

ZONING COMMISSION CASE NO. 07-13

CORCORAN/RANDALL SCHOOL PUD AND MAP AMENDMENTS

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ZONING COMMISSION

Thursday, September 27, 2007

TESTIMONY

of

DAVID C. SOBELSOHN

Commissioner
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6D02

ZONING COMMISSION

CASE No. 07-13 ZONING COMMISSION

District of Columbia

EXHIBIT No. 42 CASE NO.07-13

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TESTIMONY

of

DAVID C. SOBELSOHN

Commissioners and staff, good evening. I am David Sobelsohn, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for ANC 6D02. My single-member district includes the site of this project. My constituents will bear the brunt of any problems caused by this project. My constituents will also benefit most directly from any advantages this project yields for our community.

Tonight I represent the ANC on which I serve. On September 10, 2007, all of us present and voting, my ANC voted 7-0 to oppose the current application for a Planned Unit Development, and to urge you to postpone consideration of the merits of this application for at least 30 days. In urging a postponement, we join with the applicants. We take no position on the merits of the applicants' request for an amendment to their application.

We urge you to postpone consideration of the merits for several reasons, included in our resolution. We sent you a copy of that resolution on September 17. Briefly summarized, our reasons focus on our lack of time, prior to our September 10 meeting, to review substantial changes in the applicants' proposal--all of which date from this month, September, including the request for an amendment, and a loading-dock site change just last week; the DC Department of Transportation's failure, even now, to have sent us a transportation analysis; and the applicants' failure, thus far, to propose a satisfactory community-benefits agreement.

If built as planned, this project will include the largest apartment building ever built in Southwest north of I Street. When all its units have occupants, this building alone will increase Southwest's population by up to 10%. The applicants now propose to make this our neighborhood's tallest apartment building, casting morning shadows over the homes of many of our residents, and afternoon shadows over our only municipal swimming pool. And they expect vehicles to service the project through one or more of four currently (fully or partly) closed streets.

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Over the years, too many developers have seen our community as a goldmine and current residents as wastewater to discard while panning for upper-class replacements and high-end retail. If bringing the Corcoran College to Southwest will mean art students inside a building and nothing more, we wonder if this project will justify the dislocation and disruption of its construction, let alone the burden of a huge new building in which few of us now in the community would have the funds to afford an apartment.

At the same time, a good community-benefits agreement--involving serious commitments by these applicants to our community--could make this project this most important addition to the cultural life of our neighborhood since Arena Stage moved to Southwest 46 years ago. Commitments for serious community involvement could lead us to strongly support the application.

For over a month, we have worked with the applicants to secure those commitments. We hope and trust that, by your next hearing on the merits, we will have those important commitments, in writing, and can support the revised PUD and Map Amendments.

Until then, we oppose the pending application and urge your postponing consideration of the merits for at least 30 days.

Thank you.