



Update from HTOCA

September 16, 2007

Montessori School of Northern Virginia Expansion Plan – Traffic Study Meeting

Dear HTOCA Residents:

Last week you received a letter from the Montessori School of Northern Virginia (MSNV) dated September 7, 2007, regarding the traffic study that the school is performing to support their bid to substantially increase enrollment in their institution – enrollment which is now capped by Fairfax County at 135 students.

The HTOCA Board of Directors is sending you this letter to respond to incorrect, misleading statements made by MSNV.

In July 2007, several members of the HTOCA board, including President Mark Crawford, attended an information meeting held by MSNV at the Mason District building on its plans for expanding operations at its location at the end of Pacific Lane. At that time, MSNV informed HTOCA citizens attending the meeting that they had hired a traffic consultant to prepare a traffic study on the neighborhood. MSNV requested that neighbors and HTOCA participate in meetings has scheduled for August 27, 2007 and September 18, 2007.

At no time during MSNV's July gathering did HTOCA agree to participate in the two meetings. We indicated we would take it under consideration. HTOCA's board subsequently met on August 15, 2007, and board members determined that HTOCA's transportation committee would not be able to attend because of short notice and prior commitments.

The board agreed to communicate this to MSNV and to inform them that HTOCA would attend the September 18, 2007 meeting. The HTOCA board also determined at that time that its role would be to monitor what occurred at MSNV's September 18 meeting rather than to formally assist MSNV and its consultants with their traffic study.

The reasons for HTOCA's position on MSNV's traffic study are as follows:

- The vast majority of households in Hillbrook-Tall Oaks in the winter and spring of 2007 signed a petition **opposing any further expansion** of MSNV's operations in Hillbrook-Tall Oaks beyond its current ceiling of 135 students.* [Since 1967 MSNV has amended its special permit for expanded operations in our neighborhood four times – actions that have resulted in increased traffic, parking congestion near the school, speeding, and increased after- hours meetings. The school previously has pledged not to expand further.]
- MSNV's purpose in hiring a traffic consultant (Wells and Associates) to conduct a traffic study in the neighborhood is to build a case for expanding its operations on Pacific Lane. Its aim is to demonstrate to the Fairfax County Zoning Board that it can manage traffic and that its current Special Exception for operating in the neighborhood should be amended to allow for at least 45-55 additional students. This study should not be viewed as an "independent" study. It is not. The consultant is beholden to its customer – MSNV.
- HTOCA opposes any actions by MSNV, a business operating in a residential neighborhood under special exception to our R-2 half-acre zoning, to be prescribing "traffic management

solutions” to county and state officials on behalf of the residents of Hillbrook-Tall Oaks. Managing traffic problems, many of them generated by MSNV parents, should be a discussion between HTOCA and county and state officials. Our residents should decide what traffic management strategies are best for the neighborhood, not MSNV. MSNV is not a neutral, disinterested party; Rather, it is pursuing its own interests.

- In inviting Hillbrook-Tall Oaks residents to participate in its meetings, MSNV very likely is attempting to confuse and divide the neighborhood on the issue of expansion of the private school’s operations and the impact of those operations. MSNV, as well as Mason District Representative, Penny Gross, is well aware of the petition signed by a majority of Hillbrook-Tall Oaks residents opposing further expansion of the school.

Three residents of Hillbrook-Tall Oaks reportedly attended MSNV’s August 27, 2007 meeting. They were:

- Former HTOCA President Suzy McWilliams, who at the May 9, 2007 board meeting declined to vote in favor of the HTOCA board policy position opposing further expansion of MSNV [all other board members supported the resolution];
- Margaret Masters, an employee of MSNV; and
- Greg McNiff of Dodson Drive

As previously agreed, some HTOCA board members will attend MSNV’s September 18, 2007 meeting with its traffic consultant. We will report back to residents on what transpired in the HTOCA newsletter. Stay tuned.

For your information, MSNV circulated a similar invitation regarding a traffic study and is holding a similar meeting with its traffic consultant on September 17th, 2007 (7:30 pm) at Beech Tree Elementary School in the Holmes Run Valley neighborhood off of Sleepy Hollow Road. As a part of its expansion plans, MSNV aims to buy the Valleybrook School on Rose Lane. This purchase reportedly is contingent on the Fairfax County Zoning Board granting a modification to the current Special Exception to the R-2 Half-Acre zoning that the Valleybrook School operates under.

HTOCA residents concerned about MSNV’s plans for expanding its operations in Hillbrook-Tall Oaks should write or e-mail:

- Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross**, Mason Gov’t Center, 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale VA 22003, 703-256-7717.
- Commissioner Janet R. Hall, Fairfax County Planning Commission, Mason District, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 330; Fairfax, VA 22035, Phone: 703-324-2865.
- John F. Ribble, III, Chairman, Zoning Board of Appeals, c/o Dept. of Public Works, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 535, Fairfax, VA 22035-5503.
- Fairfax County Board Chairman Gerald Connolly -- Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, 12000 Government Center Parkway, #530 Fairfax , VA 22035, 703-324-2321.

*Excerpted from Minutes of HTOCA Board Meeting on May 9, 2007.

“...In recognition of the community’s concern as expressed by the petition, the HTOCA Board resolves to oppose the further expansion of the MSNV within the existing neighborhood, and:

Hereby petitions the Planning Staff of Fairfax County, VA, the Fairfax County Planning Commission, and Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to reject any applications, measures, or requests to further increase the current student population and/or size of the Montessori School of Northern Virginia (MSNV) at its current location, 6820 Pacific Lane, in Annandale, VA.”

**HTOCA Board Members David Borowski and Walt Sanders met with Supervisor Penny Gross on June 19, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. and presented her with a petition bearing the signatures of 216 Hillbrook-Tall Oaks residents who are opposed to further expansion of MSNV at its Pacific Lane location. At that time, Supervisor Gross refused to take a position on MSNV’s expansion plans and on protecting Hillbrook-Tall Oaks.

