

Eleanor Yano & John Harris
8311 Burdette Road
Bethesda, MD 20817
eleanor.yano@verizon.net
4/14/2025

Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Room 200
Rockville, MD 20850

**Subject: Opposition to Proposed Amendment of Special Exception for Holton-Arms School
(Case No. CBA-1174-E)**

Dear Hearing Examiner,

As long-time residents of the Yano property at 8311 Burdette Road, which directly abuts the Holton-Arms School, we are writing to express our strong opposition to any amendment to the school's current special exception (Case No. CBA-1174-E). Specifically, we oppose any changes that would permit Holton-Arms to increase student enrollment, summer camp attendance, or permit the use of its facilities by outside groups. Holton-Arms is seeking a drastic expansion of nearly 31% in enrollment (from 665 to 870), an even greater 45% increase in summer campers (from 670 to 970), and a very troubling provision to allow outsiders to use its athletic fields.

The Yano family has owned and enjoyed a portion of the abutting property since approximately 1956. This predates the special exception that was granted to Holton-Arms in 1961. The text of their decisions show that the Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings (OZAH) and Board of Appeals have attempted to balance the needs of private educational institutions with the rights of nearby residents to enjoy a normal, peaceful and safe residential environment. Unfortunately, the cumulative impact of changes and permissions granted Holton-Arms has been severely underestimated.

Currently Holton-Arms School is a bustling and thriving enterprise whose daily activities have a direct impact on us. Our opposition stems from ongoing issues that already compromise our quality of life, including excessive noise, traffic congestion, and disruptions from school-related and maintenance activities. These disturbances frequently extend into weekends and evenings and often begin before sunrise. As the neighbors nearest to these disturbances we bear the brunt of these impacts. We are bounded by Holton-Arms School along three long property boundaries (totaling around 550 ft), with our home bordering the artificial turf field (Field 1), and very near their delivery location, lower school pickup/drop-off location, driveway, parking, and bus areas (see figure 1).

Section 59-G-2.19(a)(1) of the prior Zoning Ordinance clearly states that a special exception must not create a nuisance due to "traffic, number of students, noise, type of physical activity, or any other element". In our opinion Holton-Arms already fails to meet the terms of this ordinance. The noise from the school's abutting artificial turf field (Field 1) is extremely disruptive. Field 1 operates

Exhibit 27(u)
OZAH Case No: CBA-1174-E

during school hours and into the evening on most school days and often on weekends during non-winter months, as well as all day during summer camp. Its conversion to artificial turf increased its utilization substantially. Our home is within clear earshot of field hockey balls striking goal backboards, pickup/drop-off announcements, and traffic. Bus backup alarms, which operate at a high decibel level and are intended to draw attention, begin before 7:00 AM and operate continually throughout the day and into the evening, most recently after 8:00 PM. There are ten buses parked next to us with their alarms aimed in our direction and each bus parks two or more times per day. The sound of bus backup alarms in our home is easily heard over normal television volume. A bus back-up alarm constitutes a nuisance noise disturbance due to its repetitive, periodic beeping pattern (periodic noise) and its distinct, high-pitched tone (prominent discrete tone) independent of its decibel level, although the decibel level peaks above 65db, measuring 70db several feet outside our front door. Delivery vehicles, maintenance equipment, and field upkeep (measured at 89 dB), further contribute to the disturbance. Pickup/drop-off announcements and directions are done by shouting or amplification. Together, these create an environment that is significantly degraded from what is normal for a residential neighborhood.

Any increase in student numbers and facility usage would inevitably lead to more traffic, more undesirable parking lot activity, more noise from outdoor facilities, and a further diminished quality of life for those of us living nearby. As a further consideration, there is also the matter of home safety and personal privacy; the hosting of large events, such as interscholastic competitions, draws a large number of strangers almost to our very doorstep, in conflict with Sec. 59-G-1.21(a)(5) and (a)(8). Finally, there is the matter of the decidedly non-residential character of Holton-Arms' parking area and storage trailer along our perimeter, clashing with the residential character of the neighborhood required by Section 59-G-2.19(a)(3).

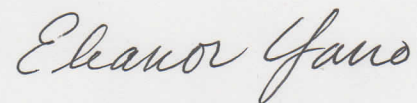
Denying Holton-Arms' petition (CBA-1174-E) is consistent with past Board decisions to preserve our neighborhood's residential character by constraining the scope of school operations. In 2001, the Board reduced enrollment to 645 students, capped summer camp attendance at 645 campers, and banned outside group rentals as not accessory to school use. The School's current proposal to allow outside groups to use Field 1 would absolutely devastate whatever remains of our peace and quiet.

We believe that the unique location of 8311 Burdette Road—adjacent to Field 1, the delivery location, lower school pickup/drop-off area, driveway, parking, and bus areas—and the number and length of boundaries shared with the school are not adequately represented by other parties. Increasing the number of students and campers and permitting outside group usage and rentals would directly contradict established precedents. We respectfully urge the OZAH to stand by the current permitted usage and reject any modifications to the special exception for Holton-Arms School—if possible, instituting additional restrictions to mitigate the already adverse impact of the school. Any additional growth or increased facility usage by external groups would place an even more disproportionate burden on us, further disrupting the livability and tranquility of what is expected in a Montgomery County residential neighborhood.

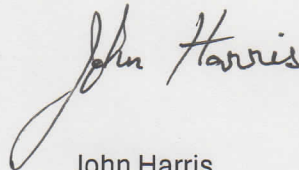
Attached are supporting photographs (Figures 1-16). Please note that the perspective distortion of a phone camera's wide angle lens creates an exaggerated sense of distance. We request this letter be included in the record as written comments under Rule 3.2, as participants. No determination has been made regarding testifying at the hearing, but we reserve the right under Rule 3.1(a) to testify if we choose.

Thank you for addressing our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eleanor Yano".

Eleanor Yano

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Harris".

John Harris

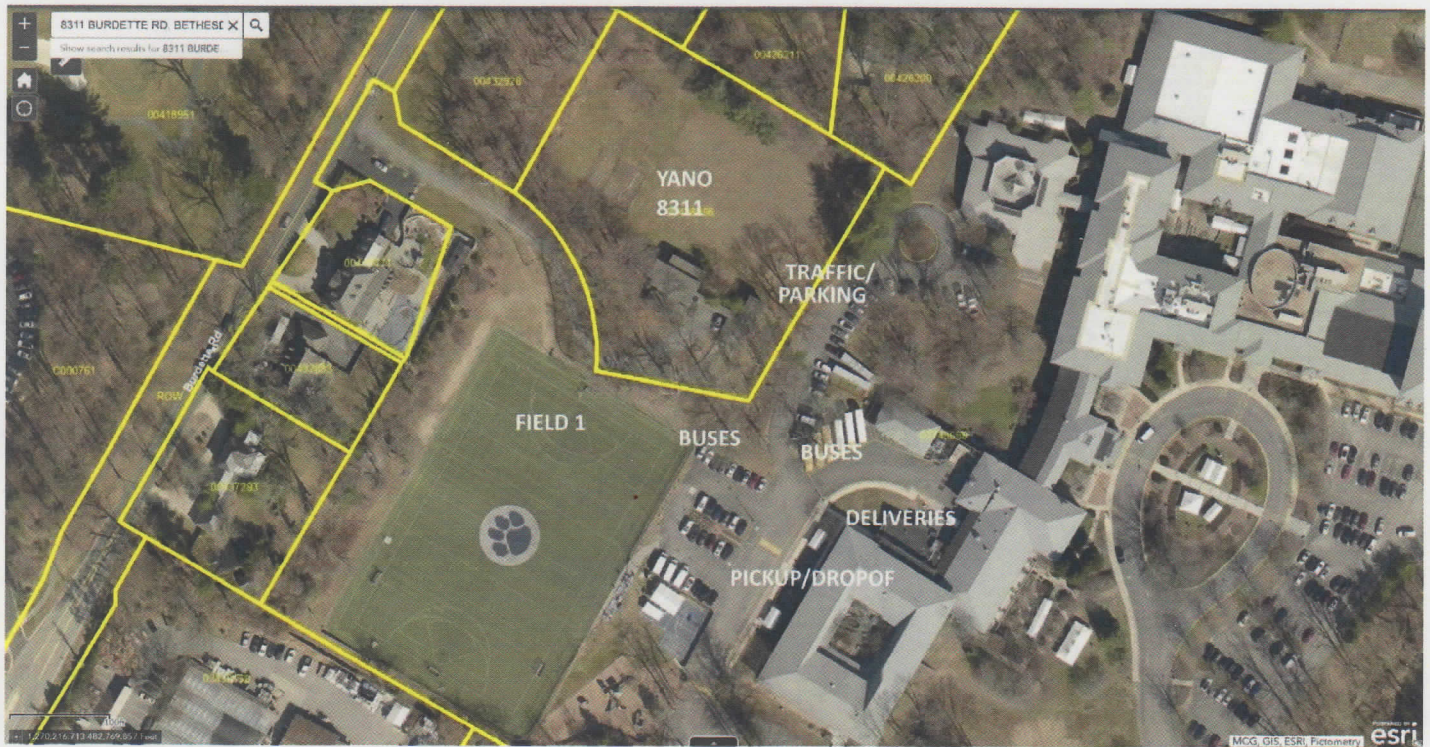


Figure 1 Aerial View of 8311 Burdette Road (Yano Property) illustrates our proximity to Field 1 and additional loud disturbances, with inadequate setbacks and buffering provided by Holton-Arms School. Buses should be relocated to the front parking area or parked in a manner that does not require reversing. Parking alongside the eastern-most Yano boundary should be prohibited and vehicular traffic restricted. The rear drop-off and pick-up location should be relocated to the front entrance. Field 1 activities should be restricted to school days and school hours or shortly thereafter with no outside group usage allowed.

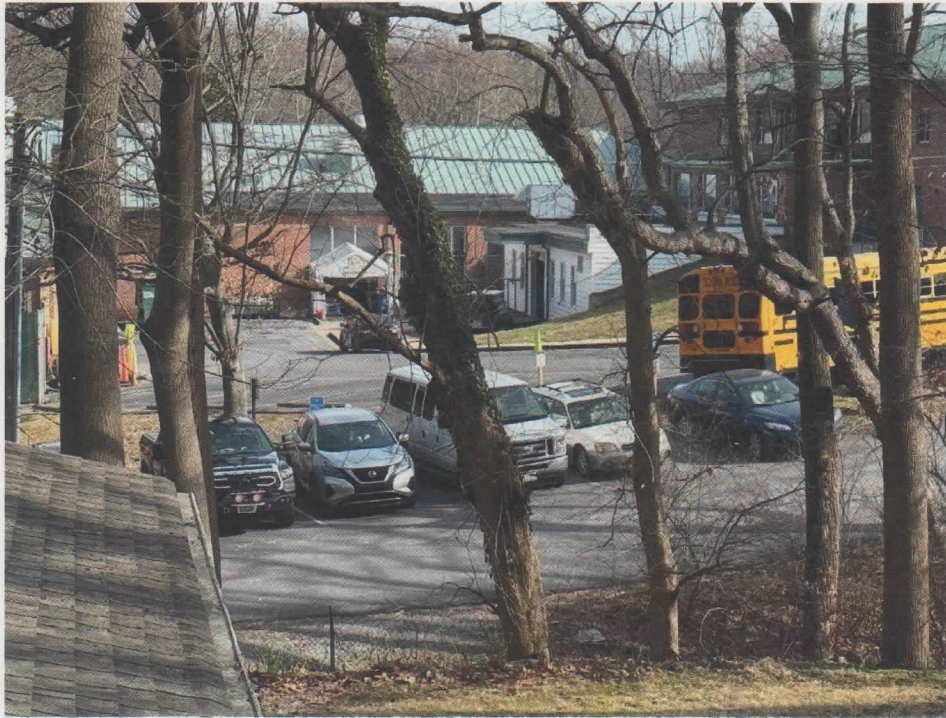


Figure 2 Delivery & Dumpster Locations, Bus Parking Area Adjacent to Bedrooms

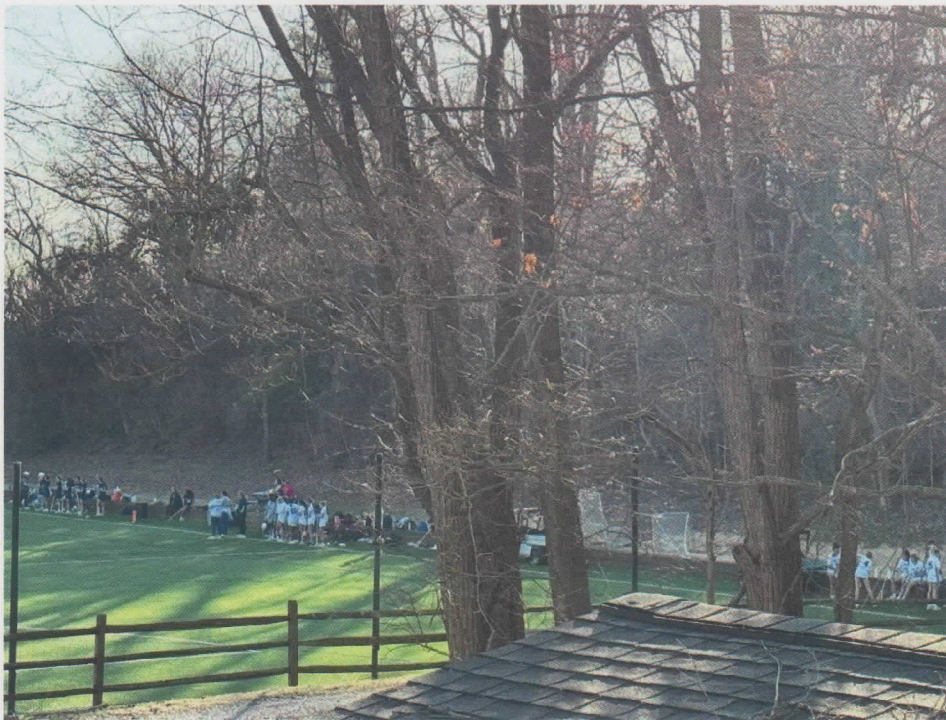


Figure 3 Artificial Turf Field 1 Activity by Front Entrance to 8311 Burdette Road. Already heavily used. Field activity generates a lot of undesirable noise. Field 1 activities should be restricted to school days and school hours or shortly thereafter with no outside group usage allowed.



Figure 4 Artificial Turf Field 1 Activity by Front Entrance to 8311 Burdette Road. Already heavily used. Field activity generates a lot of undesirable noise. Field 1 activities should be restricted to school days and school hours or shortly thereafter with no outside group usage allowed.



Figure 5 Field Hockey Goals Stored Adjacent to Front Entrance to 8311 Burdette Road. Note the hard backboard. Balls striking this sound almost like a gunshot, done repetitively dozens of times in succession during practice.



Figure 6 Extensive Parking, Traffic and Bus Activity Alongside 8311 Burdette Road



Figure 7 Parking and Traffic Along Eastern-most Side Yard and Bedrooms



Figure 8 Parking and Traffic Immediately Adjacent to Side Yard Property Line and Near Bedrooms



Figure 9 Bus, Storage Trailer, and Parking Activity Alongside 8311 Burdette Road



Figure 10 Bus Parking Area Adjacent to Side & Front Yard



Figure 11 Maintenance Activity (measured 89 db) on Artificial Turf Field Along Front Yard



Figure 12 Delivery Activity with loud back-up alarm sounding for protracted periods (>20 minutes)



Figure13 View from rear side yard



Figure14 Drop-off activity involving shouting each morning/ afternoon



Figure15 Trash Pickup Activity at the Dumpster/Deliver Location



Figure16 Bus Activity with Reverse Alarm in action continually from early morning until evening. Ten buses x multiple trips per day. Easily heard over the television. Fits definition of nuisance noise disturbance. Buses should be relocated to the front parking area or parked in a manner that does not require reversing.