

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 13108 of William Parr, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3104.47 to continue the operation of a Social Service Center to be operated by Special Approaches in Juvenile Assistance (SAJA) in the R-5 -B District at the premises 1743 18th Street, N.W., (Square 153, Lot 121).

HEARING DATE: November 28, 1979
DECISION DATE: December 5, 1979

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject property is located at the northeast corner of 18th Street and Riggs Place, in an R-5-B zone District at premises known as 1743 18th Street, N.W.

2. The site is approximately 1,256 square feet in area and is presently improved with a large three story and basement brick structure.

3. The subject property is currently being used by Special Approaches in Juvenile Assistance (SAJA). The first, second and third floors are used for the Runaway House program designed to provide temporary shelter, individual and group counseling, medical, legal and psychiatric referrals, court liaison work and family counseling for persons between the ages of 13 and 18 years old who need short term or immediate assistance in solving personal problems. The basement is used as office space for SAJA's Foster Care Placement Program and for the Resource Center, which serves as an administrative office. The property has been used by SAJA for approximately eleven years.

4. SAJA was formed in 1968, and incorporated in 1969 as a non-profit organization, as an outgrowth of a church sponsored program in the Dupont Circle area offering crisis counseling, referral services and temporary shelter for youths who had run away from their families or were otherwise having family problems. The facility located at 1743 18th Street, the subject site, became known as Runaway House.

5. Since 1969, SAJA has expanded the range of services it provides to include a Family Counseling Service, which is a program run by professional counselors and paraprofessionals to provide family counseling and guidance, the Foster Care Program which assists in foster home location, placement and supervision, and the Group Homes Program which operates foster homes for up to six people.

6. The SAJA Resources Center, located in the basement of the subject site, coordinates the administrative, planning, fund raising, staff recruitment and training, and public relations functions of the organization.

7. People are referred to SAJA by the Courts, by various social service agencies of the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia and by private social service agencies. Approximately seventy-five per cent of the persons who have used the facilities at Runaway House have been from the District of Columbia, with the remainder from other parts of the metropolitan area and other areas.

8. SAJA was originally organized as a collective, without a strong central management capability and with no single persons having overall responsibility for the direction of the organization or its programs. In April of 1977, SAJA restructured its organization to create a Board of Directors, two co-executive directors, plus various other organization positions. This organization has established a clear sense of responsibility, and it has shown that SAJA can function in a residential community without being detrimental to that community.

9. The facilities at 1743 - 18th Street include offices in the basement, a kitchen, dining room and living rooms on the first floor and sleeping rooms on the second and third floors. The Runaway House will house a maximum of twelve youth at one time. A paid staff of seven persons, plus a volunteer staff of from eight to fifteen persons, supervises the Runaway House. Adult supervision is provided at all times, though no single staff person resides full time on the premises.

10. Adjacent to the site on the south on 18th Street is a three story structure used as a multi-family dwelling. Adjacent to the site on the east on Riggs Place is a single-family row dwelling. Across 19th Street to the west are two four-story apartment buildings and three row dwellings. The immediate area surrounding the site is predominantly residential in use and character, including a mixture of single-family and multiple dwellings, and a mixture of high-rise, and mid rise and low-rise structures.

11. There are no structural changes proposed to be made to the premises.

12. There is no sign or other indication identifying the nature of the use at 1743 18th Street. N.W.

13. The use of the premises by SAJA was approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment for a period of one year by BZA Order No. 12731, dated November 6, 1978. That Order incorporated the conditions agreed to by SAJA and ANC 2B, on behalf of the residents of the area. The written agreements adopted by SAJA and the residents within the ANC single member district where SAJA is located established a liaison relationship between SAJA and ANC 2B. The agreement provided all residents of the community who had problems with the program, a direct mechanism to deal with those problems.

14. SAJA is operated under house rules that govern the conduct of both staff and residents of the house. The house prohibits the use of drugs and the congregation of residents and staff on the steps outside the building or around the side yards of the house and on nearby adjacent street corners. This rule minimizes the amount of noise or other objectionable conditions that the community is exposed to.

15. SAJA has worked very diligently to promote a good working relationship with the community to prevent any misunderstanding or adverse impacts upon the immediate residents.

16. SAJA has fully complied with all conditions of the previous BZA Order No. 12731, dated November 6, 1978.

17. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B voted to endorse the application of SAJA, because of the vital services rendered by SAJA. The Commission testified that SAJA had responded very well to the previous agreement of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission imposed by this Board. The Board so finds. The Commission therefore recommended approval for a period of two years, subject to the Board's previous conditions.

18. There were several letters submitted to the record in support of this application.

19. The Advisory Neighborhood Commission's recommendation also included a petition of support from surrounding residents.

20. Mrs. Harriett B. Hubbard appeared at the public hearing and stated that she represented the Dupont Circle Citizens Association. Upon examination of Mrs. Hubbard, the Board found that the Citizen's Association had not met and taken a position on this particular application but that she opposed all halfway houses regardless of the circumstances. The Board therefore did not allow testimony from Mrs. Hubbard on behalf of the Association.

21. There was no opposition to the granting of this application.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

The Board concludes that the weight of the evidence, as set out in the findings of fact and full record in this case, is such that the application should be granted. The Board concludes that the applicant has gone to great lengths to establish a smooth, acceptable working relationship with the residents of the community in which it is located. The effectiveness of SAJA's efforts has been proven successful by the enforcement of this application by the large majority of the community.

The Board further concludes that the granting of this special exception will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zone Regulations and Map, and will not affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with said Zoning Regulations and Maps. Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED that this application is hereby GRANTED subject to the following CONDITIONS:

- a. Approval shall be for a period of TWO YEARS
- b. SAJA shall continue to continue to comply with the conditions contained in the "Memorandum of Agreement and Understanding" attached to BZA Order No. 12731.

VOTE: 4-0 (Walter B. Lewis, Connie Fortune, William F. McIntosh and Leonard L. McCants to grant; Charles R. Norris not voting, not having heard the case)

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:



STEVEN E. SHER
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: 17 MAR 1980

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT.

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS, UNLES WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES, INVESTIGATIONS, AND INSPECTIONS.