

John G. Parsons
Landscape Architect
22 Planters Wood Drive
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928

December 11, 2009

Mr. Marc B. Loud, Chairman
D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th St. N.W, Suite 20 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

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Re: Case #17964 – Emory United Methodist Church 6100-20 Georgia Avenue

Dear Chairman Loud and Board Members,

I am writing to express my deep concern over this proposal and the process by which the applicant is seeking relief from the Zoning Regulations. Others have already expressed the historic significance of the D.C. landmark and National Park System Component of neighboring Fort Stevens. It is from that perspective that I am writing.

It would appear that the applicant has placed his design energy on preserving the church, placing it in a courtyard and including retail along Georgia Avenue. I assume this was done in response to the D.C. Historic Preservation Office and Comprehensive Plan Goals for the street frontage along the avenue. While these are valid objectives, the architect was forced to move the mass of the project to the rear property line looming over Fort Stevens.

The project is detrimental to the public good. In my judgment the visual impact of the western façade to Fort Stevens is in direct violation of the zoning regulations because it would “cause substantial detriment to the public good”. Without substantial change, the project should be disapproved.

Lower the parking levels. The Office of Planning report on Page 3 states “extensive excavation on the site to provide floors well below grade is not preferred due to its historic relationship to Fort Stevens”. However, no evidence is given by the applicant as to why the two garage levels can not be excavated around the perimeter of the church so as to lower the structure above grade.

Remove the gymnasium. The rationale for the gymnasium is not given. It would seem that removal of the gym from the project would provide more flexibility for the architect to significantly reduce the mass of the structure facing Fort Stevens.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 17964
EXHIBIT NO. 38

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Convert the application to a Planned Limit Development. As some of you may know, I served on the Zoning Commission for 32 years. In my experience, the variance and special exception process which this applicant is seeking is not intended for relief of the scale they are proposing. To grant relief to virtually the same maximums as called for in the regulations for a Planned Unit Development far exceeds the intention of the zoning regulation as they apply to the BZA in variance and special exception cases. While this case may have merit in providing some public amenities, it is a dangerous precedent for the BZA to be straying into the realm of the PUD process. I strongly recommend that the Board should direct the applicant to convert the project to a PUD.

Gift shop should be retained. The proposed gift shop for the National Park Service as shown on the sheet A1-1 and described in footnote 2 on page 4 of the application, is a proposal that should be retained. Fort Stevens is the premier site of the Fort Circle Park System and a ranger station at or near the fort is called for in the General Plan for the park.

Lower and set back the west wall of the building. The building should be lowered to 40 feet in height and set back at least 30 feet so as to allow a dense screen of trees to be planted in that setback protecting the views from Fort Stevens.

Thank you for your consideration of my views on this important project.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John G. Parsons', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

John G. Parsons, FASLA

Cc: Adrienne Coleman, NPS
Douglas Jacobs, NPS
Tersh Boasberg, SPCWDW
George Keys, Jr



The UPS StoreSM

Fax Transmittal Sheet

Hilton Head Island, SC

Tel: (843) 842-3171

Fax: (843) 842-3175

If you have any problems with this fax, please contact us.

Date. 12/11

To. RIK NERO

Fax#. 202 727-6072

From. John Parsons

Pages. (including this page) 2 ☒ Urgent ☐ For Review ☐ Please Reply

Message: _____

RIK

Thomas Bryan Jr.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

JP

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