

**Notes from Maret/ECC Meeting
With Nebraska Avenue Residents
November 1, 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 Ami Neiberger-Miller (Communications Director). About 20 residents attended, most of whom live on Nebraska but some from other nearby streets. Maret took a sign-in sheet with email addresses. I was there to listen on behalf of the ANC.

After introducing herself, Marjo began by referring to the letter that Maret received with about 72 questions from residents. She said they were in the process of preparing response, though some of the answers are still unknown and will be fleshed out as the project proceeds. She said that the answers would be posted on Maret's website (<https://www.maret.org/athletics/proposed-new-fields-at-ecc>).

She briefly described Maret — a private, non-profit school for 110 years, K-12, 650 students, half of whom identify as persons of color and 25% of whom receive financial aid. She said that they are committed to being respectful of neighbors and the community. They view this project as a partnership with community members. She said they distributed 200 flyers before the ANC's September 27th meeting and have met with many individual neighbors about their concerns. In addition to the four in-person meetings with neighbors on the four surrounding sides of the ECC field, they plan a Zoom meeting for November 16th at 6:00 pm for the broader neighborhood. They expect to do more community outreach, including through its website.

The BZA application filed on November 1st is the start of the process. The application provides more detail for its plans, but it is a first step, and much lies ahead. They expect to go to the Public Space Committee in January, 2022, and to file the comprehensive transportation plan in January as well. They hope for the BZA hearing in February (later corrected by Aakash to March), 2022.

Stephanie Nash described the recent history at ECC, beginning with the "pause" in operations in June 2019. After that was announced, she said she received lots of calls from brokers and others interested in their property. Maret was one of those cold calls expressing interest in the undeveloped space. This proposal was attractive since the space could also be used by ECC kids, and it furthered ECC's vision. ECC views the Maret partnership as an opportunity, and believes they are like-minded. ECC is planning

internal renovations of its buildings to start in January 2022, looking for reopening of its operations in September 2022. They also hope to offer after-school care to fill another community need.

Trey then walked through the Maret plans based on a picture of the fields. He began with the bus lay-by area and the parking lot for 50 +/- cars. The final number of parking spaces is being finalized with the city. The baseball field will include a shed in the southeast corner of the property. There will be a paved service area near the field house (the converted media center), which had been suggested by DDOT. It will be used to collect trash, to service the fields, and to provide access for emergency vehicles. The multipurpose field will accommodate football, soccer, and lacrosse and will have a scoreboard, moveable bleachers, and a lacrosse shot clock. Several heritage trees on the property will need to be relocated. There will be netting around the property to catch balls and keep them from going into neighboring yards. Landscaping will be installed outside the netting to shield the fields from residents' views and neighbors' yards from the fields. There will be no PA system and no field lights, though there will be security lights (probably behind home plate on the baseball field and near the field house).

Trey said that the hours of operation would be after school on weekdays. The normal number of people would be 50 to 60 kids and six to eight coaches. For weekday games, they expect an additional 50 to 60 spectators. For Friday and Saturday games, there may be 100 spectators, and for about five "rivalry" games a year, there may be 200 spectators. Maret also plans to make the fields available to non-Maret youth sports organizations. They will rely on organizations that they know and with whom they have experience. Non-Maret groups will have to follow the same rules and respect the neighborhood. These uses may be on Saturdays and Sundays and during the summer. Maret does not consider this a commercial enterprise, and Maret will still have to subsidize other organizations that use the facilities. The fields will not be used at all on holidays. Maret's seasons generally run from September through early-November and February through May, and the fields will normally be used only between the hours of 9:00 am and 7:00 pm.

Marjo said that they will be making substantial improvements to the field's landscaping and improved stormwater drainage. Maret showed some renderings of what the fields might look like, but they said these were still in the development stage.

Residents then asked questions and made comments.

How tall is the fencing? Maret said they are not fully designed, but the fields will be designed below the level of the alley by five to eight feet, which means that the fences will not appear as tall from outside as from inside. Maret will provide more information as it becomes available.

Where can people go to see the netting? Maret said it is only conceptual now, but they will provide pictures of what it will look like. It will be similar to the netting around the fields at Maret's campus, and they offered to show anyone who's interested what those nettings look like.

Will Maret pay property tax? Maret is a non-profit, so it does not pay property tax, nor does ECC currently. The District's Future Land Use Map categorizes all of the ECC property as "institutional" so it would not be expected to pay property tax. The resident then said that, in effect, the taxpayers in the District are subsidizing these fields.

This is a vast plan that will distrust our lives, and we need more negotiations. Maret said that they were developing the BZA application because there was a need for field space in the District, and some would like to see the field used for this propose. That was not possible with ECC alone.

This plan is more invasive than imagined. The space should be for public use and benefit.

Maret does not come with a good record, as demonstrated by the experience at Jelleff. Maret said that the city asked for the lights at Jelleff, and Maret does not use them. They said that Maret uses the fields only 10% of the available time. After the original ten-year lease, the city extended the lease for nine years, indicating that they thought Maret had done a good job.

Residents don't accept that Maret can develop this field. ECC has not been a good neighbor and has not reached out to the neighbors to advise them of this new use. Aakash said that there will be a conversation about the use of the field, but this is private property, not public property like Jelleff. Marjo said that there are certain elements of the project that are not flexible because of Maret's needs. Maret has been looking for a long-term sports field for 30 years. Aakash said that they could only reach out to neighbors once they had something to show them and to share the plans at this stage.

It was unconscionable that ECC did not talk to the neighbors before entering the lease with Maret. Aakash said that if the neighbors and the ANC need more time, they can put off the BZA hearing. They are here to start the process. He said that they would like to have the fields available to community youth sports groups. They would like to lease the fields to others because it's the right thing to do.

Maret should have followed a participatory design process. It begins with a dialogue, not a plan that is already complete. Maret should accept that neighbors are stakeholders too.

Can you provide a 365-day calendar that shows all the uses of the field? Maret said it would develop such a calendar. Marjo said that the non-Maret uses and the summer camp are negotiable.

What other aspects of the plan are negotiable? Trey said to let Maret know what you want to negotiate.

It was not appropriate to use the 200-foot radius to determine who gets notice of the meetings. The area for notification should scale depending on the size of the area covered. Maret said it will provide notice to as many as are interested, and now that it has email addresses for attendees, they will all be notified of future meetings.

Does the zoning application seek an exception for Maret's use of the fields? Does Maret fit within the definition of accessory use when its campus is more than three miles away? Maret offered to let residents talk with their zoning lawyer Paul Tummonds about this legal issue.

Will Maret (or ECC) release the terms of the 50-year lease? Maret has now locked up the use of this field for rich kids. Aakash said that they would not release the lease, but Marjo said that she would check on that.

Residents were not brought into the process, and it was not inclusive. ECC should have been respectful of the neighbors.

Any traffic study done while Oregon Avenue is closed will not be accurate and will need to be repeated after it reopens. Maret said that they have discussed this with their traffic consultant.

Why not move the heritage tree close to Nebraska and put the curb cut there? Maret said that there was no place to relocate it.

Will ECC release its charter? Stephanie said they would. It was originally chartered as an orphanage, but it's mission has changed over time.

What is the bioretention area? Will it have standing water (which will attract mosquitoes)? Will it be fenced? Marjo said they will check.

Will the soil studies that Maret conducted be released? Maret said yes.

Will Maret release the preliminary studies on the amount of cut and fill that will be necessary? Maret said it would.

Given the changes in the surface and the contours of the field, what's going to hold back the water? Marjo said that the drainage will be better than it is now. **We have learned to live with the drainage the way it is now, and we are concerned that it will be worse, not better.**

Notice was not given to residents on 28th Street.

Will the traffic analysis look at parking? Yes.

What will be the effect on air quality? Maret said that the District agencies responsible for air quality will need to sign off on the plans.

How can we be sure that Maret will stick with its commitments to the neighbors? Maret said that any changes would have to go back to the BZA to get it's approval, and changes to remove commitments would probably not be considered favorably.

How will the process work? There needs to be a thorough process. What is the ANC's process? I responded that the ANC has been through similar processes before (e.g., Ingleside). Now that the application has been filed, we would expect to have more meetings with the community and Maret to see if we can agree on appropriate conditions. We will have until 30 to 40 days before the BZA hearing — likely to be set for March 2022 — to make modifications to the application. As we have done before, we would expect to negotiate a detailed agreement with Maret to cover residents' concerns. (The Ingleside Agreement was 15 single-spaced pages.) The BZA would then incorporate that agreement in its order, making it binding on Maret. The ANC will hold a number of meetings — at its regular meetings or special meetings — with residents and Maret, and we are only at the beginning of the process. We provided some preliminary comments to Maret on its draft application and will share them with residents.

Maret said that it is willing to look at the intensity of use.

No matter what is done, we will lose our peace of mind with the development of this multi-million dollar stadium. It will lower property values because of the increased noise. It's being foisted on us.