

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Pastors Office <pastoroffice@nationalchurch.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2017 2:06 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Cc: Pastors Office
Subject: Ward 3, case 19450, in support of short term housing at 3320 Idaho Avenue, NW

February 16, 2017

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Frederick Hill, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th St NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

Chairperson Hill:

I am the Senior Pastor of the National United Methodist Church with 3 sites: Metropolitan Memorial (3401 Nebraska Avenue, NW), Wesley (5312 Connecticut Avenue, NW) and St. Luke's Mission Center (3655 Calvert Street, NW).

All of our sites are in Ward 3, and our St. Luke's Mission Center is in ANC3C and 1.1 miles from the Idaho Avenue site.

For decades, Washington D.C. has struggled to address the needs of its homeless families who have children. In recent years, many of these families have been housed in the old DC General building, the closed municipal hospital that now is a dilapidated, 280-unit city family shelter. Virtually everyone agrees that DC General is unfit for families and children because of its isolated location, huge size, overcrowding, and dangerously poor physical condition. No family deserves to live in these conditions.

In May 2016 the DC Council voted unanimously to replace DC General with smaller neighborhood short-term family housing in every ward of the city. Each new facility will be designed to house between 38 and 50 families. Additionally, each facility will provide services to assist families in moving toward sustainable, independent living: financial management, nutrition, child development, parenting, employment skills etc. The goal is to make homelessness in DC "rare, brief and non-recurring."

As you know, the proposed Ward 3 site is a lot on Idaho Avenue, next to the Second District Police Station in the McLean Gardens area. Our church is strongly supportive of this site for a family shelter in our Ward. In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus reminds us that "when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me." Our Judeo-Christian call is clear: that we welcome those members of our community who are our most vulnerable. We love because God first loved us. We show hospitality because God showed us what being a good neighbor looks like.

For over 20 years, our parish has housed and managed two small shelters in its churches in Ward 3. We can attest to the power of this model in helping move homeless men and women into stable, productive lives. We can also affirm that its impact on the neighborhood has been wonderful: businesses and neighbors have joined together to support this work, with no detriment to the neighborhood.

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.19450
EXHIBIT NO.161

Some neighbors contend that the city's changing to the Idaho Ave. site was not referred to the appropriate Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) for needed review before the decision was made. This concern, as well as specific negative impacts that might affect the neighborhood, are reflected in a law suit filed in Superior Court by a group called 'Neighbors for Responsive Government.'

At the same time, a new Community Advisory Team has been appointed, and has begun to meet. It includes representatives from the Metropolitan Police Department, John Eaton School, the DC Department of Human Services, as well as an appointee of Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh, and the Chair of the ANC3C, where the proposed facility is located. This group will provide the vehicle for community input on selection of an architect, the specifics of site location, and building design. The Team is also tasked with creating a Good Neighbor Agreement to assure continued accord between neighbors and the facility.

Later this year, project architects will submit their schematics of the facility and information on any necessary zoning variances to ANC3C. It will then be up to the ANC to send a resolution with their comments to the Board of Zoning Adjustment. These comments are weighed heavily by the BZA.

We believe that the present plan, including the location of the proposed Ward 3 facility on Idaho Ave. is fair and equitable. At the same time, we imagine that the proposal will incite feelings of fear and discomfort for some, who may have concerns about the facility's impact on the quality of life in the neighborhood. We also believe that the good-faith efforts of the Community Advisory Team can successfully address these concerns. As long-term residents of the Ward 3 community, we urge – we implore – you to lend your support to this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Charles A. Parker
Senior Pastor

On behalf of The Metropolitan Parish – A Multi-site United Methodist Community:
Metropolitan Memorial (3401 Nebraska Avenue, NW)
Wesley (5312 Connecticut Avenue, NW)
St. Luke's Mission Center (3655 Calvert Street, NW)
Washington, DC