

October 11, 2018

Dear Mayor and Council,

This letter is to request a “text amendment” to the pre-existing zoning that applies to **205 Simcoe St. (C1-C)**, also known as James Bay Athletic Association. Blue Heron Montessori Preschool would like the text amendment to be made under the “uses” section, to include “daycare for 16 children.” We will have children ages 2.5-5 years old. This means that there will not be any changes to the density, type of tenure, number of dwellings, or housing features. There will be NO physical changes made to the building. The daycare will use only the top floor of the building, and the JBAA will continue to use the ground floor for athletic use. During the week (Monday-Friday) the top floor is solely used by the daycare. On weekends, the JBAA will continue to rent out the top floor for other events.

The proposal conforms to the Official Community Plan. *“15.8 Encourage the development of quality, accessible, affordable daycare, including preschool, out-of-school care and elder daycare spaces, to support families and employers by: 15.8.1 Considering the provision of non-profit daycare space as an amenity in new residential, mixed-use and commercial developments to be secured through agreement; and, 15.8.2 Encouraging new childcare and elder daycare spaces throughout the city.”* (City Of Victoria Official Community Plan, pg. 113)

The need for childcare in BC is critical right now. The public schools must meet new class size standards. Facilities on school grounds that have been used for childcare are now being reclaimed by the schools. This puts many families on the search for stable childcare. We can help fulfil this need by opening a quality child care center in the James Bay area. Our demographic includes the James Bay community as well as commuters coming from all over Victoria.

Montessori education is unique and sought-after. These specialty schools are in high demand. There are wait lists for many of the well-known Montessori childcare facilities in Victoria:

Selkirk Montessori (Preschool to Grade 8)- 50 children

Maria Montessori Academy (Preschool to Grade 12)- confirmed waitlist, 1 year

Victoria Montessori (Preschool)- confirmed waitlist, 1 year

St. Christopher’s Montessori (Preschool)- confirmed waitlist, 1 year

Island Montessori (Preschool)- 10 children

Westmont Montessori (Preschool to Grade 8)- over 100 children for entire school

This is a rough estimate as the wait lists are continually fluctuating.

Since meeting informally with some of the neighbours and sharing our plans with them, we have received interest in enrollment and are actively communicating with local parents. The other members of the community we spoke with were happy to welcome us.

This particular building is exactly what we need to provide an excellent child care program. The building is located right next to a playground, community garden, and within walking distance to the beach which provides a beautiful natural learning environment. This area is safe, and has an active community that works to keep it this way.

At James Bay Elementary School, there are 224 students currently enrolled. Of these students, many of them have younger siblings that will need care. Because of proximity, many of our students will filter directly into the James Bay kindergarten program. As long as the school continues to run and enrolls 224 students each year, the need for this care will always exist. The area surrounding the school, within a 1 km radius, currently offers 48 spaces. The need is higher than the available spaces.

In the past, the JBAA has rented out their facilities to parties which have hosted events in the evening. The community has responded with feedback that these events did not adhere to the recommended neighborhood quiet times. JBAA has informed us that during the week, they will not rent out the top floor space to any other parties. This will eliminate any noise complaints during weekday evenings. Montessori environments are traditionally calm and peaceful places of learning, therefore during our school day there should not be any noises that are above the acceptable levels.

We are very interested in becoming active members of the community. We believe this is an important value to model for the children. We would like to join the community gardens, lead walking field trips and connect with others in our neighbourhood. These skills are an integral part of the Practical Life learning that we support through the Montessori philosophy.

The JBAA has 10 parking spaces allocated to the building. Blue Heron Montessori has permission to use all 10 spaces. These 10 spaces for families to park should be able to completely fill the need. The school opens at 8am. Morning drop off usually lasts about 10-15 minutes. Pick-up time is anywhere between 3-5 p.m. This creates a staggered pick-up, therefore minimal parking spaces will be used. Also, some of our clientele could have siblings at JBAA creating a "1 stop shop."

Thank you for considering our application. We look forward to opening our doors and helping to fulfill the childcare need in Victoria.

Marley Cummings

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