

TESTIMONY OF ROSALYN P. DOGGETT, AICP

VICE PRESIDENT, MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE HEIGHT CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ZONING COMMISSION

CASE NO. 08-15 – (FRIENDSHIP-MACOMB SC INC. – CONSOLIDATED PUD APPROVAL & RELATED-MAP AMENDMENT)

APRIL 23, 2009

Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission:

My name is Rosalyn Doggett. I am Vice President of the Massachusetts Avenue Heights Citizens Association and am testifying on behalf of that organization. Also, for fourteen years I was a member of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3C, in which the proposed development is located. That included the time nearly 10 years ago when Giant first proposed its redevelopment, which was opposed by the same group of opponents who oppose it today. However, now the opponents largely accept what they opposed then, i.e., a bigger Giant, and have shifted the grounds of opposition to procedural and definitional matters.

Further, Council Member Mendelson asked you what has changed since 1989 when the Macomb-Woodley overlay was passed. The answer is majority community sentiment in favor of the proposed new development. The community has moved on; the opponents have not.

The officers of the Massachusetts Avenue Heights Citizens Association (MAHCA) unanimously support rapid approval of the Giant PUD application. MAHCA members also overwhelmingly support the application, based on a door-to-door survey of single family and condominium residences that showed over 95% approval. The question asked over and over is: "Why has it taken so long to get this project done?" Those surveyed understand perfectly that the application includes not only a new supermarket but also nearly 150 new townhouses and low-rise apartments.

The Mass Avenue Heights neighborhood is bounded by Massachusetts and Wisconsin avenues to the north and west and Calvert Street and Observatory Circle to the south and east. Giant is within ½ mile of our neighborhood and is our closest mid-priced supermarket. Our residents both walk and drive to the Giant and have done so for decades. I want to emphasize walking—besides Mass Avenue Heights walkers, residents of the apartment buildings that line the west side of Wisconsin from Glover Park to Macomb Street can often be seen wheeling their own shopping carts to Giant. We also are quite capable of walking across Newark Street if we park on the south side and want to buy something on the north side. On the other hand, for those with cars, in recent years the Giant's relatively limited choice of products has led to a search for alternatives, including Giant stores at Van Ness in DC and, also, at Westbard and Friendship Heights in Montgomery County, MD, causing the District to lose retail dollars and taxes.

Mass Avenue Heights residents believe that the concerns of immediately adjacent Giant neighbors about traffic are unfounded. This is based on our own experience. Over the past decade our small neighborhood of 147 single family residences has been able to absorb a hugely successful and heavily trafficked Whole Foods supermarket and the 44-unit Georgetown Heights condominium, both at Calvert Street and Wisconsin Avenue. Whole Foods trucks enter the loading docks from our neighborhood. There have been no adverse impacts. Constructive discussions with developers and careful, but reasonable, mitigation measures approved by the Zoning Commission led to these results. These measures include restricted delivery hours, limits on truck size allowed on neighborhood interior streets, and similar types of conditions.

ZONING COMMISSION
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Because of the Whole Foods and condominium projects, our neighborhood has new residents who help to support our retail and transit services, as well as our community services such as the Guy Mason Recreation Center. The retail area surrounding the Whole Foods market has been reinvigorated.

You will hear from some that the plan for the Giant site that ANC 3C approved by resolution on January 21, 2009 is still not good enough. After 10 years and much negotiation by the developer with the community, including mitigation measures adopted by ANC 3C in its resolution, Mass Avenue Heights residents believe that the plan is good enough.

Please do not let the exaggerated claims of opponents about gutting the overlay and domino effects throughout the city and their obsession about three versus four stories of apartments, a distinction without a difference in the location being proposed, distract you from the real issues at hand. The essential part of the overlay, a mix of retail uses, is being retained. The outmoded part of the overlay, limits that preclude the low-to-moderate density uses being proposed, are clearly understood as no longer useful in this location. The Zoning Commission should not accept the opponents' death by process arguments. Instead it should embrace a project, acceptable under PUD regulations that will strengthen our community.