

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Bardin, Sara (DCOZ)
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2017 9:53 AM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: FW: Letter of Opposition to Application for Zoning Relief #19450

Sara Bardin

Director

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From: PBroke@aol.com [mailto:PBroke@aol.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2017 6:46 PM
To: ATD DCOZ <dcoz@dc.gov>
Subject: Letter of Opposition to Application for Zoning Relief #19450

3815 Woodley Rd., NW
Washington, DC 20016
February 26, 2017

Re: Opposition to Application 19450

Dear Members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment:

We, Priscilla and William Rope, are retired District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) teachers with a total of 25 years' service in our city's public schools. In retirement, we continue to teach in DCPS as substitutes, with frequent assignments at John Eaton. We have lived on Woodley Road between Wisconsin and Idaho Avenues for 42 years, 36 of them at our current address.

We do not have off-street parking, nor can we, on our current retirement income, afford to construct it. So the parking concerns we will raise below are a key reason why, reluctantly, we oppose the proposed construction of a six-story homeless shelter (with additional air conditioning and other equipment further raising its height) on the grounds of the 2nd District Police Station, for which the City seeks BZA relief.

Before being specific about parking, we wish to express support for neighbors living within 200 feet of the proposed building and others closer to it than we. We have heard their distressed voices at ANC meetings and elsewhere over the past few months, and we agree with their objections to this project, including specifically:

- The near-total lack of consultation with the community (and bypassing of the ANC) before pushing the enabling legislation through the City Council on the eve of last Memorial Day Weekend;

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- The absence of any serious survey of Ward 3 or formal solicitation of offers to identify sites appropriate for location of the proposed shelter (we understand Council Member Cheh was told about 3 possible sites by opponents of the originally-proposed Wisconsin Avenue site, but that is hardly a serious study);
- The many problems attendant upon co-location of a shelter for 50 families on the same site as one of the city's busiest police district headquarters, both for the police (whose new chief showed little enthusiasm for the project when we spoke with him) and for shelter residents and staff, all of which we understand caused the Department of General Services to label this location "unsuitable" as a shelter site;
- The total inappropriateness of building a massive structure in a residential neighborhood, overshadowing houses in the immediate vicinity, at a time when those same neighbors have already had to put up with the impositions brought on by multi-year construction and the large Cathedral Commons complex itself;
- The potential burden to be placed on John Eaton Elementary, already over capacity (we do not agree that parents will continue to transport their children across the city to their former schools, given the transportation problems that will pose and the availability of one of the city's top elementary schools a few blocks away);
- Our sincere belief -- based on all we know as teachers with experience in all 4 quadrants of our city regarding the multiple service needs of homeless families (we have taught homeless children) -- that this site will impose major transportation burdens on its residents, given its distance from the Metro and the time it will take, by bus, to be able to access needed services;
- And, finally, the near-universal concerns about parking problems in the neighborhood and the likelihood that this project will exacerbate those problems..

The population density of our area has greatly increased since we first moved to Woodley Road in 1975. In our initial decade here, there was still undeveloped land on Idaho Avenue between Massachusetts Avenue and Newark Street and on Macomb and 39th Streets. This open area was an essential aspect of the serenity in this residential single-family area.

The area has since changed dramatically, particularly with the advent of the Cathedral Commons development. We noticed it as soon as the long construction period began, as the closing of the Giant parking lot deprived visitors to local restaurants and retail facilities of parking space. Then, once the new giant and restaurants opened and Cathedral Commons became "a destination," the number of available parking spaces throughout the entire Woodley-Idaho-38th Street-Macomb-Newark area decreased dramatically. This is especially true at dinner time and all day and evening on weekends.

To be sure, the Commons' stores & restaurants provide limited free parking in the garage underneath the Giant. But at busy times, the line of cars going into the garage -- and the fact that non-Commons establishments don't offer free parking there -- regularly causes patrons not to avail themselves of it. Instead, they cruise the neighborhood to find parking. The net result is far fewer places for any residents who lack off-street parking. At times it is close to impossible for us, or our guests, to park near our home. We are in our mid-seventies and our even older friends often find it almost impossible to visit us.

Some neighbors want stricter controls (longer hours, 7 days week and stricter enforcement) on local parking, similar to what is done in Georgetown and Alexandria. This surely would bring additional problems. We are quite certain this is not the solution, especially since we have a number of religious entities in our immediate area who need additional parking on a regular basis.

We understand that the City now plans to add a level to the proposed parking garage in an effort to provide adequate parking for the police and shelter. However the cost of the additional level is significant, and there is no way to insure that the City will follow through on this plan if it receives zoning approval. We were given similar assurances by the Bozzuto people before the Cathedral Commons project was approved, only to see the parking situation significantly worsen both during and after construction.

We also believe that the City's new and undefined proposal to appropriate 60 spaces in the community for police parking during construction will turn this already difficult parking situation into a nightmare for a significant period of time.

Before closing, we think it worth quoting from a recent item posted by Arlene Holton on our neighborhood (Cleveland Park & Cathedral Heights) community bulletin board:

“A \$10 million cost for a new police parking station comes to \$200,000 per family. That, on top of the \$20 million cost estimate I have seen for the shelter building itself, would come to \$600,000 per family—for cramped quarters with no private bathrooms or kitchens, in close proximity to the noise and tumult of a major police operation. Amazingly expensive, one might say a profligate use of public funds.”

For all these reasons, we ask the BZA to deny the requests for such substantial zoning relief to establish a shelter at 3320 Idaho Avenue. The City would then have the opportunity to properly survey Ward 3 for a more suitable, less costly and more accommodating site for our homeless residents. Additionally the BZA would not be party to the fast acting, unorganized and uninformed proposals of DHS/DGS.

Thank you for reading and considering these concerns.

Sincerely,

Priscilla and William Rope

Signed copy of this letter follows by mail.