

Rebecca Ragsdale

From: Eric Sundquist <esundqu1@jhu.edu>
Sent: Friday, June 03, 2016 5:43 PM
To: Rebecca Ragsdale
Subject: Rose Garden School

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale
Senior Planner, County of Albemarle
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Re: CLE # 2016-32 Rose Garden School (Rebecca Garson)
7342 Plank Road; Tax Map Parcel 070-39E0

Dear Ms. Ragsdale,

I am writing in support of Rebecca Garson's application to operate the Rose Garden School. Because I am the spouse of the current director, Sharifa (Patricia) Oppenheimer, I am of course not at arm's length in the matter.

By the same token, because the current Rose Garden is in our home, I have also been able to observe the school and its teachers on a very regular basis. It is without question a nurturing, loving, and stimulating environment. It is no wonder that many of the children now in, or soon to enter, the Rose Garden are the children of parents who were once themselves students of Sharifa and Rebecca at the Charlottesville Waldorf School. Rebecca has been a full partner in the teaching that goes on at the Rose Garden for many years and can be counted on to direct a program with the highest (and most compassionate) standards for creative learning and growth.

I can add another observation: I teach literature at Johns Hopkins University. Although I do not make a regular practice of inquiring into my students' educational backgrounds, I am always interested to know what path they have been on. There are many driven, high-achieving, high-stress students in that environment (even in the study of literature!), but there are others whose more calm, inquisitive, imaginative engagement with their education stands out. Among that latter group over the years (I have been teaching since 1978 at Hopkins and a number of other universities, as well as being a dean of arts and sciences at Northwestern), I have had a handful of Waldorf educated students who, in my view, bring the very best values with them to university-level work. The teaching at the Rose Garden, that is to say, lasts a lifetime.

Cordially,

Eric J. Sundquist
Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities
Department of English
Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Md. 21218

Rebecca Ragsdale

From: Sharifa Oppenheimer <sharifaoppenheimer@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 03, 2016 12:47 PM
To: Rebecca Ragsdale
Subject: CLE#2016-32 Rose Garden School

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale
Senior Planner, County of Albemarle
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Re: CLE # 2016-32 Rose Garden School (Rebecca Garson)
7342 Plank Road; Tax Map Parcel 070-39E0

Dear Ms Ragsdale,

I am writing you in support of Rebecca Garson's zoning variance request for the Rose Garden School, a Family Day Home. I am aware that you have received letters of support from many current and former Rose Garden families, as well as neighbors of The Rose Garden, which will celebrate its last day in the current location this August. I am glad to see that concerns of traffic, noise, boundaries and home values have been addressed positively. And I am happy to see that a number of people have also addressed the economic, social and ecological advantages that a small business with families, children and nature at its heart brings to Albemarle County.

I would like to speak to the value of not simply a business "like this", but of this very particular business, with Rebecca Garson at its helm. I met Rebecca 28 years ago, when she applied for a position at the Charlottesville Waldorf School. I hired her immediately and have continued to appreciate her responsibility, dedication, respect and just pure talent as a teacher of young children. When I resigned from CWS, and founded The Rose Garden family day home, I was thrilled to have Rebecca join me. She has played a central role in The Rose Garden's steady success. As I retire, I am again gratified to have Rebecca continue the important work we have been cultivating together for these 28 years.

Albemarle County will be served well to support this particular family business with all its benefits of community-building, the nurturance of families, nature preservation, beauty, as well as financial input.

Thank you for your positive determination in this zoning variance request.

Sincerely,
Sharifa Oppenheimer

Founding Teacher of CWS
Founder of The Rose Garden

Author of "Heaven on Earth: A Handbook
for Parents of Young Children",
"What is a Waldorf Kindergarten?"

and "Create the Star of Your Family Culture"

www.ourheavenonearth.net

Rebecca Ragsdale

From: Afshan Ahmad Ornan <afshan328@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 03, 2016 11:17 AM
To: Rebecca Ragsdale
Subject: Re: CLE # 2016-32 Rose Garden School (Rebecca Garson)

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale
Senior Planner, County of Albemarle
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Re: CLE # 2016-32 Rose Garden School (Rebecca Garson)
7342 Plank Road; Tax Map Parcel 070-39E0

Dear Ms. Ragsdale,

I am writing in support of approving the zoning variance for the establishment of the Rose Garden School on 7342 Plank Road. My daughter Zaina has attended the current Rose Garden in Batesville and is enrolled in the Rose Garden School for the upcoming 2016-17 academic year.

Over the past two years, we have gotten to know Ms. Garson and the Waldorf philosophy on which the Rose Garden School is based well. Among the many things we love about the Rose Garden and Rebecca's teaching, is the emphasis placed on kindness and respect for peers, teachers and nature. Therefore I think the play is on average quieter than you might find at another school. There is also a strong emphasis on connecting with nature and being mindful of the environment. The play areas tend to blend into their natural surrounds and be constructed of natural materials rather than the usually brightly colored painted metal playgrounds you find in parks. Last, there is a strong sense of community and respect among the parents of the Rose Garden School. We take pride in being respectful of one another and the school's neighbors.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via email or phone (773-960-4163).

Best,
Afshan Ornan, M.D.
Assistant Professor, University of Virginia
Department of Radiology and Medical Imaging

Rebecca Ragsdale

From: Kristin Freese <imkfreese@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 03, 2016 9:03 AM
To: Rebecca Ragsdale
Subject: Rose Garden Zoning

Dear Ms. Ragsdale

I am writing on behalf of Rebecca Garson and the Rose Garden School. I am a mother of a 4 year old pupil of the Rose Garden and have been for over a year now. We drive almost 30 min to and from the Rose Garden when there are numerous closer options. We believe the value is worth it!

Not only are you encouraged to turn your cars off for drop off and pick up, you are asked to hold your child's hand walking into and out for school. They are extremely green and adopt very earth responsible practices. We love the Rose Garden because it promote calm imaginative play and the families/children that attend there are extremely sweet and kind. This is not your normal pre-school!

Kids are rounded up through song, make their own meals, and tell stories. Technology and screens are discouraged, thus created childhoods grounded in nature. Rebecca is extremely sweet and professional. I hope sincerely she is approved the zoning to make her Rose Garden dreams come true!

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!!!
Have a blessed day and weekend!

Best,
Kristin

 Kristin Freese
Keswick Hall & Golf Club
MFA Industrial Design
BA Interior Design
www.kristinfreese.com

Fairview
7466 Greenwood Station Road
Greenwood, VA 22943

June 3, 2016

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale, Senior Planner, County of Albemarle
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Re: CLE # 2016-32 Rose Garden School (Rebecca Garson)
7342 Plank Road; Tax Map Parcel 070-39E0

Dear Ms. Ragsdale:

It has come to my attention that Rebecca Garson's attempts operate the Rose Garden pre-school are under challenge from one or more neighbors. This is a letter of support from a parent of three children who are presently excelling at UVA and Western Albemarle HS, but who have roots in Rebecca's kindergarten at the Charlottesville Waldorf School and with Sharifa Oppenheimer in the early years of the Rose Garden.

Our experiences with the Rose Garden were beyond positive and I am unaware of any incidents involving safety, traffic problems or other drama. The parents were highly involved and the children incredibly supportive of one another. Unlike other preschools where drop-off is limited to very strict 5-10 minute increments, my mornings at the Rose Garden were typically 2-3 parents dropping off at a time. Carpools were common given the location. There was no stress at drop-off, and I cannot say that about any of the other schools we've attended.

Beyond being a very experienced educator of young children, Rebecca is a mature and gentle person who would not put any adult or child in even the slightest danger for personal gain. She also has the communication skills and character that would lead me to believe that any reasonable neighbor(s) could reach compromise with her through dialogue.

The Rose Garden and Rebecca Garson are assets to the community. I hope you can enable her to continue doing great work.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damon DeVito', with a stylized, cursive script.

Damon DeVito

Rebecca Ragsdale

From: Corinne Cayce <corinne.cayce@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2016 10:27 PM
To: Rebecca Ragsdale
Subject: Letter regarding CLE: 2016-32 Rose Garden School (Rebecca Garson)

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale
Senior Planner, County of Albemarle
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Re: CLE # 2016-32 Rose Garden School (Rebecca Garson)
7342 Plank Road; Tax Map Parcel 070-39E0

Dear Ms. Ragsdale,

I am writing to express my husband and my deep and thorough support of the Rose Garden School remaining an invaluable part of this community. Our children have attended the Rose Garden for the last 4 years. For the last 3 ½ we commuted from Charlottesville to bring our daughter to the Rose Garden because we found no other school in the area that could provide an equal quality of care. This spring we have been lucky enough to move next door to the Rose Garden. I write this letter in support of the Rose Garden both as a parent of Rose Garden students and current neighbor of the School.

We viewed having the Rose Garden School as our neighbor as a tremendous asset. We have only ever heard an occasional soft tinkle of laughter from the children. Some afternoons as I walk to collect my children from school, I wonder if there are actually any children there because I cannot hear them at all. Then I will invariably find them gathered quietly on the playground listening to a story or singing a song. Sometimes they are playing freely and the nature of what constitutes play at a Waldorf School means that it is not a loud and wild sort of play but a deep immersion into imaginative worlds, where they are humming around like busy bees.

We bought our home at a very competitive price and there were several other offers on it so I do not believe that owning property near the Rose Garden effects property values at all. Also, we have never noticed or been troubled by cars/traffic at drop-off and pick-up times. It is truly difficult to tell that there is even a school there, there are no big plastic play structures, no wild free for all times.

The Rose Garden has brought such richness to our lives, both as parents and neighbors. It is a tremendous asset to this community, one that I hope will remain for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Corinne Cayce and Jesse Lockett

Rebecca Ragsdale

From: Hillary Campbell <hillaryjanecampbell@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 02, 2016 9:29 PM
To: Rebecca Ragsdale
Subject: The Rose Garden

Dear Ms. Ragsdale,

Hello, we live 100 yards away from the current Rose Garden and share the property with the school. We also share a driveway with the Rose Garden. Our daughter has been attending for three years now. We would like to take this opportunity to describe what it is like to be so close to this exceptionally unique home daycare center.

The day begins with parents dropping off their children between 8:30 and 9am. There may be at most six extra cars (additional to the teachers and residents) in the driveway at one time. We have found that Rose Garden parents are conscientious and slow drivers. They hold their children's hands on the way in and the way out from school (this is a school policy). The volume and rhythm for pick up at 3pm is very similar. We have a 6' x 8' window overlooking the area where parents are coming going and parking. We also have wraparound decks. We do not find that these two 30 minute intervals M-F disturb us at all.

The children spend a lot of the day out on the playground, always supervised. We will greatly miss the sound of children's laughter and sweet games across the way. The teachers are very mindful of keeping volume levels down and we find that the Rose Garden kids interact in a peaceful and quiet manner. When teachers need to redirect a student or call the children inside they do this through a lovely song voice, never yelling at the children. It is truly remarkable how quiet and well behaved we observe the children to be. Any visitor or new onlooker is shocked at how well behaved children are at this school. I have

learned that this can be attributed to the calm intentional space that the teachers hold, no candy or sugar snacks and the structured daily rhythms that stay consistent. I believe that the Rose Garden enhances the community that we live in. I will miss living so close to this truly special school.

Thank you,

Hillary and Loren Oppenheimer

Batesville, VA

Jon McKeon
6678 Plank Road
Charlottesville, VA 22903

May 31, 2016

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale, Senior Planner, County of Albemarle
401 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Re: CLE # 2016-32 Rose Garden School (Rebecca Garson)
7342 Plank Road; Tax Map Parcel 070-39E0

Dear Ms. Ragsdale,

I need to preface this letter by saying three things. One, I serve on a Board of Supervisors (BOS) appointed committee, the Crozet Community Advisory Committee (CCAC); I write this strictly in my capacity as a private citizen, not as a member of the CCAC. Two, my wife and I have a five year old daughter who currently attends the “old” Rose Garden, run by Rebecca Garson on Sharifa Oppenheimer’s property (TM# 85-66), and our daughter will attend the “new” Rose Garden, as proposed by Rebecca Garson on her newly purchased property (TM# 70-39E). Three, I am not a lawyer.

I have read the letters from two of Rebecca’s new neighbors, objecting to the new Rose Garden, and I am struck by how lawyerly they sound. One of Rebecca’s new neighbors is indeed a lawyer, and despite her expressing in concerns in a very lawyerly way the concerns she expresses are either wildly overblown on completely unfounded, and Rebecca Garson’s request to establish a preschool should be granted.

My wife and I live at 6678 Plank Rd (TM# 85A-16). We are about equidistant (a mile or so either way) from the “old” Rose Garden (to the east) and the proposed “new” Rose Garden (to the west). We have lived there since 2002, and officially purchased the property in 2006. Over the last 14 years I have commuted west to Waynesboro daily. This means I have been passing the driveway of Rebecca Garson’s new property—the proposed home of the new Rose Garden—twice a day, every day, during peak hours, for 14 years. I have never once seen a problem with traffic in front of the proposed location of the new Rose Garden. Also I have never once seen an accident there. The neighbors complain that the driveway is on a “blind curve.” This is partially true in the sense that the driveway in question is indeed near a curve (not “on”), but the sight lines there are excellent—not at all “blind.” Our driveway at 6678 Plank Rd is on a dead-straight stretch of the road, but has much, much worse sightlines due to hills, stone walls, and vegetation. For the past two decades I have also known the owners and then renters of 7346 Plank Rd. (TM# 70-39A) which shares the driveway with Rebecca (7342 Plank Rd./TM# 70-39E). I have come and gone out of the driveway in question many, many times—easily hundreds of times—and there is absolutely nothing particularly dangerous about it at all. Again, it is a much safer entrance/exit than my own personal driveway, despite being located near a curve rather than on a straight stretch of road. A complaining neighbor also states that “It is a treacherous part of the road, as evidenced by these car accidents” without ever citing one accident that has ever occurred there; indeed, to the best of my knowledge, in fifteen years I’ve been living on Plank Rd. there has never once

been an accident at the curve referred to. Secondly, “treacherous” is extremely subjective and every day I drive by at least a dozen or so more spots on Plank Rd. that I would consider much more “treacherous” than the driveway of the parcel in question.

I also understand that one of the concerns of the neighbors is trespassing. This is a non-issue. The property for the proposed new Rose Garden is completely fenced in—this can be easily verified, despite being described in one of the abutting neighbor’s complaints as “across a completely open meadow.” Again, like “treacherous part of the road, as evidenced by these car accidents,” this is a statement that any research or site visit would prove to be simply untrue. One abutting neighbor expresses worry that a child might drown in their pond. Their pond is a full quarter of a mile away from the proposed new Rose Garden. It would be like having a pre-school at the County Office building and having a child wander unnoticed all the way to Settle Tire—it just isn’t happening. On any given day at the Rose Garden there are three teachers for ten to twelve children. A child wandering a quarter of a mile unnoticed just isn’t happening.

The current Rose Garden has a fenced in play yard approximately 50x100 feet in size. In the three and a half years I have had our daughter at the Rose Garden I have never once seen a child outside of that play yard, except walking to and from their parent’s cars. Abutting neighbors arguing that a child under five years old is going to climb several fences, wander a quarter of a mile, and then drown in their pond or get bitten by their dog is simply unreasonable.

After reading the abutting neighbors’ complaints, it sounds like they had issues with the previous owners of the property, but I have no doubt that they will not have similar issues once Rebecca Garson purchases the property. Rebecca Garson is a person of the utmost integrity and she has absolutely no desire to let the children in her charge wander a quarter of a mile, fall into a neighbor’s pond, or get bit by a neighboring dog. None of these things have happened in the many years the current Rose Garden has been located in Batesville, and I have no doubt they will continue to not happen. The current neighbors of the current Rose Garden can easily vouch for this, and there are no complaints on file from neighbors for the whole time the Rose Garden has been in its current location.

The Rose Garden is an asset to the community of Batesville. If the complaining new neighbors would keep an open mind and take the time to go and see the Rose Garden as it currently operates, I have no doubt all of their fears would be totally assuaged. The Rose Garden is a lovely pre-school that teaches children how to be kind and caring towards their fellow human beings. There is no screaming. There is no hitting. There is no trespassing. There is no inconvenience to the neighbors. The complaints lodged by the abutting neighbors imagine a preschool filled with screaming children and teachers uncaring about trespass or drowning. The Rose Garden has always been and will always be the exact opposite of that.

Well established precedence in the county allows for pre-schools in the rural area, and you’d be hard pressed to find a better preschool than the one run by Rebecca Garson, no matter if she’s running it one mile east of Batesville or one mile west of Batesville. The strictly theoretical complaints of the Rose Garden’s new neighbors one mile west of Batesville are wildly overblown and should be discarded. If you have any doubts about this, I’d strongly encourage you to visit the site of the current Rose Garden and to visit the site of the proposed new Rose Garden. If you do so I have no doubt you will approve Rebecca Garson’s request for a zoning variance, and provide her with the full support of the county for her worthy enterprise.

Sincerely,

Jon McKeon

Lanz Travers Hubbard
2516 Woodland Drive
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903
June 2, 2016

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale, Senior Planner
County of Albemarle
Department of Community Development
401 McIntire Rd, North Wing
Charlottesville, VA 22902-4596

Re: CLE # 2016-32
Rose Garden School
(Rebecca Garson)
7342 Plank Road; Tax Map Parcel 070-39E0

Dear Ms. Ragsdale:

I am writing to you to express my support for Rebecca Garson's request for a zoning variance. Rebecca Garson is re-locating the existing Rose Garden School from 2579 Heartwood Road to one mile away at 7342 Plank Road in Batesville.

Our three year old son, Cole, has attended the Rose Garden this past year, and we feel grateful to be a part of this unique school that nurtures young children in an unhurried home setting. Rebecca Garson is an outstanding teacher and a respected leader in her community. Currently, she is a wonderful steward of the home and land of the current Rose Garden School, and has been for the past 14 years. I believe that she will continue to be a respectful neighbor—mindful of boundaries, conscious of the safety for all children and adults, and thoughtfully aware of her impact on her neighbors—in her new location.

As a Waldorf teacher myself, I want to relay that the Rose Garden School is a home preschool that is valued and admired by Waldorf Early Childhood educators **across the United States and beyond**. I first learned of this home preschool program while living in Portland, Oregon. The founding teacher, Sharifa Oppenheimer, is a renowned Early Childhood teacher who is the author of two books *Heaven on Earth* and *How to Create the Star of Your Own Family Culture*. Rebecca Garson, who has taught at the Rose Garden School since its inception is an amazing educator and I feel grateful that she is continuing the school in a new setting. The Rose Garden is an incredible resource for our community in Albemarle County and in Charlottesville. What makes it unique is that it is in a home setting—the ideal place for young children to thrive. I hope that Rebecca Garson's new neighbors may come to value what she is bringing to our whole community.

Sincerely,

Lanz Travers Hubbard

