

Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3-D
P.O. Box 40846
Palisades Station
Washington, D.C. 20016

June 21, 2007

Ms. Carol Mitten, Chair
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210-S
Washington, DC 20001

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2007 JUN 22 AM 8:30

RE: ZC No. 07-12, George Washington University – Mount Vernon Campus
Pelham Replacement Project

Dear Chairman Mitten,

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D heard Case No. 07-12 George Washington University - Mount Vernon Campus Pelham Replacement Project twice: on May 2 and June 6, 2007. A quorum (5) was present at all times for both regularly scheduled meetings, which were held at Sibley Memorial Hospital's Ernst Auditorium. Notices of the meetings were posted for two weeks prior in the Northwest Current, and on the ANC Website, the Palisades Listserv and in prominent locations throughout the community.

Relation to 2000 Campus Plan

The University informed the Commission that the proposed Pelham Replacement Project includes 22,300 sq. ft. more than the dormitory proposed in the 2000 Campus Plan. University officials have proffered that the increase constitutes a reallocation of the total gross floor area allowed under the 2000 Campus Plan. There would be no change to the nature or character of the campus, no increase to the student or faculty/staff cap and no additional traffic anticipated with the implementation of the application versus the 2000 Campus Plan.

The existing Pelham Dormitory houses 78 students and has two apartments for professional staff. The new Pelham will house 287 students and contain three apartments for professional staff. The footprint of the building has been shifted to the south and east, and the height of the building has been scaled down on the north wing to eliminate visual impacts associated with student rooms that would back onto the homes of Berkeley Terrace neighbors. The courtyard entrance to the new dormitory will face the central campus rather than Berkeley Terrace.

In addition to more student beds, the proposed new space will include an additional dining facility and, below-grade, residential/campus life support space such as meeting rooms, practice and performance space. The executive training facility and 100-car

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 07-12

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 07-12
EXHIBIT NO. 12

underground parking garage proposed in the 2000 Campus Plan Pelham replacement dormitory have been omitted from the current proposal.

Existing Storm Water Problems

The campus is surrounded on two sides by residential property (Berkeley Terrace and W Street), has Whitehaven Parkway to the south and Foxhall Road to the east. Under the proposal the replacement dormitory would be located to the rear of the campus above Whitehaven Parkway and separated from Berkeley Terrace by a 125-foot protected area. Delivery vehicles would get to the dormitory using a new entrance at Whitehaven Parkway.

Issues of storm water management were discussed at length by a resident of W Street who noted that storm water runoff from the campus has been a major problem since the start of construction under the 2000 Campus Plan. He stated during the June ANC meeting about repeated flooding and sinkhole problems experienced by residents living along W Street. The university said it had worked with WASA to replace a pipe that would ensure water was carried away from the campus. However the neighbor said the solution wasn't working due to a sharp turn in the pipe that causes water to breach at a headwall and overflow.

Commissioner Gates also shared the concerns of a resident of Hutchins Place, west of the campus across MacArthur Boulevard, who twice contacted her to complain about the Mt. Vernon campus's contribution to run-off problems below MacArthur Boulevard. He is concerned that run-off off would be exacerbated by a new access road and the additional lot coverage of the larger Pelham building.

The problem in this case, along Whitehaven Parkway, appears to be an inadequate WASA storm water pipe meant to carry water from the Foxhall Road watershed, down Whitehaven to Reservoir Road. Heavy rains cause the pipe to overflow on Reservoir Road below MacArthur Boulevard. Recent construction on Foxhall Road – and the expansion of St. Patrick's School and The Lab School – have created more runoff onto Whitehaven Parkway during heavy rains and onto Hutchins Place where basements have been flooded.

The commission asked the university to bring its storm water plan for the entire campus to the June 6 meeting. A plan, presented by the university's civil engineer, who stated that the university was not required to consider sewer capacity, would pipe all water from the Pelham side of campus to Whitehaven Parkway and a sand filter would help cleanse runoff before it enters the WASA sewer pipe on Whitehaven. It was noted that the plan did not include plans to accommodate runoff from the new Pelham access road or the existing perimeter road that has been a problem in the past.

Consultation with Neighbors

Prior to the May ANC meeting, one of two groups of neighbors – those on Berkeley Terrace – negotiated an agreement with the university to enlarge a “protected area” outlined in the 2000 Campus Plan. Further, the university agreed to limit future development within the new protected area through the 2011 and 2021 Campus Plans.

While Berkeley Terrace residents’ concerns about the larger dormitory were satisfied through this agreement, W Street neighbors have additional, ongoing complaints about storm water run-off from the campus. By the June ANC meeting the W Street residents had also begun talks with the university to reach an agreement, but there were a number of items still to be resolved.

Among the conditions sought by the residents of W Street is that the 22,300 of additional space proposed for the new Pelham Hall would be removed from proposed dormitory buildings that abut W Street. However as of the ANC’s June meeting the university would only agree that it would come from buildings in the “residential/campus life” category, declining to be more specific. W Street residents also asked that a landscaping plan outlined in the 2000 Campus Plan, which has not been fully implemented, be completed. The incomplete areas include upper W Street and Foxhall Road where new trees would screen the rear of Eckles Library and Somers Hall as well as exposed HVAC equipment.

Commission Vote

After hearing from the university and neighbors in May and again in June, the following motion was made to support the Pelham replacement dormitory with conditions:

ANC 3D supports the George Washington University’s Mount Vernon Campus Application for special exception approval of an amendment to an approved campus plan and further processing approval for the replacement of the Pelham Residence Hall. The Commission recognized the amendment involves the reallocation of approved square feet under an existing campus plan, but in all other respects meets the requirements of §§3104 and 210 of Title 11, the Zoning Code. ANC 3D approval is conditioned on the following:

- 1) The university will undertake a comprehensive stormwater management plan for the entire campus that meets best practices determined by the DC Department of the Environment and WASA to ensure there are no additional environmental impacts to residents of W Street, Hutchins Place and other surrounding areas;
- 2) The university will, in the future, reduce the proposed Hillside dormitories (located at W Street and Foxhall Road) by the 22,300 square feet reallocated to the Pelham replacement dormitory. This condition will carry forward to future campus plans until the Hillside dormitories are constructed;
- 3) The university will implement the landscaping buffer outlined in the 2000 Campus Plan along upper W Street and Foxhall Road;

- 4) The university will use its best efforts to reach a signed agreement with the W Street neighbors on issues of concern.

Under a separate motion the commission voted 7-0-0 to be represented at the hearing before the Zoning Commission by Alma Gates, vice chair of ANC 3D.

ANC 3D requests that its vote be given the great weight to which it is entitled under DC Law.

Sincerely,



Rachel W. Thompson
Chair

cc: Alicia M. O'Neil by email
David Avitabile by email

FAX COVER SHEET

RECEIVED

D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

2007 JUN 22 AM 8:30

Date: June 22, 2007

From: Rachel W Thompson, Chair
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D

Phone: (202) 364-1384
Fax: Call first

To: District of Columbia Zoning Commission
Attention: Case No. 07-12
George Washington University – Mt. Vernon Campus
Pelham Replacement Project

Pages: 5 including cover

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2007 JUN 26 AM 10: 22

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Chair

cc: Alicia M. O'Neil by email
David Avitabile by email