

From: Chad Haller <chad.haller@10karch.com>

Sent: Tuesday, September 17, 2019 2:21 PM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward3 <Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: 1886 Ford Parkway - Highland Montessori School - Parking Variance Request - Letter from Owners

The below letter is from my clients Shamil and Varuni Ranasinghe in regards to the parking variance request at 1886 Ford Parkway:

To Whom it Concerns:

We, Shamil and Varuni Ranasinghe, have been owners of Highland Montessori School at 1882 Ford Parkway since 2015. Highland Montessori has been in business for over 23 years in the same location. Child care in the Highland District, and Saint Paul as a whole is a desperately needed service. Currently Highland Village Montessori has a waiting list that extends to the end of year 2020. At times we have to let parents know that all of our spots are spoken for even without offering a tour. Parents and first time parents who have started touring and reserving a spot for their child hold off sharing the good news with their own parents/in laws and friends for fear that someone will take their childcare services. At times we have declined tours of the school because we are limited by capacity. Recently Whole Child Daycare across the street (1901 Ford Parkway) has closed, creating an even greater need in the area. The current facility, in addition to having accessibility and functional challenges, fails to meet our long-term goals to expand the business and serve the growing need for daycare service in the community.

We feel that a parking variance is warranted for this project. The proposed project is compliant with the zoning code in all respects with exception to one – minimum staff parking. However, we believe that there is adequate parking available on Ford Parkway to accommodate the additional staff parking spaces. See attached photographs taken periodically on Tuesday 9/17/19 from 7:28 AM to 9:44 AM. This is the busiest time of the day for pick-up and drop-off in front of our facility, and is representative of a typical day with area schools now back in session. It should be noted that the zoning code DOES NOT have a requirement for a dedicated drop-off/pick-up zone. However, it is our belief that there is also adequate parking available in front for this purpose as well.

It should also be noted that Ford Parkway is a major transit line, and some of our current staff do use public transportation to get to work. It is anticipated that this will continue in the future. To encourage staff to use public transportation we plan to offer funding for staff members to obtain bus passes to assist with these costs.

Neighboring residents have expressed concern in regards to traffic in the alleyway behind the daycare facility. It is their belief that parent drop-off/pick-up is occurring here. To address this issue, we have further reinforced an existing policy that parents are not to use the alleyway for this purpose, and have required them to sign a written agreement. All future parents will also be required to agree to these terms. In addition, the new building has been designed with a more prominent entryway to promote drop-off/pick up at the front door. This is something we feel the current facility lacks due to it being a converted duplex. The door to the rear of the building is to remain locked from the exterior. Signage is to be installed near the new parking spaces that reads “STAFF PARKING ONLY, NO PARENT PICK-UP OR DROP-OFF”. Moving forward, our goal is to discourage daycare traffic to the alleyway as much as possible for safety, not only for the children in attendance but also the neighborhood as a whole.

Throughout this process we feel that we have been open and honest about the proposed daycare, and that we have encouraged input and collaboration with the community. We have met with the Highland District Council (HDC) on two occasions. At the first meeting there wasn't anyone present in opposition to the project. The council issued a resolution in support of the variance. We were surprised by the opposition to the project at the Board of Zoning Appeals on 7/29/19. We agreed to revisit the proposal by going back the HDC to have an open discussion with the neighbors. During that meeting we listened to neighbors and received constructive feedback. We worked with the HDC to develop solutions that we believe resolve their concerns. Subsequently the HDC issued another resolution in support of the parking variance.

Our goal is to be long-term owners of the daycare facility and we want to be "good neighbors". Many of the concerns of the neighbors with current operations were never brought to our attention until this process began. Moving forward we are going to do our best to have an open dialogue with the neighborhood to encourage communication and ensure any of their concerns are addressed. We are continually looking for constructive feedback in regards to the daycare facility design and welcome your feedback. We feel that the process working with city staff, the Highland District Council, and the neighbors has ultimately led to a better project for all. Please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns. We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shamil and Varuni Ranasinghe

Chad Haller AIA, NCARB
Principal

10K ARCHITECTURE, PLLC
525 15th Avenue South, Hopkins, MN 55343



09/17/19
7:15 AM



09/17/19
8:28 AM



09/17/19
9:04 AM



09/17/19
9:44 AM