

Testimony of Edward Garnett  
Commissioner,  
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5E01

Before the Board of Zoning Adjustment  
The Honorable Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson

**BZA Case 19377: The Boundary Companies and The Missionary Society**  
**Wednesday, April 25, 2018**  
**9:30AM**

441 4th Street N.W., Room 220 South  
Washington, DC 20001

Good morning Chairperson Hill and members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment. My name is Edward Garnett, and I represent the communities of Edgewood and Brookland as the Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (ANC) for ANC5E01.

I have previously submitted for the record Exhibit 53, ANC5E Resolution 2017-07, which outlines the support of this project from our Commission as well as several conditions that were agreed to by Boundary Companies and the Missionary Society as part of that support by the Commission.

I appreciate the amount of material this body needs to consider during our hearing today so I will keep my remarks brief but I would like to outline how the Commission came to its support before returning to those conditions.

This project was very controversial in my neighborhood. I sought to represent both my neighbors and friends as well as the future residents whose voices we cannot hear today.

The incontrovertible truth is this – the Missionary Society has gotten a better deal by developing their land in two phases than in one. The two projects, in sum, are more lucrative for the Paulists and their partners than it would have been if the entire property were developed when this organization appeared before the Zoning Commission in 2008.

Here is their application submission from April 2, 2008, just a little over 10 years ago today:



No one in their right mind – or even anyone who has ever sat through a Zoning Commission or Zoning Adjustment hearing – would have said, “Nice plan, but what you should think about doing to improve it is have 2 charter schools occupy the main building and build another seminary and 94 townhouses on that green area on the left.”

No, what happened in 2008 was that the Zoning Commission reduced the number of townhomes applied for from 251 to 237 while applauding the application for preserving green space.

We can’t go back and assess what the Zoning Commission thought of the big green space on the left but what we can look at is this project relative to others in the Brookland and Edgewood areas.

<b>Property</b>	<b>Total Land Area (acres)</b>	<b>Proposed Units</b>	<b>Units/Acre</b>
<b>Josephite</b>	8.02	80	10.0
<b>Redemptorist</b>	2.74	22	8.0
<b>Missionary Society and Boundary Companies 2018</b>	9.47	60	6.3
<b>Missionary Society and EYA 2008</b>	10.24	237	23.1
<b>Total Missionary Society Development 2008-2018</b>	19.71	297	15.1

As you can see, this project by itself has fewer units per acre than either the recent Josephite project in Brookland or the recent Redemptorist project. But when you consider the entire scope of development of the original Josephite, Redemptorist, and Paulist campuses, it’s easy to see that 15 units per acre is higher than either of the other projects.

I would also point out that neither of those projects is considering using the original building for two charter schools with a projected 700 students or building an additional seminary building.

So, when the ANC heard objections from the community – and when this body considers the testimony from people I know as friends and neighbors – it is entirely understandable that there was some emotion.

The other fundamental truth is that I would not be here today, nor many of the people fighting against this project, if it were not for the actions of the Missionary Society, their partners, and the Zoning Commission in 2008. I live in a house built on land that was once an open field.

So I ask all parties to keep these truths in mind as we attempt to find a resolution.

We cannot relitigate the 2008 hearing. We can't go back and design a better Chancellor's Row community that incorporates two charter schools that neighborhood kids can attend and neighborhood families can support, playgrounds, green spaces, 300 homes, and a new Paulist building.

What we can do is proceed from the facts on the ground in a way that treats all parties as neighbors and asks them to behave in a neighborly fashion.

In reviewing the case, the ANC set out three priorities that I would ask the Board to keep in mind:

- (1) to provide additional housing for a growing community, including an affordable component;
- (2) to preserve as much green space as possible as former institutional uses are converted to residential; and
- (3) to minimize the impact of new development on the existing community during and after construction.

To this end, I had hundreds of conversations and email exchanges with the developers, the community, and my fellow Commissioners about this project.

### **Affordable Housing for a Growing Community**

Based on the feedback and concerns I received from the entire Edgewood community, I pushed for additional affordable housing as part of the project. We face a housing crisis as a city and this is felt no more so than in rapidly changing neighborhoods, like Edgewood.

As part of the agreement with ANC5E, the Boundary Companies agreed to provide 9 affordable homes at 50%, 60%, and 80% of Median Family Income. This means that 9 families making \$53,000-85,000 will be able to purchase homes at a reduced rate. This is a 50% increase over the previous offer. Setting aside 15% of the project as Inclusionary Zoning sets a new standard for future development both in Edgewood and around the city.

Including the 9 affordable units, the 60 new homes will add new classmates for our children, customers for local businesses, and friends to our metro-oriented community.

### **Preservation of Green Space**

As areas like Brookland and Edgewood that have large swathes of institutional land are developed, the city loses green space. It may be private green space, but it still is green space. Several constituents were very concerned about the loss of the mature trees on the Paulist property.

The revised plan, reducing from 94 homes to 60, allows for the preservation of many more trees and green space. I'm pleased to see the Casey Trees testimony that the updated plan will preserve 27 trees, including 17 special trees. I hope that going forward, the city and this Board pushes for innovative uses of existing institutional space that allows for green space to be maintained as our city grows.

In addition, as part of the agreement with the ANC, the development team pledged to keep the remaining green spaces on the site – a natural playscape, a smaller open field, and a pocket park – open to the entire community. I applaud the Boundary Companies and the Missionary Society for this commitment and look forward to the entire community enjoying their generosity.

### **Minimize the Impact on Existing Neighbors**

While I have outlined the positive aspects of the project – 60 new homes, 9 affordable, new play spaces – these benefits are distributed among the entire community and among people who do not even live here, yet. The costs of the project – years of construction, additional traffic, uncertainty – are borne by a concentrated few. Several of those people are here today and I urge the Board to do what they can to protect the rights of these individuals.

As part of the agreement with the ANC, the development team committed to several protections. No construction or residential traffic is to be routed through the existing Chancellor's Row community. The revised plan meets the commitment to a 75-foot buffer between the new Paulist seminary and existing homes as well as a 40-foot buffer between new townhomes and existing homes.

### **ANC5E Support**

In conclusion, ANC5E supports the project, as currently constituted, subject to the conditions outlined in the ANC Resolution on this matter.

I appreciate the public service of the members of this Board and the willingness of those present to hear the Commission's input on this case.

Attachment A – ANC Resolution No. 2017-007

**ANC Resolution No. 2017-007**

ANC5E RESOLUTION No. 2017-007

RE: BZA Case 19377

WHEREAS, the subject of Board of Zoning Adjustment Case No. 19377, St. Paul's College (St. Paul's) lies within the boundaries of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5E (ANC5E), Single Member District 5E01 (SMD5E01); and

WHEREAS, the St. Paul's site is proposed to have 60 rowhomes built by Boundary Companies and Elm Street Development and a new 20,000 square foot building for the Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle (Paulist Fathers). The 100,000 square foot building formerly occupied by the Paulist Fathers is now occupied by Washington Leadership Academy and Lee Montessori Public Charter Schools.

WHEREAS, the existing St. Paul's building and land were previously part of a larger St. Paul's campus and were subdivided from the campus subject to the Planned Unit Development process approved by the Zoning Commission (ZC) in ZC Case No. 07-027, November 10, 2008, in which the Paulist Fathers and EYA developed 237 townhomes as Chancellor's Row.

WHEREAS, the priorities of ANC5E in reviewing the project are to provide additional housing for a growing community, including an affordable component; to preserve as much green space as possible as former institutional uses are converted to residential; and minimize the impact of new development on the existing community during and after construction.

WHEREAS, Boundary Companies, Elm Street Development, and the Paulist Fathers (development team) have committed to an inclusionary zoning component of 9 homes, comprised of 3 homes at each of the 50%, 60%, and 80% of AMI levels.

WHEREAS, the development team has offered the use of the playground and open green space remaining after development is complete to the broader community for recreation. The development team has also pledged to develop a detailed tree preservation plan.

WHEREAS, the development team has moved the location of the new Paulist building to a minimum of 75 feet from existing homes and the new townhomes a minimum of 40 feet from existing homes. The development team has pledged that no construction traffic or residential traffic will be routed through the Chancellor's Row neighborhood.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ANC5E hereby requests that the BZA approve the application of the development team for a special exception in case #19377.

Commissioner Edward Garnett ([5E01@anc.dc.gov](mailto:5E01@anc.dc.gov)) is the Commission's representative in this matter.