

**Notes from Maret/ECC Meeting
With Utah Avenue Residents
November 2, 2021**

[notes taken by ANC 3/4G-03 Chair Randy Speck]

Marjo Talbott (Maret Head of School), introduced the Maret representatives: Aakash Thakkar (Maret Board member), Trey Holloway (Assistant Head of School for Finance and Operations), Sally Dunkelberger (Director of Development), Sherry Rutherford (Maret's community outreach consultant). ECC was represented by Stephanie Nash (President and CEO) and Bill Sherman (Chair of the ECC Board of Directors). About 20 residents attended, some of whom had been to the previous night's meeting, but most of whom live on Utah and nearby streets. Maret asked attendees to complete a sign-in sheet with email addresses. I was there to listen on behalf of the ANC.

The Maret presentation was the essentially the same as to the Nebraska Avenue residents at the November 1, 2021 meeting. Marjo also asked me to describe the ANC process, and I did (basically the same as my comments at the Nebraska Avenue meeting). Maret then took questions.

How will this new field affect Maret's use of Jelleff? Maret will continue to use the Jelleff field until its agreement with the city expires in 2029. They are currently in conversations with the city about how they might reduce their use of Jelleff when the ECC fields are completed.

Will Maret use this new field to expand its athletic program and, consequently, grow the number of spectators at games? Maret has no intention of expanding its athletic program. It has been searching for a permanent field for 40 years so that it can accommodate its existing student athletic program. They want to work with the community with regard to any rental of the fields for other uses.

What if Maret didn't rent the fields at all. Neighbors are concerned about noise from the non-Maret uses that are proposed to begin at 9:00 am every weekend. There could be multiple teams on the fields at once. The time that others use the fields will be controlled by Maret's contracts with those users. They expect that groups like DC Soccer will want to use the field as a full-size soccer field, not for multiple games at once. Maret is not seeking to maximize its revenue by getting 125 kids on the field for tournaments.

Are you willing to have no non-Maret use of the fields? Marjo said that there is a need for playing fields in the District, and it would be a benefit to the community to

have the fields available to others. That is part of Maret's philosophy to give back to the community.

This field is not zoned for the level of noise that would be created by the uses Maret proposes. Neighbors will not be able to sit in their backyards without hearing the kids playing. If there were no rentals, it would keep the noise within acceptable bounds.

The field has been unused for decades, so there is nothing being take away. If the city needs more playing fields, they should provide the space, not Maret. You think this would be great for the city, but you don't live here. I don't care if someone blocks away doesn't have playing fields. If it were city land, there would be controls, but there is no control over a private entity. This property is not zoned for this use.

Maret has not talked about flooding issues.

Is Maret willing to have input from neighbors on the terms of its lease contracts? We should have participation as stakeholders. Aakash said, "Yes." Marjo said that this is not about the money to be derived from rentals. Maret's plan to lease the fields to others is driven by its philosophy that the fields are a needed resource that should be used by others.

There is a big feeling by the neighbors of having no control over the changes being made.

Where is the seating going to be? Trey said that the current plan is to have moveable stands on the north and south sides of the multipurpose field. The plan is to have permanent stands on either side of the baseball backstop and permanent bleachers at the west end of the multipurpose field, next to the Utah Avenue alley (i.e., near the houses on Utah that back up to the alley). They are still considering those plans.

Where with the moveable stands be stored when not in use? They may be stored in the field house or elsewhere on the property. That has not been decided.

Aakash said that it would be necessary to work through some "arbiter" like the ANC rather than having individual neighbors negotiating the terms of the lease. Some individual neighbors may not be completely comfortable with all the terms, but they will have to be worked out through negotiations. He said that they have sent the ANC a copy of one current Maret lease for its athletic facilities.

Why should we end up not "completely comfortable" with the negotiated agreement? Maret is turning the field into a public park. Is its goal to maximize

use? Maret said that its philosophy would be to make the field available as much as possible except on holidays. Maret will control who goes on the property, and it will not be accessible in the way a public park would be. Stephanie said that there have been unauthorized uses of the field, and they have arranged for Lafayette to use it on occasion.

Will there be amplification? No, there will be no PA systems. **Will there be referee whistles or noise makers?** There will be referee whistles, but no noise makers or horns will be permitted. Maret has current noise restrictions with those who use its fields, and if lessees don't follow the rules, they are kicked off. Maret won't tolerate misbehavior. With their current lessees, Maret doesn't hear complaints from neighbors about problems with noise or trash because they manage those potential problems.

Can neighbors call Maret if there are problems on the field? Yes. Aakash said that all of these conditions could be included in the BZA order.

Please describe the parking plans? Trey said that their preliminary study indicated that they need 50+/- spaces to meet the expected usage. That is still being evaluated. The city is pushing Maret to use more on-street parking rather than a parking lot. Marjo said that the kids would be bused from Maret.

Why do you need a new bus turnout? Why can't Maret use the existing circular drive in front of ECC? Maret and ECC explained that the circular drive is for ECC's use, and it would conflict with the drop-off times for Maret after school. Maret doesn't have access to that property under its lease, and it is proposing lay-bys for picking up and dropping off students instead.

Why does Maret need the alley for picking up trash? This will commercialize the alley, and there is no room for dumpsters. Maret said that was a good point, and they would look into it. Trey said that DDOT had asked them to use the alley for access, and they would need it in any case for access in an emergency if an athlete is injured.

The gate at the end of the alley should remain locked when not in use. Maret is planning a different level of use than ECC has had.

Why can't all of ECC's and Maret's trash be picked up at the same location on the Nebraska Avenue side? Trey said that Maret will still need the curb cut on Nebraska for its program.

Is there a program that guides the architectural design, and can residents see a copy of that program? Maret said that there was nothing more than the program described in the BZA filing.

What are the elevations going to look like? Preliminary engineering indicates that the field will be about 4 to 5 feet below the level of the alley. Maret will share more details as the plans develop. They showed renderings from each of the four sides of the field based on the current concept.

Has there been an environmental impact study/report? Maret said that it is conducting preliminary studies and will do whatever the District agencies require with respect to stormwater, noise, and air quality.

The turf field will be hot. Marjo said that the materials in the turf field are significantly improved now and have eliminated or greatly reduced the previous environmental concerns.

This looks like a disaster waiting to happen. The houses on 28th Street will be washed away. Marjo said that the stormwater management will be improved under Maret's plans. The District's regulations on stormwater are among the most stringent, and Maret will have to meet them.

Residents raised questions about the Knollwood extension on Nebraska and warned that there would be flooding if they took out the trees. It did turn out to be a problem, and that's why they are now rebuilding Oregon Avenue. Marjo said that they have done major work on the environmental issues, and the new fields will improve the quality of the environment.

Is there a comprehensive list of the uses of the fields? Maret is putting together a chart or calendar to show when the fields will be available for neighborhood use. In general, for the last two weeks of August, Maret will use the fields from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm on weekdays, From September through November, it will use the fields from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm on weekdays (a little earlier on Wednesdays). They would like to offer the fields to youth groups on Saturdays when Maret doesn't have a game from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. In the winter, there will be no Maret uses, and they have not established any use for others. From February through May it will be similar to the fall hours with games on weekends. There will be no Maret use in the summer but only rentals.

The more we hear about uses by third parties, the greater our concerns. Marjo said that they are willing to talk with neighbors about these third-party uses. They can particularly look at the summer usage.

Weekends are a problem. Just don't allow third-party uses if you want to be a good neighbor and want us to like Maret's presence here. Maret's "philosophy" disregards and disrespects neighbors. Marjo said that they are listening, and these concerns make sense.

There is an undercurrent from Maret that its “philosophy” overrides the neighbors concerns. Marjo said that Maret is not discounting their concerns.

It’s tone deaf for Maret to say they will severely impact the neighborhood based on their “philosophy.” Aakash asked whether there is a middle ground.

This is like having a neighbor who has a loud party every day, all year long. Marjo said, “We hear you.”

We may not have leverage to stop this from happening, but we do have leverage to make it not as bad. Games — as opposed to practices — will be more disruptive. Maybe Maret can include in its leases that there will be no games and a limit on the numbers of people using the fields. They could limit traffic in and out. There will probably be an increase in Metro bus usage (with a bus stop on Utah). Can there be a Capital Bikeshare station either on the property or on public property? Maret said it is considering a bike rack, and it can consider a Bikeshare station (though they said some people are opposed to Bikeshare stations).

When did ECC enter the lease with Maret? There was an announcement of the deal with Maret in February, but you say the lease was entered in June. ECC and Maret said that there was a due diligence period when Maret continued to look at the the feasibility of the site. The lease was finalized in June.

How can residents access old ECC property records that are not in the District’s on-line data base? ECC will look into this.

How many trees will be removed/relocated/retained? Maret will share that information.

Maret has filed its BZA application. Can it be changed? Yes. The filing was a preliminary draft at this time. Applicants often change the application to address any concerns or comments up to 21 days before the hearing, and Maret expects to do that in conjunction with the neighbors and the ANC.

Some of Maret’s “philosophical” uses of the property seems to be a selling point in the application for why the city should approve this field. Won’t the application be weakened if Maret cuts back those third-party uses? The final BZA order will be different than the application, and Maret will make its case based on negotiations with the neighbors and the ANC. Maret has three objectives in this plan: (1) to provide facilities for Maret’s athletic programs; (2) to help ECC to continue its work; and (3) to offer space for other youth sports.

How will Maret monitor the permitted noise level of 60 dB? That is one of the 72 questions that residents submitted to Maret, and Maret is working on the response.

We're worried about our home prices. When I told a realtor about these plans, he asked, "Have you sold your house yet? Are these plans public? Too bad."

We should have had this conversation with ECC before it talked to Maret. It was disrespectful not to talk with neighbors first. ECC was not a good neighbor.