



HOPKINS HOUSE

• A Center For Children And Their Families •

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March 10, 2000

Dear Neighbor:

I want to thank you for your tremendous and vocal support of Hopkins House and our programs for the children and families of this community at the Alexandria Planning Commission meeting this past Tuesday.

More than thirty neighbors and parents spoke in support of our plans to renovate our preschool and erect an addition to the back of the building to provide an improved and handicapped accessible facility for our children and their families.

While I am personally deeply saddened by the racially insensitive language included in a letter from the Inner City Civic Association, including the proposal that Hopkins House and our children "relocate to a suitable facility in an appropriate area", I was heartened by our supporters – of all races, income levels, and ethnicities – who recognized the 61 years of work this agency has put into uniting this community and serving all its children and families, regardless of race or ethnicity.

It should be apparent to all, and certainly to our civic association, that we are one community with a single vision: the best for our children.

It is my hope to continue our efforts to work with the civic association to address their concerns. I will continue to reach out to the association officers and members to gain their support for this project.

Since last Tuesday, I have received so many telephone calls from neighbors and City residents who watched the public hearing on television. Each and every caller told me to share with you just how proud you made them feel, as longtime residents of this community and longtime supporters of Hopkins House.

As the members stated before they voted, the Planning Commission was poised to vote against the Hopkins House application. But your voices, speaking loud and proud, persuaded the Commissioners to change their minds. Our neighbors and parents, speaking together, saved this preschool for our children. I cannot say thank you enough on behalf of every child at Hopkins House now and in the future.

But, our work is not yet over. On Saturday, March 18, 2000 at 9:30 a.m. the Alexandria City Council will hold a public hearing to affirm the vote of the Commission. Again, we need to make sure your voice is heard.

Please place this date on your calendar and plan to attend the public hearing at City Hall and to SPEAK in support of our efforts to build an improved preschool for your children.

The City Council needs to hear from you about what you want for your children and how Hopkins House is helping to make that possible.

This effort to renovate and build a better Hopkins House preschool cannot happen without your help. Our children and this community need your voice.

Please ATTEND and SPEAK at the City Council public hearing on Saturday, March 18, 2000 at 9:30 a.m.



J. GLENN HOPKINS
Executive Director

PS: If you cannot attend the City Council meeting on Saturday, March 18th, please write a letter to Mayor Kerry J. Donley (301 King Street) supporting this effort. Mail or Fax it 838-6433 it today so that it reach Council in time for the meeting. Thank you.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON
RENOVATION AND ADDITION TO
HOPKINS HOUSE BUILDING
CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Saturday, March 18, 2000, 9:30am

WHY SHOULD I SPEAK AT THE PUBLIC HEARING?

The City Council has the power to approve or deny permission for Hopkins House to make these improvements. The Council listens to the community and then decides what to do. With renovation and building project in a residential community there are often people who will speak in opposition, sometimes for very good reason. In the absence of positive comments, Council is left to make its decision having heard only negative comments. Who better to say how an expanded and larger preschool will benefit their children than parents. Without the support of parents this project may not gain Council approval.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY AT THE PUBLIC HEARING?

All you need to say is what Hopkins House is doing currently for your children and talk about the advantages, as you see them, of having your children attend a local preschool right here in your own community. Tell the members of Council what it will mean to have all the children on the first floor of the building, rather than two floors; how fewer children in smaller classrooms might help your children learn better; and, how long you have lived in the neighborhood and why you bring your children to the Hopkins House preschools. Your remarks need only take a minute or two. Just sign-up to speak, come to the podium when your name is called, and express your support for the renovations. That is all.

WHAT WILL BE RENOVATED IN THE BUILDING?

Hopkins House will install two windows to the N. Payne Street side of the building, improve the appearance of the lobby (including a new exterior door), convert a public bathroom on the first floor into an office, paint around the exterior windows and doors, plant new shrubbery and add a rear door.

WHAT WILL BE ADDED TO THE BUILDING?

Hopkins House will add a 920 square foot addition to the first floor at the rear of the building. This new addition will be subdivided into two classrooms for a total of three classrooms serving 46 children.

WHAT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THIS PROJECT?

This project is intended to accomplish three objectives: (1) To make the preschool at 1224 Princess fully accessible to the handicapped and elderly, (2) To improve the quality of this neighborhood preschool by reducing class size, and (3) To improve the overall appearance of the building, internally and externally.

One of the two preschool classrooms in the building is on the second floor of the building. There is no elevator to the second floor. Elderly grandparents and persons with physical disabilities are unable to visit or pick up their children from the preschool classroom on the second floor. This new addition will enable Hopkins House to keep all the children on the first floor of the building.

We currently enroll 49 children in two classrooms. This new addition will enable us to reduce the total number of children, from 49 to 46, and to have fewer children in each classroom. This will improve the quality of childcare, reduce noise, and enhance the safety of the children.

Over the past nine years, we have improved the appearance of the building. The slippery-when-wet entrance way was removed, new gold signage and a fresh coat of paint was added to the front of the building, and new lighting was installed to enhance safety along the building perimeter. We intend to continue these improvements by adding two architecturally appropriate exterior windows, a new front door, new shrubs, and a rear wooden fence.

WHEN WILL THIS WORK BE SCHEDULED?

Subject to input from the community and receipt of the necessary permits and approvals, we hope to begin work on the interior of the building in February and begin work on the exterior of the building in late spring. Work on the interior and exterior will continue through the end of the summer.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE PLAYGROUND IN THE BACK OF THE BUILDING?

The 920 square foot addition will consume the children's playground now the back of the building. Once the addition is completed, we plan to use the space at the back of 1218 Princess Street (also owned by the agency) as a smaller play area.

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH THE 1218 PRINCESS STREET BUILDING?

We are considering a number of options for use of the 1218 Princess Street building, all of them connected with preschool use. Suggestions have ranged from additional preschool related office space, an ~~infant childcare~~ facility, a computer-learning center for preschool children and their parents, to ~~a meeting space~~ for preschool parents. We welcome suggestions on appropriate uses of this building that will benefit the local neighborhood and is consistent with the agency's mission to serve the educational and health needs of children and their families.

HOW IS THIS PROJECT BEING FUNDED?

This project is being funded through a combination of federal and local public funds and private donations. This project is intended to address the growing need for quality childcare in the neighborhoods where people work and live. We believe the improvements we plan and the addition to the building will be attractive and beneficial to families in the local neighborhood.