to improve the traffic situation at the existing facility on Forest Road mainly through its bussing program. Three years ago, the School bussed only about 25% of its students; today the School busses 55% of its students.

The School also puts a strong emphasis on its carpooling program. Approximately an additional 8-10% of the students and faculty utilize carpools bringing the totals to approximately 65% of the students and faculty that currently travel either by bus or carpool. Only 15 students are currently allowed to drive to school and most of them bring other students with them.

The School will purchase additional buses to accommodate a anticipated busing ratio of 70% to 75% of its student population. In addition, it will redouble its efforts to have more students and faculty members in carpools. The school's goal is to achieve a carpool ratio of approximately 1.8 students/faculty/staff per car.

The School anticipates that approximately 20 students will be allowed to drive at its new campus. The few students who are allowed to drive to school will have assigned parking spaces.

The School increased its bus ridership from 25% to 50% over the years from 1988 to 1991. This past year it was increased to 55%. The move to Potomac will make the School less convenient to many parents and will naturally enhance bus ridership and carpooling. Further, the change in the school start time from 8:30 to 8:45 will also result in an increase in bus ridership as many parents will no longer be able to drop off their children prior to the beginning of their work day. Based on the School's track record, and because of these factors, the School believes that the bussing and carpooling goals are realistic.

Parking

provisions have been made on campus to be able to park 200 cars and up to 24 buses. The 200-car total consists of 150 spaces for faculty and staff, 20 for students, and 30 for visitors. These parking accommodations are spread out around the perimeter of the campus in small-scale linear parking areas so as to eliminate the need for any large, unsightly parking areas, and so as to provide parking readily adjacent to all the main buildings on the campus.

All of the parking along the site perimeter is set back and completely screened from the adjacent properties by solid walls and/or fences and landscape plantings. This screening will mean that the parked cars cannot be seen from neighboring properties, and automobile headlights will not shine into neighboring properties.

The busses will be parked in a central depot that will be shielded from neighboring residences by an 8'-0" high wall on the west side of the parking area. Extensive, mature landscaping will also be provided in this area. As a result, the busses will not be visible from adjacent properties.

As stated previously, only 20 students will be allowed to drive to School. Adequate parking will be provided on-site for both student and faculty parking. The school will have strict policies against parking in the adjacent neighborhoods. These policies will be signed each year by both students and parents and will be strictly enforced.

Sound

The architects and engineers have utilized the natural conditions of the property to help insure that sound will not be a nuisance to the neighboring properties. The perimeter of the site will have both a dense landscape buffer and a combination of berms, walls and solid fences for screening and sound attenuation. The courtyards which will serve as active play areas are centrally located and are surrounded by the school buildings. The multi-purpose field is located in a low area of the site providing additional natural sound buffering. It will also have a berm and solid wall along its eastern boundary.

Security and Lighting

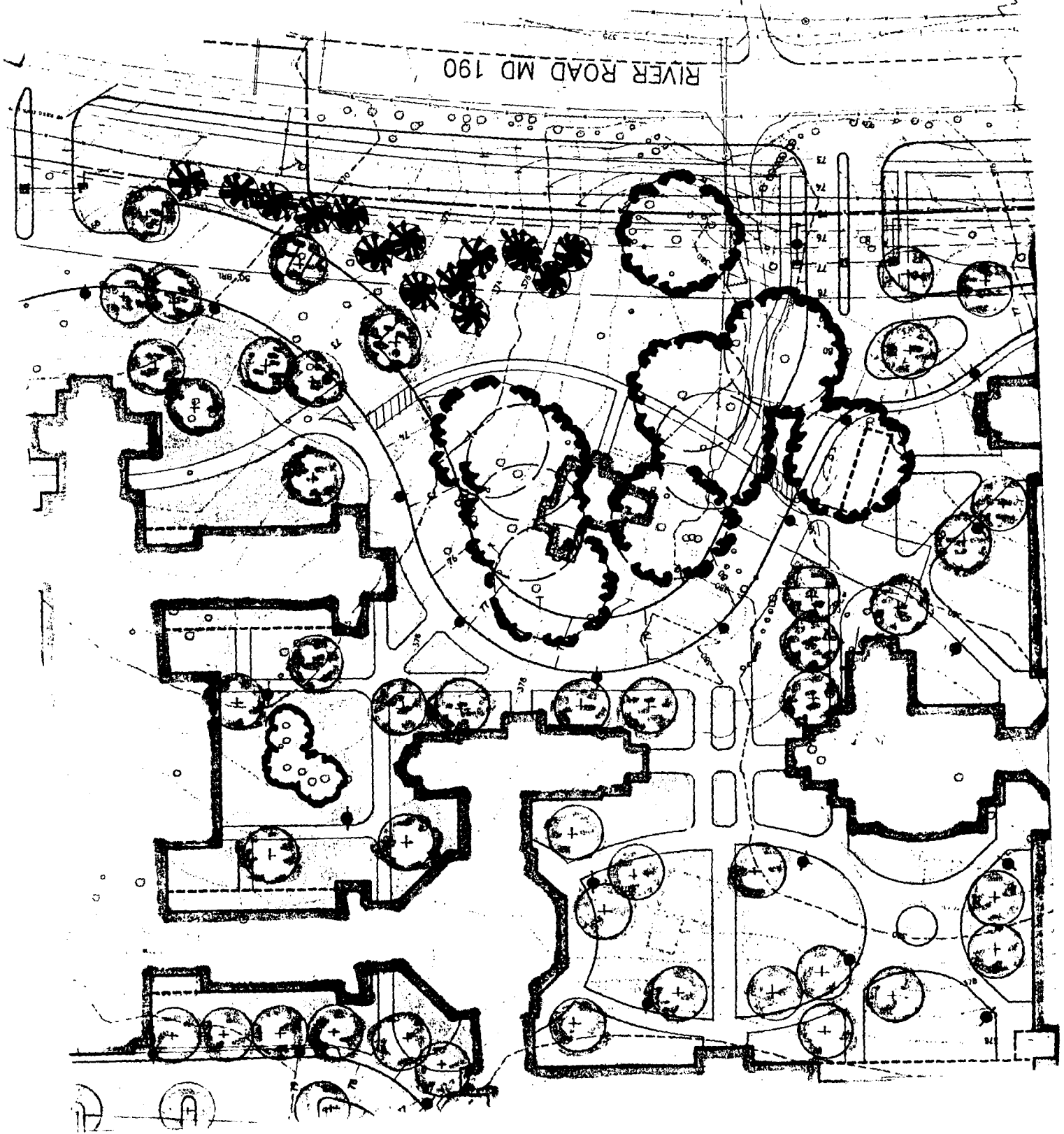
The School will utilize a number of methods to assure security on the campus. All driveways and parking areas will be well lit, as is shown on the attached lighting plan. The lights will be low in scale and will be shielded so they will not cause glare to the surrounding properties. Site lighting will be reduced after school hours to low levels for security only.

In addition to lighting, there will be a small "gatehouse" at one of the two school entrances. It will be manned when the entrances are open. In addition to enhancing security, this will also allow better control of the internal circulation of the site. Electronic gates are planned for both entrances for after hours control.

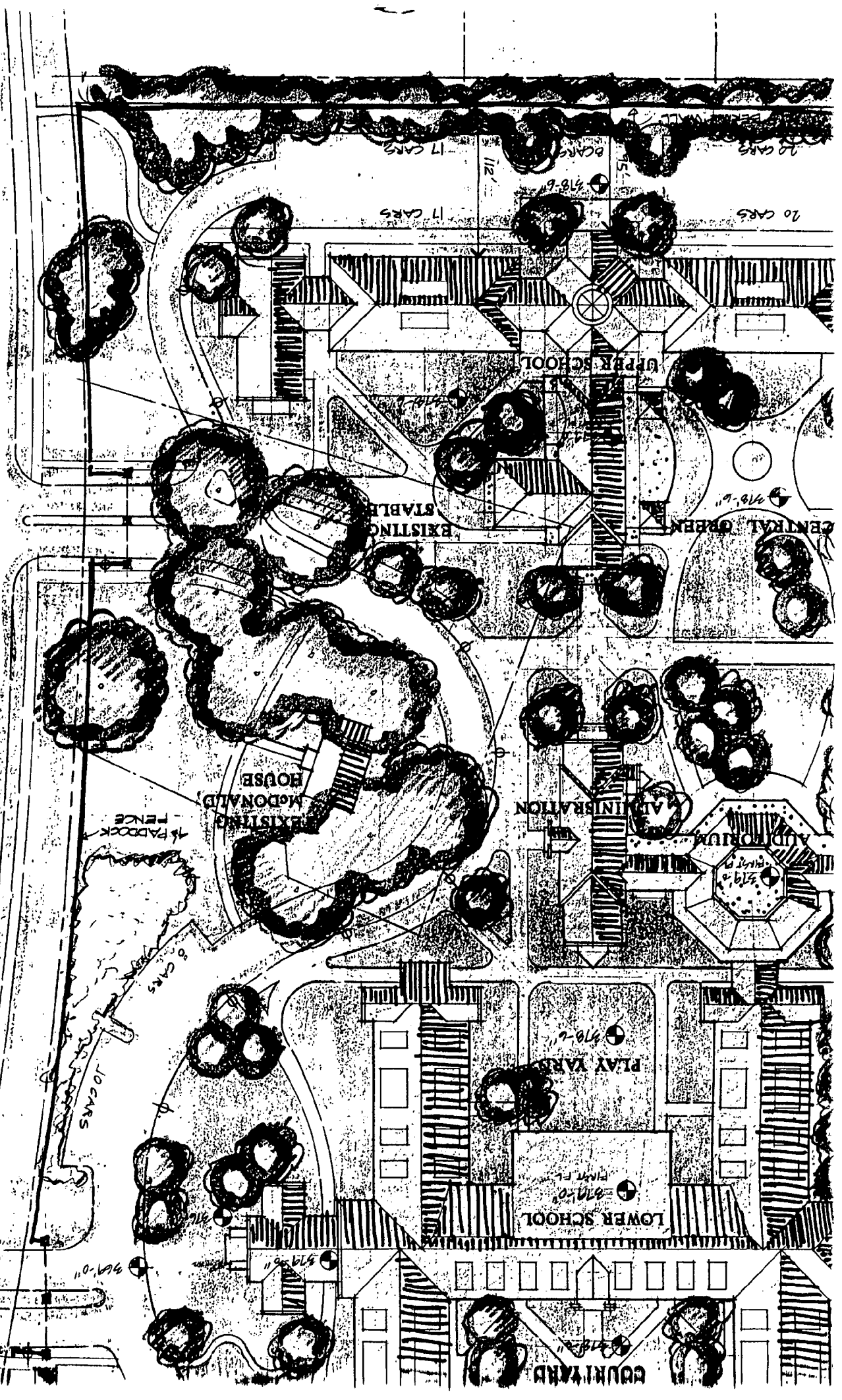
Finally, as indicated previously, the residences on the campus will enhance security by providing a continuous presence on the property.

re\dept\cmb
37523.SOP
051993/6

RIVER ROAD MD 190



RIVER ROAD



Opposition Mobilizes against French International School

#2917 McDONALD
HOUSE

POTOMAC

By Rachel Wallace

Almanac Staff Writer

8/25/93

About 20 people attended a Monday meeting held by the River Road Citizens Coalition to discuss the Bethesda-based French International School's plans to move to Potomac. The meeting was the fourth in a series organized by the coalition to enlist help in its campaign to prevent the move.

With about a month to go before the school and its opponents square off in a series of public hearings, the coalition is putting its campaign into high gear. Coalition members have staffed tables at the Giant and Safeway supermarkets in Potomac village, passing out information to passers-by and collecting 870 signatures on a petition opposing the school's plans. The sessions will be repeated at both stores Saturday, said coalition member Peggy Lawson.

Members also plan to hold four additional evening meetings at area homes for residents interested in learning more about the school's plans, Lawson said. The coalition's hotline receives "several calls a day" from people who want more information, said member Anne Younes.

The French School, which is currently housed on two campuses in Bethesda and Chevy Chase, purchased a 25-acre site just west of Potomac Village on River Road. The school will seek a special exception from the county to allow it to build a school in a residential zone at a county Board of Appeals hearing scheduled for Sept. 29 and 30. A hearing before the county planning board is scheduled for Sept. 23.

The plans have sparked strong opposition from neighbors of the property, who say the school is not compatible with their neighborhood, and will bring more traffic problems to an already congested area.

"I think it's going to be a nightmare," said Lawson, who lives beside the property on Fox Hunt Lane. "I think it's going to destroy our property

values. It totally destroys the character of our quiet old neighborhood."

Members also say the school will pack too many students onto the 25 acre campus. In response to concerns about numbers of students, the school promised never to enroll more than 1,500 students in its nursery through 12th grade program. But 60 students per acre is far higher than was intended on that piece of land, the coalition says.

"The project, if approved, will produce a student density of 120 students on a section of land zoned for one family—12 times the student density of a comparable Potomac school," says one of the coalition's fiercest.

"The literature going out [in opposition to the school] makes it sound like the school would start at 1,500 [students] and shoot up," said the school's attorney, Harry Lerch.

Lerch said the school's enrollment, currently less than 1,200, will probably

not reach 1,500 for 10 years. According to Lerch, the county's standard density for private schools is 87 students per acre.

In response to the traffic issue, Lerch said the school pushed back its opening hours to reduce its impact on rush hour and will encourage students to use its bus service to cut down on the number of cars driving to the school. The campus plans provide for two driveways, he added, which "effectively cuts the traffic in half."

The coalition is backed in its opposition by the West Montgomery County Citizens Association, the area's umbrella civic group

The West Montgomery County Citizens Association will hold a special meeting Sept. 9 to discuss the French International School's plans to move to Potomac. The association is opposed to the plans. The meeting will be at Potomac Elementary School at 8 p.m..

24

THE GAZETTE ICC foe's charges wrong

To the editor: 8/25/93

The wildly incomprehensible distortions of truth in the letter from Edward B. Weisel (Aug. 11) defy credulity.

Mr. Weisel states, "the Bowie Mill Civic Association ... has adamantly opposed any improvements (even safety improvements)" to Bowie Mill or Muncaster Mill Roads "on the off-chance that they also might increase traffic." This is blatantly false.

Our association was instrumental in obtaining the traffic signal at Muncaster Mill and Bowie Mill Roads; was responsible for a guard rail between Bowie Mill and Redland Roads at an acci-

dent-prone area; worked with the Board of Education prior to the construction of Sequoyah Elementary School, requesting acceleration and deceleration lanes; has officially recommended and supported the realignment of Bowie Mill with Needwood Road; obtained guard rails on two dangerous areas of Bowie Mill.

We support improvements on both Bowie Mill and Muncaster Mill Roads. We do not support widening Muncaster Mill, as advocated by Mr. Weisel; construction of the Inter-County Connector will solve many of its problems. As a juxtaposition to our stance, the county planning board in the not too distant past

stated its intent to preserve the character of Muncaster Mill Road.

Several years ago, following Mr. Weisel's move to the area, learning the ICC was in close proximity to his property, and joining the Coalition on Sensible Transportation (COST), he attended a meeting of the Bowie Mill Civic Association to enlist our support in opposing the ICC. He was quite surprised to learn we supported the ICC, telling him, "We need it." Following the Federal EPA's questions regarding the possible environmental impact of the ICC, Mr. Weisel became an environmentalist.

Marion L. Polli
Derwood

Tear m House

The mother of a 3-year-old 5-year-old, Blalock is worried children walking and biking Broad Green, which has no walk. Blalock moved to Potomac over a year ago, her opinion of the has quickly changed. thought it was perfect for raising ll children, and then boom," she

ulte is asking for Broad Green to ist 26 feet wide—instead of the dard 36—to try to slow down ic, Myers said.

ulte also redesigned the lots along n Road after initial plans to find a d match with the surrounding hborhood, Myers said. Sixteen es will be built along Glen, with sizes slightly more than a quarter .. The 1-1/2 acre lot surrounding old farmhouse will remain, Myers id, as will the trees on that lot. Though residents urged Pulte to tore the farmhouse, the developer dided to tear it down because its ondition doesn't warrant saving. It ould end up being a liability and a zard," said Myers. The new house ill match the others in the proposed evelopment, which are to have a dditional look.

"The house is not historic, but still, does raise at least a community issue in terms of what kind of house would eplace it," said Joe Davis, subdivision oordinator for the county planning oard.

Pulte's plans must be approved by the planning board, which has tentatively scheduled a public hearing for Sept. 9. The public can testify without prior notice. The hearing will be held at 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 495-4600 for more information.



photo by Susan Parlyns

Pulte plans to demolish the old barns and farmhouse on the Radie Evans Farm as part of building 178 new homes on the 75 acre property.

#29/7 MCDONALD HOUSE (Atlas)

Opposing French School

Dear Editor: POT, ALMANAE
The possibility of the French International School building in Potomac is a disaster in the making for this area. 8/25/93
The 25 acres for the proposed school is much too small for such a large school...1500 students.

The traffic it will generate will bring traffic to a halt during rush hour. River Road is already overloaded. Norton and River is a dangerous intersection and will get much worse.

But as a neighbor of the proposed school, I find it frightening that not only will 24 busses be parked at the school (the fumes and noise cannot

be hidden) but the school proposes to bury gasoline tanks and service the busses on site. This is a residential area. Most of us have wells. It is ludicrous to even suggest that the school poses no "threat" to Potomac.

I'm also a taxpayer. The French School will not pay taxes, but will endanger and disrupt our community.

I am not against good schools or the French, but our public schools do not park busses on site nor bury gas tanks in residential neighborhoods.

The French should not build here.
Suzanne Murphy
Potomac

Air Quality Forums Planned

POT, ALMANAE 8/25/93
The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection is holding three open meetings to discuss problems with the local air quality.

The Washington metropolitan area must comply with the standards established by the 1990 amendments to the federal Clean Air Act. The meetings will be held Sept. 9, 7:30 p.m., Upcounty Government Center, meeting room A, 12900 Middlebrook Road, Germantown, Sept. 13; 7:30 p.m., Executive Office Building, terrace level cafeteria, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville; Sept. 14, 7:30 p.m., Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission auditorium, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring. For more information, call either Eric Mendelsohn or Mary Whitehead of the Department of Environmental Protection at 217-2380.

19

#29/7 McDONALD HOUSE

West Montgomery calls special French School meeting

by Phil Coupe

Staff Writer

8/25/93

POTOMAC GAZETTE

The West Montgomery County Citizens Association has one thing to say about the French International School's plan to move from Bethesda to Potomac: "NO!"

With a showdown looming next month over the proposed transplant, West Montgomery has called a special meeting 8 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 9 to bring members up to speed and reaffirm its no-compromise stance on the issue.

The meeting, to be held at the Potomac Elementary School on

River Road, will also be an opportunity for the group to plot its opposition for Board of Appeals hearings scheduled Sept. 29 and 30 in Rockville.

Meanwhile, the River Road Citizens Coalition, West Montgomery's ally in the fight against the school, is offering to send speakers to any Potomac neighborhood interested in learning what kind of impact opponents believe the school will have.

"We'll send out all the invitations and bring in our own speakers for free to anyone who asks," said Peggy Lawson, a member of the coalition.

The coalition has invitation-only meetings scheduled Aug. 30 in River Oaks, Sept. 2 in Piney Glen, Sept. 7 on Piney Meetinghouse Road and two others on Tara Road and in Potomac Towne yet to be scheduled. The coalition has set up a hotline telephone number, 983-9005.

The two groups, claiming a combined membership of 1,200, believe the proposed 1,500-student school will create mile-long traffic snarls along River Road and bottle up the village, as well as destroy the residential character of surrounding neighborhoods.

Last year the French School

bought a 25-acre tract between Sandy Landing and Chapel Roads, roughly a mile north of the village, with plans to consolidate its campuses in Potomac. The land is zoned for one home per two acres.

The French School is now spread between two campuses, one at 3200 Woodbine St., Chevy Chase and another at 9600 Forest Rd., Bethesda.

"The French International School has committed millions of dollars in the past year to purchase the proposed River Road site, and has spent additional huge sums on lawyers, consultants and engineers to make a

sophisticated appeal to the County for a special exception," wrote Nels Ackerson, retiring president of West Montgomery, in a letter notifying members of the meeting.

Yet, Ackerson wrote, "the French School has still not even considered WMCCA's conclusion that the proposed school would clog eastbound morning rush hour traffic on River Road, would restrict access to River Road from Piney Meetinghouse, Norton Lane and other neighborhood roads . . . and would inundate other neighborhood roads with spillover traffic seeking an (Please see MEETING, A-18)

Meeting

(Continued from page A-1) alternative route around Potomac Village."

The French School disagrees, saying the traffic impact will be lessened by the school opening

at 8:45 a.m., after peak rush hour, and by the use of 24 buses to transport a majority of its students.

While traffic remains the groups' primary concern, both allege the school will have other negative impacts on Potomac such as damaging wetlands, pol-

luting nearby wells and ruining the residential character of surrounding neighborhoods.

The coalition has hired Environmental Resources Inc. to study wetlands on the school's property. The coalition believes the figures on the size of the wetlands may not be accurate.

While the French School claims its construction plan will leave 70 percent of its land as open space, Environmental Resources contends the school's five main buildings, driveways and running track will actually leave only 60 percent of the land as open space. Eighty-to-90 per-

cent open space is the norm for residential neighborhoods.

"The French School is proposing to put 60 students per acre on that land, which equals 120 students on a section of land that is zoned for one family," said Harry Lawson, a coalition member.

29

Opposition Mobilizes against French International School

#29/17 McDONALD HOUSE

POTOMAC

By Rachel Wallach

Almanac Staff Writer

8/25/93

About 20 people attended a Monday meeting held by the River Road Citizens Coalition to discuss the Bethesda-based French International School's plans to move to Potomac. The meeting was the fourth in a series organized by the coalition to enlist help in its campaign to prevent the move.

With about a month to go before the school and its opponents square off in a series of public hearings, the coalition is putting its campaign into high gear. Coalition members have staffed tables at the Giant and Safeway supermarkets in Potomac village, passing out information to passers-by and collecting 870 signatures on a petition opposing the school's plans. The sessions will be repeated at both stores Saturday, said coalition member Peggy Lawson.

Members also plan to hold four additional evening meetings at area homes for residents interested in learning more about the school's plans, Lawson said. The coalition's hotline receives "several calls a day" from people who want more information, said member Anne Yomes.

The French School, which is currently housed on two campuses in Bethesda and Chevy Chase, purchased a 25-acre site just west of Potomac Village on River Road. The school will seek a special exception from the county to allow it to build a school in a residential zone at a county Board of Appeals hearing scheduled for Sept. 29 and 30. A hearing before the county planning board is scheduled for Sept. 23.

The plans have sparked strong opposition from neighbors of the property, who say the school is not compatible with their neighborhood, and will bring more traffic problems to an already congested area.

"I think it's going to be a nightmare," said Lawson, who lives beside the property on Fox Hunt Lane. "I think it's going to destroy our property

values. It totally destroys the character of our quiet old neighborhood."

Members also say the school will pack too many students onto the 25 acre campus. In response to concerns about numbers of students, the school promised never to enroll more than 1,500 students in its nursery through 12th grade program. But 60 students per acre is far higher than was intended on that piece of land, the coalition says.

"The project, if approved, will produce a student density of 120 students on a section of land zoned for one family—12 times the student density of a comparable Potomac school," says one of the coalition's fliers.

"The literature going out [in opposition to the school] makes it sound like the school would start at 1,500 [students] and shoot up," said the school's attorney, Harry Lerch.

Lerch said the school's enrollment, currently less than 1,200, will probably

not reach 1,500 for 10 years. According to Lerch, the county's standard density for private schools is 87 students per acre.

In response to the traffic issue, Lerch said the school pushed back its opening hours to reduce its impact on rush hour and will encourage students to use its bus service to cut down on the number of cars driving to the school. The campus plans provide for two driveways, he added, which "effectively cuts the traffic in half."

The coalition is backed in its opposition by the West Montgomery County Citizens Association, the area's umbrella civic group

The West Montgomery County Citizens Association will hold a special meeting Sept. 9 to discuss the French International School's plans to move to Potomac. The association is opposed to the plans. The meeting will be at Potomac Elementary School at 8 p.m.

24

THE GAZETTE ICC foe's charges wrong

To the editor: 8/25/93

The wildly incomprehensible distortions of truth in the letter from Edward B. Weisel (Aug. 11) defy credulity.

Mr. Weisel states, "the Bowie Mill Civic Association . . . has adamantly opposed any improvements (even safety improvements)" to Bowie Mill or Muncaster Mill Roads "on the off-chance that they also might increase traffic." This is blatantly false.

Our association was instrumental in obtaining the traffic signal at Muncaster Mill and Bowie Mill Roads; was responsible for a guard rail between Bowie Mill and Redland Roads at an acci-

dent-prone area; worked with the Board of Education prior to the construction of Sequoyah Elementary School, requesting acceleration and deceleration lanes; has officially recommended and supported the realignment of Bowie Mill with Needwood Road; obtained guard rails on two dangerous areas of Bowie Mill.

We support improvements on both Bowie Mill and Muncaster Mill Roads. We do not support widening Muncaster Mill, as advocated by Mr. Weisel; construction of the Inter-County Connector will solve many of its problems. As a juxtaposition to our stance, the county planning board in the not too distant past

stated its intent to preserve the character of Muncaster Mill Road.

Several years ago, following Mr. Weisel's move to the area, learning the ICC was in close proximity to his property, and joining the Coalition on Sensible Transportation (COST), he attended a meeting of the Bowie Mill Civic Association to enlist our support in opposing the ICC. He was quite surprised to learn we supported the ICC, telling him, "We need it." Following the Federal EPA's questions regarding the possible environmental impact of the ICC, Mr. Weisel became an environmentalist.

Marion L. Polli
Derwood

#29/17
McDonald
House

French school opponents build their case

by Phil Coupe
Staff Writer

8/18/93
BETH GAZETTE

As the day of reckoning nears, a group opposing the French International School's planned move to Potomac is signing on scores of citizens for its cause and bolstering its case with new evidence.

The River Road Citizens Coalition, formed a year ago specifically to prevent the school from moving from Woodbine Street and Forest Road in Bethesda to a 25-acre site on River Road, has now swelled its ranks to 800 members and is planning an all-out war against the school come September.

"Every time we tell our story about the traffic nightmare this school is going to create, people jump right on the bandwagon," said Mickey Greenblatt, a member of the coalition. According to coalition figures, the school could cause backups for nearly a mile in each direction on River Road during morning rush hour.

The coalition has been carefully mapping its attack and will go up against the school at Board of Appeals hearings September 29 and 30 in Rockville, when the school will attempt to get a special exception to operate in a residential neighborhood. The 400-member West Montgomery County Citizens Association is backing the coalition.

The 37-year-old school is proposing a maximum enrollment of

1,500 students ranging from preschoolers through the 12th grade, and a staff of 150. The school will consist of five main buildings totalling 220,000 square feet, with 70 percent of the property left as green space.

While potential River Road traffic snarls created by the school remain the coalition's primary focus, the group is also exploring other issues including wetlands, underground gasoline tanks and the amount of ground coverage in the school's plan.

Donald Shive, a member of the coalition who lives on Fox Hunt Lane, behind the school's proposed site, said he is concerned about the school's impact on wetlands on its property.

"I drilled holes on that land in 1969 and decided it would be a bad investment because it was too soggy and there seemed to be an aquifer near the surface," said Shive. He said the school's analysis of the wetland might be too conservative.

But Joe Hughes, an engineer with Chester Environmental, the company the French School hired to determine the boundaries of the wetlands, said the study has been reviewed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

"We found roughly 16,000 square feet of wetlands on the property and that has required us to shift the tennis courts and the bus staging area to the east, away from the wetlands," said Hughes.

Hughes said Chester Environmental made more than 35 borings on the 25 acres and found the water table to be between seven and 20 feet below the surface.

Harry Lawson, a leader of the coalition, said he is worried about what might happen if one of the school's planned underground gasoline tanks were to rupture.

"That poses a direct threat to the water supply in the Fox Meadow neighborhood where people have wells tapped into that underground water supply," said Lawson.

Carter McCamy, president of Environmental Quality Resources, Inc., the company hired by the coalition to study the amount of ground coverage in the school's plan, said his figures are about 10 percent higher than Chester Environmental's.

"They didn't include things like sidewalks and porches and the running track," said McCamy. He said the county likes to keep ground coverage below a maximum of 20 percent in residential zones. Environmental Resources is also planning to conduct its own study of the wetlands.

Chester Environmental's Hughes said his company is now looking at ways to reduce the ground coverage in the school's plan by trimming parking lots and finding a porous material to be used for the track.

Limited copies of master plan available

A limited number of copies of the Montgomery County Planning Board's final draft of the Aspen Hill Master Plan are available for public distribution at the Planning Board's headquarters, 8787 Georgia Ave. For current availability, call the Planning Board at 495-4600 (TDD 495-1331).

Aspen Hill Happenings
by Elliot G. Chabot

Montgomery and Prince George's counties, the Maryland-National Capitol Park and Planning Commission and the Maryland Department of Trans-

portation have recently opened an office at 14015 New Hampshire Ave. to coordinate public relations and other efforts on behalf of the proposed Intercounty Connector. The office has scheduled the first of a series of subject forums for Aug. 26 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at John F. Kennedy High School, 1901 Randolph Road. The topic will be

traffic projection methodology.

The Wheaton Woods Swimming Pool, 4610 Landgreen St., will hold an open adult social this Saturday.

The pool also will sponsor a pre-teen night at 7 p.m. Aug. 26.

If your group or organization is planning a meeting or event in Aspen Hill, call Elliot Chabot at 942-4218 so it can be shared with the whole community.

25

Opposition to French School Mounts

B-CCALMANAC
By Rachel Wallach 9/23/93
Almanac Staff Writer

The River Road Citizens Coalition, a group of 550 families formed to fight the proposed building of the French International School, is conducting a survey of its members, asking whether they have problems with traffic along River Road, and soliciting donations to help pay for the fight.

After searching for lots in the Bethesda/Potomac area, the French International School chose a 25-acre site on River Road in Potomac near Potomac Elementary School. On May 24, the school filed a request for a special exception from the county to operate the school in the residential zone.

Neighbors, worried that the facility will produce problems with traffic and the environment, and that it will clash with the area's character, have vociferously opposed the plan, forming the coalition, and hiring a traffic engineer, an environmental consultant and a zoning attorney.

"I find myself in objection [with the plans] on many counts," said Foxhunt Lane resident Mervel Oleson. "Probably the dominant one that affects most people in the area is traffic. Traffic will go from bad to intoler

"Also, it is completely out of character with the neighborhood. No matter how you slice it, it's putting a high-density personnel operation into a low-density neighborhood," said Oleson, a newly-elected member of the board of directors of the West Montgomery County Citizens Association.

The school's main campus is the former Ursuline Academy and convent on Forest Road, but 400 elementary schoolers go to school 20 minutes away, in leased space at the former Rollingwood Elementary School in Chevy Chase. Of the 1,100 students, 650 attend preschool through sixth grade, 250 are in grades seven through nine and just over 200 are in high school. But the school has long wanted to find a home on a single campus.

"It's a disaster for Potomac," said Harry Lawson, a resident of Spring Knoll Drive and the president of the River Road Citizens Coalition.

But cars will travel to the school after the current traffic peak, said Potomac resident Douglas Russell. Russell has three children at the French School. According to his own traffic counts, volume drops "dramatically" after 8:30 a.m. The school plans to open at 8:45.

The school has worked hard to meet neighbors' concerns, said its attorney, Harry Lerch. The new campus is expected to serve a maximum of 1,500 students. Because 70 to 75 percent of the students are expected to ride the bus, the school should add no more than 300 cars to the traffic stream on River Road, Lerch said. The school expects to pay for the widening of River Road and the construction of a westbound left turn lane at its entrance, Lerch said.

Wendy Guillou, another Potomac resident with a son at the school and also a member of its board of directors, said those who oppose the move are overlooking the advantages the institution will offer Potomac. "Potomac kids are the leaders of tomorrow. They have an extra opportunity to go to an international school. It won't be a foreign body dropped in the midst of Potomac, but a whole new doorway onto the world."

Currently, 150 students from 80 Potomac families attend the French School.

A hearing on the zoning exception is scheduled for September 29 and 30 at the Board of Appeals. Individuals may submit written comments to the Board before the hearing, and may also testify at the hearing itself.

Farm Market

Seeks County

9/23/93
Approval

B-CCALMANAC

The owner of the Potomac Farm Market on River Road across from the water filtration plant will go to the board of appeals in July to seek further approval under his special exception. The business operates in a residential zone with permission from the county.

Hugh Hunt, president of the Georgia-based Ashdun Corp. that bought Potomac Farm Market five years ago, said he didn't know that the parking lot and two outside gazebos were not approved under the existing county plan for the site. His request for a modification in that plan seeks approval for the parking lot and fixtures as they now stand, Hunt said.

The 19-space parking lot, which was in place when Ashdun bought the business, contains more spaces and is a different shape than what is currently approved, Hunt said. The fixtures were added last summer as part of a branch of the business called Amish Crafts, and include two gazebos, a rose arbor and swinging seats, he said. Hunt said he has no plans to expand the market.

The Board of Appeals will hear the request on July 28 at 10 a.m.

—Rachel Wallach

25

Lines drawn in battle over French School

Neighbors dread River Road gridlock

POT. GAZETTE
by Phil Coups
Staff Writer
5/26/93

The battle cry has been sounded over plans to build a new school on River Road in Potomac.

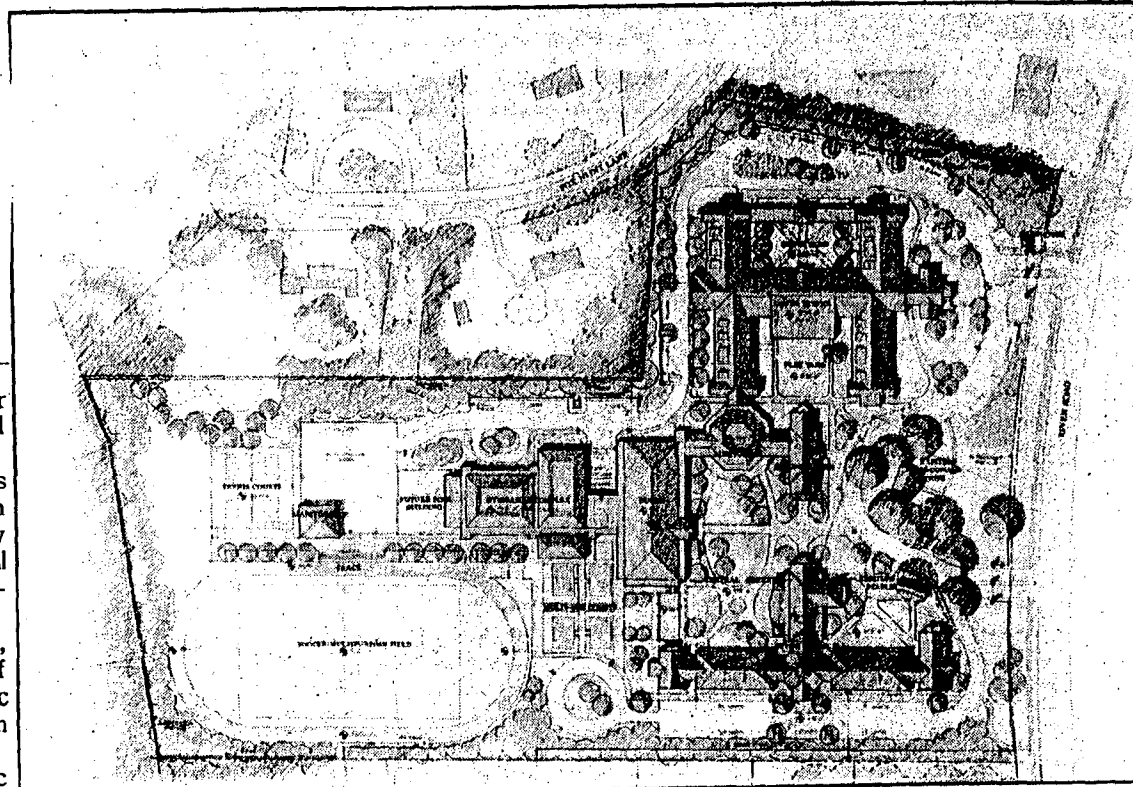
Having already purchased 25 acres near Norton Road, Bethesda's French International School applied to the County Board of Appeals Monday for a special exception to build on the residentially-zoned site.

Two local groups are fighting the plan, saying the school is too big for the piece of land and that it will create massive traffic jams on River Road during morning rush hour.

"We think it's a disaster for Potomac and we plan to fight it every step of the way," said Harry Lawson, a member of the River Road Citizens Coalition. Compromise is not an option, he said.

The coalition, which claims 550 families as members, was formed last year for the sole purpose of stopping the school's construction, and was joined last October by the 400-member West Montgomery County Citizens Association in opposing the project. A hearing on the project is scheduled for Sept. 29 at the Board of Appeals in Rockville.

The 37-year-old school, which has campuses in Bethesda and Chevy Chase, is proposing a maximum enrollment of 1,500 students ranging from preschoolers through the 12th grade. Harry Lerch, the school's attorney, said there will be a maximum of 150 staff members.



The proposed French School on River Road in Potomac will have a maximum enrollment of 1,500 students.

More than half the students will be preschoolers through sixth-graders. Currently 873 of the school's 1,109 students live in Montgomery County.

Anticipating a battle over traffic, the French School hired its own expert to assess the school's potential impact. Craig Headberg, a Baltimore-based traffic engineer, conducted a study of the site and said the school's plan will work.

Headmaster Pierre Hudelot said the school will change its opening time from 8:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. so drivers will avoid the 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. rush

hour. He said the school will add turning lanes on River Road so northbound drivers can make a left turn into either of two entrances to the school without stopping traffic.

Only 20 students will be allowed to drive to school, while 70 percent will be bused in on the school's 23 buses. The remaining students will arrive in carpools, said Hudelot. Parking for staff and students will be spread throughout the campus on small 10- to 12-car lots with a total of 200 spaces.

Lawson said cars trying to turn into the school will back up southbound River Road traffic for almost a mile. "We videotaped 596 southbound cars between 8:15 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. on River Road. You can't possibly have cars getting into that school without a traffic light," said Lawson.

Lerch said the school will help pay for a light if one is required by the State Highway Administration, which does not rule on such issues until a project is approved. He said a crossing guard hired by the school will help direct traffic.

2

Continued on Ne Page

French

A key element of the school's latest plan is a 6-foot-high earth berm with a 6-foot-high brick fence resting on top that will surround three sides of the property. Lerch said the berm/fence buffer was added to hide the school from adjacent properties.

"That's going to be like having the Berlin Wall in your back yard," said River Road coalition member Bob Beckman, a Washington attorney. "You just can't jam a 1,500-student school into a residential community," he added.

The proposed school will have five main buildings, totaling 220,000 square feet, connected by enclosed walkways or underground tunnels. The one- and two-story buildings will be no closer than 75 feet to the property line, Lerch said. That will leave 70 percent of the 25 acres open green space.

The historic McDonald House will probably become the headmaster's residence, said Lerch.

Besides the berm and fence, the school plans to plant more than 280 new trees on the property. A 14,000-square-foot patch of wetlands will be protected in the property's northwest corner.

"This is a complete destruction and raping of the Master Plan—I guess the battle has been drawn," said Beckman, who intends to fight the school in court if it is approved by the Board of Appeals.

Update *Peter Goyt*

Parking meters deter some library patrons

The number of people using the Bethesda Regional Library went down in the first week after parking meters went up in the parking lot.

The county installed meters on May 14 to keep shoppers and Metro riders from using the free lot.

"We can certainly see that we have fewer people than we expect," said Librarian Leila Shapiro, who could not estimate the size of the drop. "A number of people have decided not to use this library because of the meters. I hope we haven't permanently lost old friends."

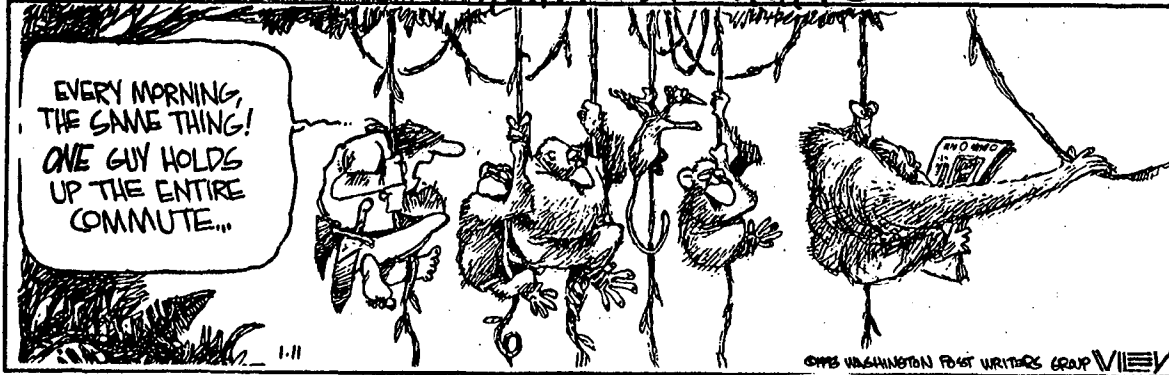
Shapiro said ever since the April announcement that meters would be installed, circulation has dropped.

Drivers pay 25 cents for 30 minutes of parking.

Las
for
T
Bet
tric
p.m
Plar
Ave
T
opr
20
pro
the
nue
Ro:
Str
Mc
roa
acc
dis
C
wor
at i
No
the
Co
Co
wi
199
460

NON SEQUITUR WILEY

WASH. POST 11/11/93



29/7

French school plans move to Potomac

By PETER KELLY
Journal staff writer

11/11/93
JOURNAL

After more than a decade of renting classrooms and operating two campuses, the French International School plans to move from Bethesda to a single 25-acre site west of Potomac.

The new campus, on River Road about three-quarters of a mile west of Potomac Village, would put the school's 1,100 students in one place. School officials hope to open it in fall 1995.

The school, which goes from preschool through high school, prepares students for the entrance examinations to French universities, and offers courses that lead to a Maryland high school diploma.

School officials will apply this month for special permission from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to build the school in the residential area.

The local civic group, the West Montgomery County Citizens Association, voted in October to oppose the construction plan because members who live near the site were worried about traffic and other aspects of the proposal, said Jill Lavin, the association's director of zoning and planning.

Based on the association's objections, school officials reduced the proposed maximum number of students from 1,800 to 1,500 and said they would start the school day later to avoid adding to morning rush-hour traffic.



An architect's drawing of the proposed French International School in Potomac.

School officials also pledged that 75 percent of the students will take a bus or car pool to the school.

The French International School was founded in Washington in 1955 for about 40 children of French diplomats. Today about 1-in-5 students is American.

In 1975 the school moved to its current 13-acre site on Forest Road, the former Ursuline Academy

and convent, near Old Georgetown Road and the Capital Beltway.

But enrollment continued to grow. Since 1979 the school has been renting classrooms from the county public school system. The rented rooms, at the former Rollingwood Elementary School, are about a 20-minute drive from the main campus.

"We would like to be on the same campus," said Elizabeth Hoffman, the school's director of development.

38

29/7 McDonald House

Standard Procedure

Dear Editor: ^{11/11/92} ~~BCCALMANAC~~

Judith S. DeBrandt rightly deplors the traffic clog in Potomac but she is myopic when she minimizes the impact that the proposed French International School would have on the problem. By conservative estimate, the school would add at least 500 vehicles to the traffic on River Road during rush hour, an increase of 50 percent or more. Spillover traffic would further congest side roads. The school planners also envision a parking lot nearly as large as the parking lot facing the Safeway—a clear threat to the environment.

Ms. DeBrandt is equally muddled in her allegation that supporters of the school were denied a fair hearing at the meeting of the West Montgomery County Citizens Association on Oct. 14. Nels Ackerson, the president of the WMCCA, conducted the meeting in a thoroughly even-handed manner. He invited both the school's headmaster and lawyer as well as critics of the project to express their views. With the predictable exception of the school's lawyer, members of the WMCCA voted unanimously against the school. If Ms. DeBrandt views that process as "mean" and "vindictive," as she puts it, she seems to be unfamiliar with democratic procedures.

Stanley Karnow
River Road Citizens Coalition

29/7 McDonald House

Premature Decision

Dear Editor: ~~BCCALMANAC~~

As a Potomac homeowner and parent of a child who attends the French International School (FIS), I confess to having a special interest in the school's proposal to build a well-designed, low-profile campus in Potomac. ^{11/11/92}

... Many of my neighbors were urged to attend the Oct. 14 meeting of our local civic association (the West Montgomery County Citizens Association), especially to vote *against* the school's proposal to relocate to a site fronting River Road.

Although they have not even seen the school's plans (because they are not yet complete), WMCCA's board, together with about 25 other members attending the meeting, decided to "provisionally" oppose the FIS plan.

It seemed that WMCCA hardly even listened to the FIS representative's plea to the group to defer its vote until they had had an opportunity to review the plans. The school has engaged an outstanding, internationally known architectural firm to design a beautiful, two-story facility, which will harmonize with the surrounding area. Detailed plans should be ready in a few weeks, and school leaders plan to share them with interested citizens at that time.

I hope my neighbors will consider the real school plan and not leap to oppose a project that—like prestigious schools in other prime suburbs—will be a real asset to the Potomac community.

Brian Mitchell
Willow Green Court
Potomac

2

Developer challenges 190-foot radio tower located off Route 355

by Sara Green
Staff Writer

The silver-colored metal radio tower sits just off Rte. 355 near the Walnut Hill Shopping Center and stands 190 feet tall. Its closest neighbors are an old motel and a one-story frame bungalow, now a towel shop.

Jon Hodnett's company owns the land behind the tower and homes are being built there. He thinks Montgomery County should have notified adjoining property owners and held a public hearing before letting the Montgomery County Cab Co. build the tower earlier this summer.

Hodnett wants the Montgomery County Board of Appeals to overturn the tower's building permit which was issued by the Department of Environmental Protection without a hearing or notification to adjoining property owners.

The hearing will be held Wednesday, Oct. 21, at 10 a.m. at the Stella B. Werner Council Office Building on 100 Maryland Ave. in Rockville.

"The existence of the huge radio tower is having a negative impact on our ability to market housing at our neighboring project, Walnut Grove," wrote Hodnett in his appeal request.

The county argues that the tower is being used as an accessory to the cab company, which has an office in the motel, and therefore does not need a special exception, which would require an appeals board hearing, wrote three attorneys for the county in their prehearing statements to the board.

If, for example, the tower was built for a radio or television station or if the cab company let a radio or television station rent even part of the tower, a special exception would be needed, but that is not the case here, explained John Reinhard, a program manager for the Department of Environmental Protection.

That was the case from 1972 to 1981, when a 100-foot-high cable television relay tower stood on the same property, 807 S. Frederick Ave., noted the county's statement. That tower's special exception was revoked on Oct. 27, 1981 after the tower was removed from the site, the statement said.

Hodnett argues that the tower is ugly regardless of who is using it and that the law should be changed to protect nearby property owners.

"We don't have the authority when we issue building permits to hold any type of public hearing" nor can the department let public opposition alter its decisions on building permits, if the use meets the zoning law and other basic safety issues, said Reinhard. "We would never get anything done in a timely period," if hearings were held, he added.

The tower is not in the approach area for Montgomery County Airpark, about about one and a half miles away, so aviation agencies are not involved, said Reinhard.

Bruce Mundie, an official with the Maryland Aviation Adminis-

tration who had not known about the Rte. 355 tower, does not think a 190-foot structure threatens aircraft. Pilots should fly at least 1,000 feet above populated areas unless they are making an approach to an airport and even then should fly at about 500 feet within two miles of the runway, he said.

29/17 JOHN McDONALD HOUSE

French School Not Welcomed

More than 100 people turned out for West Montgomery County Citizens Association's first meeting of the season—and many of them were there to fight the French International School's plan to move its 1,100 students from two locations—one in Chevy Chase and one in Bethesda—to a new campus in Potomac.

After more than an hour of presentations from both the French School and the River Road Citizens Coalition, which opposes the school, members voted overwhelmingly to block the move.

"There is no way this is going to work," said Harry Lawson, a member of the coalition, who prepared a traffic study estimating that the school would generate an additional 660 cars during morning rush hour.

French School Headmaster Pierre Hudelot made an emotional appeal on behalf of his school, promising to be a good neighbor, and offering several key compromises, including subsidizing bus service, moving the starting hour of school back until after rush hour and limiting the size of the school to 1,500.

But in the end, only one member voted for the French School—their attorney, Harry Lerch.

—Mary Kimm Dixon

f

State honors county for forest conservation

Of the 30 jurisdictions in the Potomac River basin, Montgomery County ranks last in forest coverage except for one other jurisdiction—the District of Columbia. 10/22/92

So when the state passed its forest conservation act in 1991, the county leaped at the chance to become greener, said County Council member Derick Berlage, D-Silver Spring.

Wednesday, Berlage and County Executive Neal Potter planted a sugar maple tree in the "forest" beside the Executive Office Building in Rockville, as the state Department of Natural Resources honored the county as the first to develop an acceptable forest conservation plan.

Most counties submitted plans to the state beginning last spring, but Montgomery County is the only one to be certified so far, said Eric Schwaab, director of forestry programs at DNR.

The county's strict law requires developers to preserve as many trees as possible by inventorying trees on the site before they begin construction, Berlage said. Developers must work with the planning department to strike a balance between the need to protect trees and to build what is planned, he said.

In a commercial zone, developers must preserve a minimum of 10 to 15 percent of the trees, while a residential zone requires that at least 25 percent of the trees be preserved, Berlage said.

—LISA NEVANS

FDA consolidation 5 to 7 years away

by Bill Borda
Staff Writer

Despite the recent good news, the consolidation of some Food and Drug Administration laboratories in Montgomery County is a long way off.

The time frame for acquiring the land, designing the labs and constructing the facilities could take from five to seven years, an administration official familiar with the process said.

Last month an agreement was reached on Capitol Hill to free up \$200 million for the site selection and acquisition of land in Montgomery County. The accord calls for the government to acquire 129 acres of land for the consolidation of three "critical" administration divisions.

The official, who did not want to be identified, said the process is "quite protracted."

First, the government has to solicit interest from county land owners. A previous solicitation, when the administration needed 365 acres, drew about eight or nine responses, the official said. But now the administration needs to acquire 129 acres, and the official anticipates receiving many more offers.

Rex Strum, the attorney rep-

resenting the owners of the Irvington Farm, said his clients will still be interested in having their 445-acre farm considered for the consolidation "assuming we can make some progress with the Wal-Mart deal."

"We're eager to have it (the administration) on our property," he said. "Just when it seems we have our cards on the table, somebody shuffles the deck."

A spokesman from Marriott Corp., whose Milestone property in Germantown is being considered for the consolidation, did not want to comment on the situation "because we have not been informed of their (the administration's) plans of site selection."

Once the government receives all the responses, the process to narrow down a property will take six to nine months, the official said.

Food and Drug Administration officials will have to meet with the land owners, look at the properties, have an engineering firm survey the different parcels and have an environmental assesment performed for each of

the sites. "We're not talking about something that's going to happen overnight, that's obvious," the official said.

After the site is chosen, the deeding of the property would take another year, the official said. Designing the labs will tack an additional year to year and a half to the process and construction will take at least three years, the official said.

The length of time it will take before the building is ready for occupy, according to the official, will be five to seven years.

Jon A. Gerson, director of the county's Office of Economic Development, said he does not think the time frame will discourage biotechnology firms from staying in or relocating to the county.

"Health care research is long-term in nature, and it is likely there will still be need for FDA and its related function for many years to come," he said. "Unfortunately, it seems unlikely we will find a cure for AIDS and cancer in five years. However, the sooner FDA is at full strength, the better the prospects."

5

Opposition to French School Heats Up

POTOMAC
By Mary Kimm Dixon
Almanac Staff Writer 9/19/92

The French International School is running into more opposition than it expected in its planned move to River Road in Potomac.

More than 350 people have joined the River Road Citizens Coalition that seeks to block construction of the new school on 25 acres, a short distance west of Potomac Village. Leaders of the coalition met last week with the attorney for the French School, Harry Lerch.

"I do believe we were able to clear up some matters that were misunderstandings," Lerch said.

Although both sides described the meeting as a forthright exchange of opinions, neighbors remain steadfastly opposed to the school's chosen location.

"You're talking about a neighborhood that's been established for over 30 years," said coalition member Robert Beckman. Beckman cited in-

compatibility with the existing residential neighborhood as his key objection, but added that traffic and environmental issues add up to insurmountable problems.

"We see it as an outrage," he said.

The new campus would serve the school's 1,100 current students, now split between two campuses, in Bethesda and Chevy Chase. Coalition leaders point to a history of problems between the community the school's Bethesda locations.

Finding a location large enough to consolidate the entire student body, and which the school would own, has long been a goal, Headmaster Pierre Hudelot said earlier.

The French International School will prepare comprehensive answers to the problems the community has raised, Lerch said, responding to concerns including traffic, the school's ability to discipline students, the French School's record in Bethesda, the de-

sign of the campus and environmental issues.

The French International School met with community leaders and county planners before settling on this site, Lerch said, and received nothing but positive feedback until now. He said the school paid "millions" for the property, but might still be willing to consider other locations.

The coalition plans an organizational meeting to coordinate a bevy of volunteers with a wide range of talents, said Ann Younes. The meeting will be held Sept. 30 at St. Francis Church at 7:30 p.m.

West Montgomery County Citizens Association, the area's umbrella civic group, will take up the issue at its meeting on Oct. 14. Younes and Beckman said that coalition members are joining West Montgomery so they can vote on the issue. West Montgomery's membership recently topped 400.

Council Delays Vote on Productivity Housing

Legislation Would Pave the Way For Affordable Housing Site in Potomac

POTOMAC
By Mary Kimm Dixon 9/19/92
Almanac Staff Writer

At the corner of Falls Road and Alloway Drive, the dozen or so bluebirds that call the meadow home seem to be making plans to spend the winter. Perhaps they heard that county coun-

"This is a torpedo into the heart of our general plan and two and a half decades of planning and zoning decisions by this council."

—Betty Ann Krahnke

cil is in no hurry to pass the legislation that would pave the way to build about 50 moderately priced houses on the 14-acre surplus county site.

For the second time in a month, County Council began what was supposed to be final action on productivity housing, a plan to allow moderately priced housing—for those who make up to the area median income of nearly \$60,000 for a family of four—in areas zoned for one house on one or two acres.

While proponents of the bill say that they have the required five votes to pass the legislation, a series of complex amendments have slowed progress.

Betty Ann Krahnke, who opposes productivity housing, said her amendments are critical to land-use planning.

"At least if you all are going to do this," she said, referring to the majority of the council, "it's not going to wreck everything I've done in the last 20 years." Krahnke is a former planning board member.

"This is a torpedo into the heart of our general plan and two and a half decades of planning and zoning decisions by this council."

Bill Hanna, who sponsored the legislation, accused opponents of the bill

of filibustering to kill it.

"I have to congratulate my opponents," Hanna said. "The have resurrected the senatorial tradition of filibustering."

Nancy Dacek, who also opposes the bill, questioned the need for productivity housing.

"Are we providing a kind of housing that is not available in the county? The answer is absolutely not," Dacek said. "This level of housing is available in the county. What we're trying to do is shove this type of housing in areas where it has not been planned."

The proposal has commanded regionwide attention. Many, including county Housing Director Rick Ferrara and Planning Board Chairman Gus Bauman, see it as a litmus test: Will the county stand by its policy of placing affordable housing in all parts of the county? Potomac has less affordable housing than most other parts of the county, some believe because of the wealth in the area.

Residents around the Falls-Alloway site have vociferously opposed the plan, saying that productivity housing

"I have to 2 congratulate my opponents. They have resurrected the senatorial tradition of filibustering."

—Bill Hanna

would lower their property values and isn't compatible with two-acre zoning. Houses in the surrounding area range in price from \$500,000 to \$2 million. The productivity housing would sell for around \$150,000.

"I'm really tired of all the trashing of Potomac," Krahnke said. "The people of Potomac didn't zone Potomac—the County Council zoned Potomac."

The bill is once again scheduled for final action on Tuesday, Sept. 22 in the morning.

Transportation outlook fair for Montgomery County

LARISA LOMACKY

Editor

From the ever-widening I-270 Corridor to the still-stagnant Inter-County Connector (I-CC), a number of transportation programs are waiting down the road for Montgomery, largely thanks to the efforts of the county's delegation to the General Assembly, according to transportation officials.

Hal Kassoff, administrator of the State Highway Administration, and Graham J. Norton, director of the county's Department of Trans-

portation, painted a fair if not altogether rosy picture of the state's road and transit system for concerned businessmen at last week's meeting of the I-270 Corridor Employers Group.

"In the next six years, not counting maintenance or small projects, the state Department of Transportation will spend three-quarters of a billion dollars in Montgomery County," Kassoff said. The county obtained 23 percent of the increase in state funding for transportation in the last legislative session.

Reliance on federal funding for

transportation projects has changed since the recession, relieving the state's burden somewhat. Between 1988 and 1991, 76 percent of projects were state-funded, but for 1993-94 only 15 percent are slated for state funding. This shift is partially due to the new Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), Kassoff explained.

Upcoming projects include several to along the I-270 Corridor, from widening the highway between Route 118 and Route 121 next summer, to expanding Route 355 in spring 1996. The total cost

for all of these projects adds up to \$165 million, Kassoff said.

Another \$593 million is slated for operating and capital costs for the county's transit system, he added.

As for the controversial I-CC, "it's still on the agenda," Kassoff said. He predicted it would be "a 21st century transportation corridor," with a parkway design, a greenway for bicycle riders, and financed by the latest electronic toll collecting technology.

"The I-CC is critical to the future of I-270 and the state transportation network," Norton said.

The county council will hold a hearing on the I-CC on Oct. 29.

Because recent studies show that 64 percent of work trips in the county start and end within county lines, Norton said DOT would concentrate more on roads and transit systems to move people around the county rather than shuttling them to and from the District.

"The MARC system will be our through system, and we need to have an express busway going to

NIST or the Life Sciences Center as that develops, so that people will save time taking transit to work in these areas," he said.

Though 50 percent of the county's investment in transportation over the last three years has gone toward public transit, only seven percent of trips in the county use transit—a figure DOT hopes to change, Norton said.

He said local priorities for transportation funding are maintenance of roads and buses, to cut down on potential capital costs, and improving the county's computerized traffic management system, which can check traffic conditions remotely and adjust traffic signals to compensate.

Because state and local budget cuts and funding priorities are taking money away from transportation to fund education, "our biggest challenge in DOT right now is the fiscal situation," Norton said.

Norton said he supported the controversial construction excise tax, which could bring as many as nine areas out of moratorium.

3

Some Potomac residents balk at French school's plans to relocate

by Jean Cryor
Co-Editor

Some Potomac residents are saying "Ah, Non," to the French International School's plans to relocate to 25 acres at River and Norton roads.

The impact of the school's move from its Bethesda and Chevy Chase campuses, and particularly of the buses transporting the 1,100 students on River Road rush hour traffic, is the first concern of nearby residents.

"As it is now, it takes 10 minutes to get out on to River Road from Sandy Landing," said Stanley Karnow, a 30-year resident of Potomac and one of the leaders of the River Road Citizens Coalition, a new group formed to explore the impact the school will have on traffic and on the character of the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Mailboxes along River, Norton and Sandy Landing have been stuffed with coalition flyers alerting residents to the school's plan to move to Potomac. In the past few days, Karnow himself has delivered 300 of the 3,000 flyers the organization has printed.

The land is zoned residential. Any plan will have to be approved by the County Board of Appeals before the school can be built.

Harry Lerch, the attorney for the school, has said the hearing should be in February. With approval, the school could be built by next summer.

Robert Beckman, a lawyer who lives near the property, said of the school being built, "It is inappropriate and contrary to the Master Plan. It puts a great burden on the neighbors and the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people who are lined up in the morning bumper-to-bumper traffic on River Road."

Lerch said he expects to sit down with the neighbors of the property within the next weeks.

The school, Lerch said, will have three buildings, one for the elementary school, another for the junior and senior high school and one for cafeteria, gym and auditorium. The buildings and driveways are expected to use less than 20 percent of the land. Buildings are planned to be residential in appearance, two-stories high, "no higher in height than the chimney on the Miller house now," Lerch said.

The Miller house, or the McDonald house as the Historic Commission refers to it, will remain on the property.

Plans call for the school entrance to be on River Road with turning lanes to avoid delaying traffic. Lerch speculated that cars turning left to enter the

school would not have much trouble since traffic is so slow at rush hour.

The school officials are urging the families to use the school buses to reduce the number of cars on River Road, Lerch said. The school has 11 buses and could have about 30 when the school opens.

The students are largely children of people employed by the French government, French corporations and the World Bank.

Tuition ranges from \$5,500 to \$7,000. The school receives financial assistance from the French government. Lerch would not speculate on how

much money the school receives.

The proviseur, or headmaster of the school, is Pierre Hudelot. Plans call for the school to continue its strongly academic nature. This is a school, Lerch said, that does not have a football team, big games at night or on the weekends.

POTOMAC WASH. POST

■ FRENCH SCHOOL SITE 9/10/92

A plan by the French International School to consolidate its Chevy Chase and Bethesda campuses into a new facility on River Road in Potomac has prompted concern from neighbors who worry about added traffic that the project will generate.

The school, with a combined enrollment of 1,100 students at its current elementary and secondary school campuses, will file an application this fall with the Montgomery County Board of Appeals to build on the 25-acre site at 10600 River Rd., just north of Potomac Village. The school's lawyer in the case, Harry Lerch, said he expects a hearing on the matter could occur by February.

Children of diplomats as well as children of employees of the World Bank, the International

Monetary Fund and other international companies are among the students at the

school, but about 20 percent of the students come from American families.

Stanley Karnow, who lives near the site of the planned school, said it would bring 30 to 50 school buses to the area every morning, causing gridlock on already congested River Road. He said student drivers would further add to the traffic and said that the community has expressed concerns about the diplomatic immunity of some students.

Lerch and Headmaster Pierre Hudelot said that a total of 11 buses currently transport students to the two campuses.

The new school would be designed to accommodate up to 1,500 students.

Representatives of the school and the 100-member neighborhood group, River Road Citizens Coalition are scheduled to meet tonight.

20



Montgomery County Government

May 2, 1988

TO: Charles Loehr
Subdivision Review
MNCPPC

FROM: Bobbi Hahn, Executive Director *BH*
Historic Preservation Commission

At its April 21, 1988 meeting, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the following plans which involve historic resources:

1. Revised plan 1-88083 Capitol View Park within the CVP Master Plan historic district (#31/7). The Commission decided to stand by its previous position forwarded to you on March 28, 1988

2. 1-88083 Brunswick Woods, Capitol View Park historic district. Deferred comment until revised plan is submitted.

3. 1-88002 Seneca Park Estates. The Commission has no objection to the plan as submitted.

→ 4. 1-88078 Potomac Manor involving the John McDonald House. The Commission is concerned about the placement of the house on lot 8 and has asked the applicant to increase the size of lot 7 if possible. The Commission is also concerned about the retention of existing vegetation on lots 6 and 8 to the greatest extent possible. In this regard the Commission requests that no berm be required along the River Road side of the property but that the existing vegetation be used to screen the historic house from traffic noise. Finally, the Commission strongly urges SHA not to require the abandonment of the existing River Road entrance to the McDonald house and its traditional driveway.

5. The Commission reviewed plan 1-88113 Capitol View Park for one lot on Meredith Street and recommends approval as submitted.

Upon further investigation, I have determined that plan 1-88097 Allenwood does not involve historic site #27/4, the Gustavus Cashell house, as mentioned as a possibility in my memo to you on April 6, 1988.

BH/tyh

0732E/4

Historic Preservation Commission

51 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 301/279-8097

MEMORANDUM

March 22, 1988

TO: Charles Loehr
Subdivision Review MNCPPC

FROM: Bobbi Hahn *BH*
Historic Preservation Commission

I have reviewed the following plans of subdivision and found them not to involve any identified historic resources.

PLAN

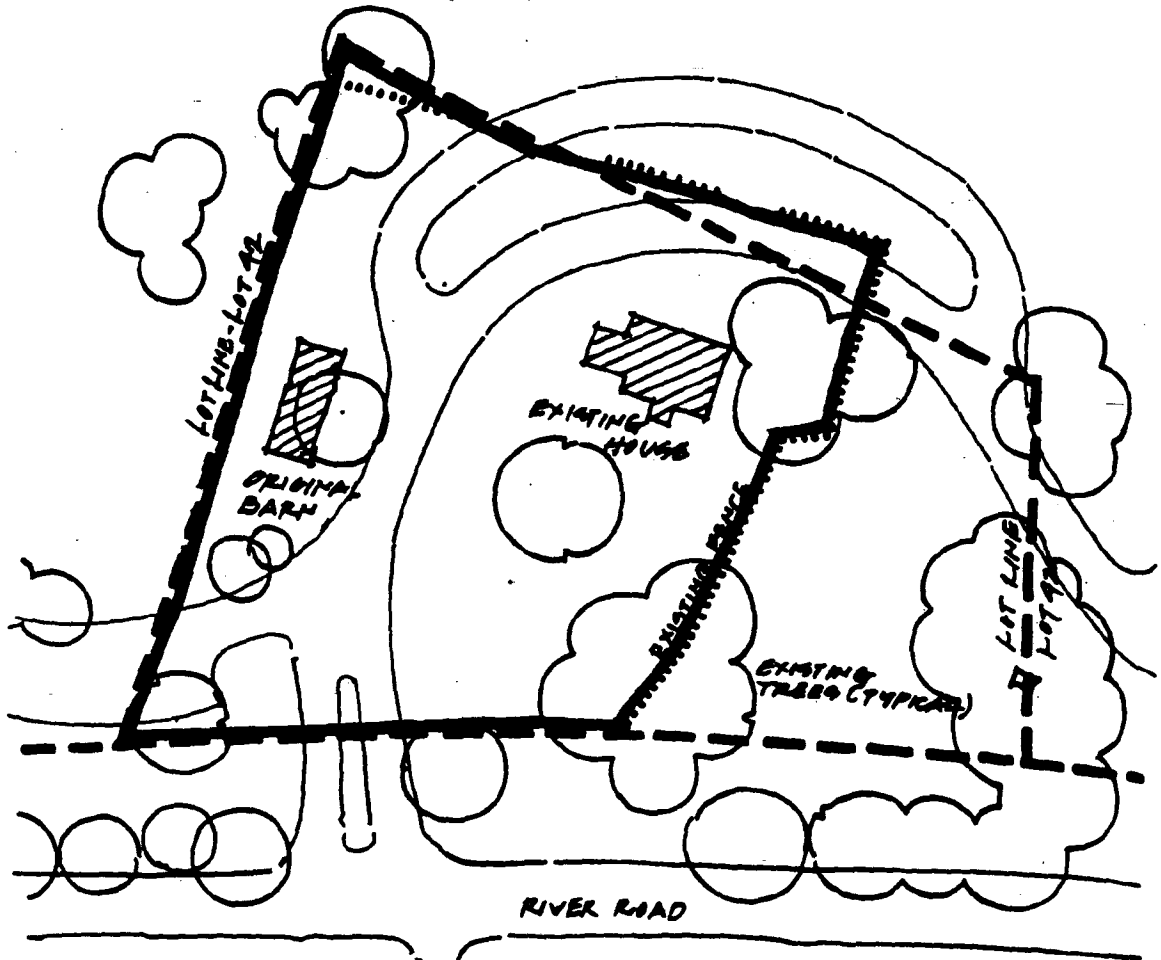
1-88076 Conklin-Ward Property
1-88077 Potomac Manor
1-88073 Montgomery Auto Sales Park
1-88070 Garcia's Service Center
1-88074 Burgundy Park
Genstar Stone Products Co.
1-88080 Brown Property
1-88079 Middlebrook Office Court
7-88012 Cherry Valley
7-88011 Glen Falls
7-88013 Crestview
7-88014 Cabin John Park
1-88075 Sweepstakes
1-88072 Holy Trinity

Plan 1-88071 American Speech Hearing is immediately adjacent to Master Plan historic site #30/12 Strathmore Hall (Performing Arts Center). It does not appear that the proposal will have a negative impact on the historic resource.

Plan 1-88078 Potomac Manor involves Atlas historic resource #29/7 the John McDonald house on proposed lot 7. At a minimum the house itself should be retained. I will schedule this plan for Commission review as soon as possible and forward its comments on to you regarding the size and configuration of the lots and their impact on the historic resource.

BH:kag

0084E



29/7 McDONALD HOUSE
 PROPOSED HISTORIC SETTING

7-22-97