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December 28, 2008

Mr. Clifford Moy
Secretary of the Board of Zoning Adjustment
Office of Zoning
441 Fourth Street NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: BZA Case 17842 (901-903 D St. NE)

Dear Mr. Moy,

This requested variance fails to meet the conditions for a variance – neither exceptional condition or uniqueness of the property, practical difficulties, nor exceptional or undue hardship upon the owner are present in this case. It is also clear that the Credit Union does not meet the criteria of the Comprehensive Plan for the conversion of non-residential structures found at CH-1.1.9 which, in brief, requires that development proceeding from the sale of obsolete or vacant schools be consistent in density with surrounding areas, and that housing should be the preferred usage.

The school building is ideal for condominiums. School-to-residential conversions have been spectacularly successful on Capitol Hill. These conversions of course are by-right in the R-4 districts. Either use, school or housing, would meet the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan (EDU-1.5.2 Reuse of School Surplus Space and CH-1.1.9).

Sadly I represent the ANC district stuck with a very inappropriate AppleTree school – a narrow rowhouse with 36' street front footage, no parking, no playground, in the middle of a narrow residential street. The former Edmonds School, however, is perfect for a charter pre-school. It meets all of the site needs of a educational institution that AppleTree's site selection flouted. This would be a neighborhood-enhancing use of this building.

That said, we don't wish to drive the Credit Union from the neighborhood, just make it a responsible member of the community. Currently it's not really part of the community. Few members live in walking distance, and a survey of cars using the parking lot shows over 60% from Maryland with many others from Virginia. Local residents are not eligible for membership. The community amenities provided are an ATM and the use of the parking lot by the across-street church on Sundays. The second is important to reduce double-parking.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 17842 Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
EXHIBIT NO. 32 CASE NO.17842
EXHIBIT NO.32

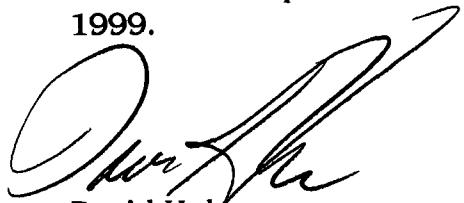
The lot and building are harshly institutional in look and feel – alien to a residential (R-4) district. The grounds are completely paved, with even the public space covered in concrete; vehicles are parked in the public space; very noisy air conditioners, sufficiently loud to stop conversation in passers-by and in nearby front yards; and window-covering white-painted closely-woven grates give the appearance of a public jail. All provide no comfort to the idea that this office use is appropriate in R-4.

The Credit Union should do better. It needs to update and screen the large whole building air conditioners so that they are no longer a public nuisance. They need to replace the lower window grates with a less visually obtrusive level of security, and replace the chain link fencing. The Credit Union also needs to remove the concrete that now fills all public space, and replace the concrete with landscaping.

The Credit Union committed to the BZA, ANC 6A, and Stanton Park Neighborhood Association to remove the concrete and replace the window coverings at the time of the last request for a C of O. (Commissioner Hood may remember his participation in the 1999 hearing.) Vice Chair Betty King said at that hearing, "You're quite right. But you all look like downright, upright, forthright people and you said you'll do it so we'll take your word for it. Besides which, I know a whole bunch of you."

The agreement unfortunately was not embodied in the BZA decision and the commitments were not honored. So the ANC requests that this C of O, if granted by the BZA, be only until December 31, 2015 to help ensure compliance.

ANC 6A conditionally supports this variance only if the Credit Union agrees to reasonable improvements in its external appearance, most of which it agreed to in 1999.



David Holmes

Commissioner, and authorized representative for ANC 6A for BZA Case Number 17842