

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Yvonne Thayer <yfthayer@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2017 11:34 AM
To: Yahooogroups; all@anc3c.org; Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ); Cevasco, Jenna (EOM)
Subject: Letter to ANC3 and BZA regarding proposed shelter plan
Attachments: Letter to ANC3.docx

Attached and pasted below is my letter to ANC3 and BZA regarding the proposed shelter building and the city's just-announced plan to build a three story parking ramp and partially pave over gardens and tennis courts for temporary parking.

The steady drip of changes and misrepresentations regarding this project, rammed through now some three weeks before the BZA March 1 hearing, and the pitting of neighbor against neighbor over the impact and what could be far better and more cost-effective solutions for homeless families and the community alike is regrettable and a stain on the DC government.

Letter to ANC3 and BZA regarding the building proposed to be built on 2D Police parking lot.

-- I have lived at 3308 Idaho Ave for 33 years, raised my family, and paid taxes here. I am one house, several dozen feet, from the proposed shelter building at 3320 Idaho Avenue NW.

-- The proposed six-story, 72 foot building (with eight more feet of mechanics and generators on top) will jut up over twice the height of the surrounding properties on our residentially-zoned street. It will tower directly over my home, yard and deck, as well as that of my neighbors and the police station, destroying our privacy, quiet, sunlight, and sight lines, in contravention of applicable zoning regulations. The fact that the city is seeking half a dozen zoning exceptions and variances shows the building is too big, too tall, and incompatible with the site. It violates BZA requirements that requested variances and exceptions must not "substantially impair the intent, purpose and integrity of the zone plan" and must "harmonize" with the zone plan.

-- According to ANC Commissioner Nancy MacWood, the city has to provide "evidence that the variance it is seeking will "not substantially harm the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan". The standard of review for special exceptions includes an assessment of whether the exception will generally be in harmony with the intent and purpose of the zoning regulations and zoning map, and whether it will not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property."

-- The city announced at an ANC meeting on February 6 that it now proposes three levels of stacked parking be built directly behind and rising above the 2D police station to accommodate lost police parking and additional shelter parking. It estimates the cost of the ramps at \$9.5 million, over the previous \$5.5 million for a two story ramp. It proposes paving over part of the gardens and tennis courts for parking police cars during the estimated 18-24 month construction period, and then restoring the gardens, at a still undisclosed cost. These suddenly announced plans significantly raise the cost, making it considerably more expensive than other options. The city and council declared cost efficiency was the justification for moving the shelter onto the DC-owned Idaho police lot. The substantial additional costs required to build on the inappropriate police lot, and pave over gardens and tennis courts, site nullify that justification.

-- Integra Realty Resources Patrick Kerr and Samuel Sherwood's May 6, 2015 assessment prepared at the request of Chairman Mendelson states on page 9 that "our opinion is the market value of the value of the

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(Wisconsin Avenue) site is \$2,500,000". The other two Ward 3 properties identified and rejected by council cost \$2.5 and \$2.7 respectively. The cost of the police parking ramp alone is far more than it would cost to acquire a vacant lot, or existing buildings, and avoid the ongoing damage, disruption and multiple exceptions required for the Idaho police lot. The June 20 ANC resolution requesting assessment of alternative sites for cost and impact purposes remains valid despite its summary rejection by the council.

-- The April 29, 2016 letter from then-DGS Director Christopher Weaver to councilmember Mary Cheh that "complicating factors ... make this (Idaho police lot) site unsuitable for our purposes" remains valid and on the public record. That the council voted to build on the Idaho site a month later, despite the DGS's negative assessment, demonstrates its failure to consult with the community or to consider other sites. The zoning application falsely claims the city carried out an "exhaustive search" for alternative sites, none of which was communicated or documented to affected residents.

-- The architect's admission at the ANC's January 31 meeting that his guidance was to accommodate and not disturb the "police station" and "gardens", ignoring the R-1 residential zoning of the site and adverse impact on the street's private homes demonstrates intent to politically cherry pick winners and losers, over objective consideration of merits and costs of the Idaho or any other site. The gardens and police station will now be further adversely affected by the newly-announced larger parking ramp and temporary parking scheme.

-- The architect's apology at the ANC's January 31 meeting that the firm's rendition of the building which air brushes out our homes and invents over-sized 80-foot plus trees was false, nevertheless was published in the press and is still part of the record submitted to BZA. Later sketches of the building next to our homes are rendered from a high angle, not the street view or our homes' view, continuing to provide a false impression of the building's adverse impact.

-- The DHS director and other speakers' responses at the January 31 meeting underscore the unsuitability of the site. The assertion that the building must house 50 families, must have ten per floor, must be on DC-owned land, must be six stories high, and must get multiple exceptions and variances as it is not compatible, are untrue, as the public record shows on the Mayor's previous Ward 3 site and other shelters.

--The requested impact assessments, including on environmental factors, traffic, parking, noise, and property values are either poorly and hastily done or not done at all in the race to BZA hearing on March 1. Questions persist about the size and design of the playground, immediately next to private homes, the impact of a large fueling dock on residents, the height and design of the facility itself, and the impact on police operations and flexibility, both during 18-plus months of construction and long after. Protection of existing screening trees, guarantee of noise and light mitigation, and limited extent of screening and privacy landscaping are also of concern.

--The city has provided no evidence that solutions or affordable housing will be available after the intended 60-90 day "temporary" stay. The council chairman acknowledges homeless families regularly remain more than a year in the "temporary" DC General shelter, and frequently return. The unconscionable state of DC General, the documented rise in family homelessness in DC despite city claims of improvements, and the failure of the city to enforce its own requirements that developers direct a percentage of constructed units for affordable housing attest to a chronically-failed system, which DC now wants to impose throughout the city.

--Directing criticism at adversely impacted neighbors and denying their homeowner rights ignores the fact that the site is inadequate, unsafe, and "substantially impairs the intent, purpose and integrity of the zone plan". The \$24.5 million plus price tag can produce a better, dignified, and appropriate facility, which is what residents should insist upon for the city's homeless families.

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