

From: Rebecca Rockefeller [mailto:rebeccarockefeller@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, October 28, 2016 4:49 PM
To: PCD <pcd@bainbridgewa.gov>
Subject: Re: Madrona School's Conditional Use Permit Application

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing in support of Madrona School's Conditional Use Permit application for the Lowery Farm property. This is my daughter's 4th year as a student at Madrona School. She started out as a public school student in our undeniably fine public school system, but despite being on both an IEP and a 504 plan, she was failing to thrive both academically and socially. Luckily for us, Madrona School accepted her as a scholarship student (as a single mother working for an island nonprofit, my salary wouldn't even come close to covering the full cost of tuition), as it does for other Kitsap County families committed to Waldorf education. Luckily for my daughter, the Waldorf education philosophy embodied by Madrona, one that prioritizes connections to the natural world and rhythm of the seasons, hands-on explorations in lieu of tech-based interactions, and an integrated arts curriculum, agreed with her to such a degree that the individualized special ed support she required at Blakely was no longer even necessary. Today she is thriving, not just surviving.

While I continue to be a strong supporter of our public schools, my own child is living proof that the public model of education is not one that meets the needs of every local student. I believe our community has a strong ethical obligation to welcome a wide variety of schools to our island, and Madrona School brings financially accessible Waldorf education as an option along with our other choices that includes strong Montessori schools, religious schools, and unique models such as Hyla and The Island School. This rich tapestry of educational choices helps maintain our island as a livable choice for families, and having families as part of our demographic is crucial for the sustainability of our island culture and economy.

Madrona has proven that it is ready, willing, and eager to be a good neighbor as it develops and settles into Lowery Farm, if only give the chance. This is not a school with an interest in loudspeakers, floodlit playfields, and single occupant vehicles. This is a school community with an existing culture heavy on carpools and other mindful approaches to respecting and living in harmony with both the natural world and human neighbors. I think it's also important to note that should this low impact, low tech school move into the Lowery Farm property, 92.5% of the land will be preserved as open space, per City regulations; indeed, this requirement acts in concert with Madrona's own educational philosophy that prizes student access to the outdoors, the true outdoors, just as it is, where they can observe and explore as scientists and artists as well as play as children on natural attractions such as paths and meadows.

I grew up on Bainbridge Island and it my great good fortune, and my children's great good fortune, that I am able to raise them here as I was raised, with a deep connection to this island we all call home. I have seen many changes come to the island, and I well know the visceral reaction we each have to change, especially when we see new buildings take the place of old. I ask the City of Bainbridge to consider the importance of varied educational opportunities, the fairness of Madrona's request to develop the Lowery Farm property with full respect for and compliance with City regulations, as well as the nature of Madrona's specific plans to build a campus that respects the existing trees and visual buffers as well as traffic and noise impacts on neighboring properties. If we are to continue into the future as a strong community with the accessible educational choices our families and children deserve and need, we must allow for some changes and growth, especially when this comes from willing partners with a proven commitment to our island's regulations and culture.

I know Madrona School to be such a partner, and I respectfully ask that their application for a Conditional Use Permit for Lowery Farm be approved.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Rockefeller

Bainbridge Island Resident since 1971 (allowing for some breaks for college and exploration),

Executive Director of Island Time Activities, an island nonprofit serving people with intellectual disabilities,

Co-founder of The Buy Nothing Project,

and

Parent of a Madrona School scholarship student