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February 29, 2000

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th St NW 210
Washington DC 20001

00 FEB 29 PM 2:28

Re: Application for Zoning Adjustment No. 16554
James and Julie Edmonds
Studio House School of the Arts, Inc
2306 Massachusetts Avenue NW
(Sheridan Circle)

Gentlemen:

I am pleased to write in full support of the above application by James and Julie Edmonds for a zoning adjustment to permit adaptive reuse of Studio House on Sheridan Circle to be a school for the arts. The Edmonds proposal is ***serious and practical***, has tremendous ***cultural merit,*** and is superior to all the alternatives. ***If BZA turns down the Edmonds proposal, only the alternatives will survive. One has been tested and failed; the others are unacceptable, because they will cut off public access to Studio House and its century-old historically protected legacy of architecture, furniture, and decorations that are unique in the Washington area and, indeed, nearly unique in the whole United States.***

1. A group of neighborhood activists worked from 1994 to 1999--5 years--to rescue Studio House, the historically protected studio and salon of Mrs Alice Pike Barney, but failed. They tried but could not find 1000 donors to pay $1000 each for renovations cooperatively with the Smithsonian, which owned the property and which was to share in program and upkeep costs. The program was to include art exhibitions, public performances, and use as an educational center. The Smithsonian finally put Studio House on the market, and the Edmondses bought it. **THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVISTS' ALTERNATIVE IS RULED OUT.**

2. The Edmondses could sell Studio House for use as a foreign mission, but this would cut off public access except for possible house tours. Much worse, the historically protected rooms, contents, facade and site could well be entirely destroyed by any foreign government by neglect, insensitivity, or deliberate intent. **DIPLOMATIC OWNERSHIP IS UNSATISFACTORY.**

BZA
Case No. 16554
Exhibit No. 33

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16554
EXHIBIT NO.33

3. The Edmondses could sell Studio House to the District of Columbia, George Washington University, or other large institution for use as presidential residence, museum, school, or art gallery. Such change in ownership would have to accept the historical preservation restrictions, making for considerable inflexibility, and there would be strong neighborhood opposition to a large institution taking over. **INSTITUTIONAL OWNERSHIP IS UNSATISFACTORY.**

4. The Edmondses could sell Studio House for use purely as a household dwelling. This would cut off public access except for possible house tours, and it is unlikely any household except the Edmondses would use the building for a working studio, performance space, exhibition hall, and educational center as did Alice Pike Barney. But it was precisely the historical importance of these uses and the fabric of the building itself that entitled it to historical registration and protection. **PURE PRIVATE OCCUPANCY IS UNSATISFACTORY.** ***This leaves us with the Edmonds proposal.***

5. The Edmonds proposal draws directly from Alice Pike Barney's ideas. She used her private fortune to build and operate Studio House 1902-1931 as her own painting studio, personal private residence, and grand salon for public performance and exhibitions to enlighten and stimulate the elites of Washington. In 1960 her daughters gave Studio House to the Smithsonian, which used it for various purposes until the 1990s; it was then closed for want of repairs. The Smithsonian had spent most the Barney endowment and did not find it convenient to make other money available for the repairs.

6. Mrs Barney used real money to own and operate Studio House. She did not build a bungalow, she built a mansion of 11,000 square feet plus garden and 2-story carriage house on two house lots. This presents an enormous challenge of stewardship. Resources and operating skill are necessary if such a venture is to survive and succeed 100 years later.

   The Edmondses, and so far only the Edmondses, are equal to this unique challenge. They own their own successful music school in Falls Church and fully appreciate what to do and how to do it in Studio House. Their proposal is solid and focused. They will be successful in saving Studio House, bringing it back to life, keeping it open to the public, and reviving the unique ideas of the remarkable lady who invented the place. For these good things to happen, the BZA must approve application 16554..

   This is a very high-profile case. BZA has a heavy responsibility to historic preservation and preserving public access to Studio House, which is unique and a jewel in Washington. The property cannot be kept going on a shoestring. There has to be a significant financial budget and long-term commitment to save the property and make it publicly available. The Edmonds proposal, and only the Edmonds proposal,

meets these stringent requirements.

It is obvious: denial of application 16554 or delay for mediation will be very costly to the Edmondses. They will find a buyer (they have already received some offers). Mrs Barney's unique legacy will disappear from public access and be scattered or destroyed for want of proper stewardship, in contravention of law (D.C. Code, 5-1001 (1981)).

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7. Jim Edmonds ***knows from his own extensive professional music training*** that performance before others is essential to developing serious talent. Students at Studio House would perform on Friday evenings 7-9 and Sundays 2-4, mainly before small gatherings of students' families and their friends. Professional soloists and chamber groups would perform on selected Fridays or Sundays and attract a little wider audience. The nearby Phillips Collection presents professional artists on Sundays, but the Phillips does not teach musicians. Studio House would do that, living up to its name *Studio: "working place of a painter, sculptor, or photographer," "a place for the study of an art."*

8. The Edmondses believe as I do, ***educating the young is the highest of callings.*** The best use of Studio House is as a school for the arts. This will generate revenue for restoring and rehabilitating buildings and grounds one or two projects at a time, and it will support a staff that trains new performers and artists--a thrilling prospect for old, neglected, disused Studio House.

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9. Activity at Studio House will be reasonable in intensity. It may be compared to the Levine School of Music on Upton Street NW.

	Studio House	Levine
Weeks per school semester	13	16
Days and hours open	M-Th 10-8 pm Fri 10-9 Sat 9-2 Sun 2-4	M-F 9-9 pm Sat 9-4 Sun Special events only (12 Suns only)
Days and hours of music lessons	M-F 10-12 noon M-Th 3-8 Fri 3-6	M-F 9-9 --- ---

	Sat 9-2	Sat 9-4
Days and hours of art lessons	M-W 7-9	Not applicable
Days and hours of performances	Fri 7-9 Sun 2-4	Sat 12-4 (varies) (10-12 events/mo)
Number of studios for private music students	9	36
Number of studios for art students	1	Not applicable
Maximum students at one time	17, M-Th 7-8 pm	500 (150 on Sat after 1 pm)
Parking spaces	9 on site plus 10 at 2100 Mass. (Fairfax) plus 10-40 near 2201 P St. (Ch. of the Pilgrims)	80 on site
Number of student performance events per semester	8	12-16
Number of professional musician events	8	---
Avg. no of students per student performance event	8	5-6
Avg. attendance per student (family, friends)	2-3	4
Avg. total attendance per event (family, friends)	24-30	20-40
Scholarship aid	$5200-$10,000	$210,000

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10. Traffic and parking issues have been raised and must be discussed. In doing so, it is important to disclose that I am an experienced professional traffic engineer. For example, I was appointed by New York City to direct a nearly one-year study of the Lower Manhattan Expressway, a 2-mile, $6-billion-dollar viaduct to connect the Holland Tunnel and three East River bridges (Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Williamsburg bridges) on several alignments.

11. I have examined the Carter traffic study done for Studio House.

    o In my professional opinion the Carter study reflects fairly the traffic situation at

Sheridan Circle now and in future, even though the Q Street bridge behind Studio House is closed for repairs. Traffic destined for Q Street travels one block farther south at 23d Street to P Street to get to Georgetown. Reopening the Q Street bridge will have ***no measurable effect--zero*** on the amount of traffic reported by Carter as passing in front of Studio House. The Carter traffic samples are ***not flawed.***

- Likewise, Carter's conclusions are sound because the capacity of Sheridan Circle and nearby streets is large compared to peak hour demand.

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12. I present now my own analysis of traffic safety in front of Studio House. In my professional opinion there is abundant space for safe drop-off and pick-up of students and guests at Studio House as proposed in application 16554.

- First, there are 28- to 30-second gaps in the platoons of traffic on Massachusetts Avenue from the northwest heading for Sheridan Circle and going past Studio House. These gaps are created by the red and yellow signal time at 24th Street.

- Second, these gaps are open gaps because very few vehicles enter Massachusetts Avenue from the side streets R and S, both of which are on the other side of Massachusetts Avenue, or from nearby driveways. Of the vehicles these sources provide, fewer still enter the traffic gaps and go around the circle past Studio House.

- Third, Sheridan Circle roadway is 40 feet wide. Its two inner lanes are each 12 feet wide, 2 feet wider than usual in Washington, and the outer parking lane is 16 feet wide. All traffic moving around the circle moves on the two inner 12-foot lanes, ***which are steeply banked inwards from the roadway crown.*** The generous inner lane width reduces side friction, there are no traffic island lane separators, and there are no cross streets at Sheridan Circle. The result is smoothly moving traffic on the two inner lanes.

- Fourth, the really generous 16-foot-wide outer lane ***is steeply banked outwards from the roadway crown.*** Pausing and parking are safe and secure because of the generous lane width and separation by banking profile of the roadway.

- Fifth, a queue of five, six, or even seven can safely line up in the 150-foot-long parking lane that starts in front of Studio House and reaches northwesterly and without incident drop off or pick up students or guests.

- Sixth, this queue length is safe and sufficient because only 18 vehicles will arrive

during the peak hour (7-8 pm, Monday-Thursday), when there will be 9 students arriving 7-7:30 and 9 students departing at 8 pm.

- Seventh, these arrival and departure times will be dispersed and irregular because the lessons are individual lessons, not lessons governed by a school bell.

- Eighth, these 18 peak vehicles are a mere ***1.5% of peak hour traffic*** [18 / (986 + 251 =1237) vehicles] passing Studio House, as reported in the Carter traffic study (Appendix B, page 0, for 5:15-6:15 pm, Thursday, 12/9/99). Of 200 vehicles driving by Studio House, three will pull over for drop-off or pick-up.

- Ninth, cell phone users will be encouraged to call ahead to improve efficiency of drop-off and pick-up.

- Finally, some trips will be by car pool, Metro, Metrobus, taxicab, bicycle, and on foot.

13. Taking account of all the above, ***it is my professional opinion*** that the parking lane of Sheridan Circle provides ***abundant space for safe and convenient*** drop-off and pick-up of Studio House students and guests, especially with a paid security person, as proposed in the application, posted outside Studio House to assist.

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14. For parking, Studio House has nine off-street spaces in its driveway reserved for faculty (and guests attending performance events, which occur after faculty has gone home), and Studio House has reserved 10 more spaces at Westin Fairfax hotel, 2100 Massachusetts Avenue, two blocks away. These 19 spaces exceed zoning requirements. In addition, from 10 to 40 spaces are available near 2102 P Street (Church of the Pilgrims) for Friday evening and Sunday afternoon performance events.

15. Vehicles in the nine driveway spaces at Studio House must all back out onto the Sheridan Circle parking lane. At that location the lane has 33 feet of clear space alongside the curb because of two curb cuts. The back-out maneuver has been ***tested and is safe even with traffic moving on the inner lanes.***

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16. Lastly, the superb 18-inch-thick masonry walls of Studio House, overlaid by new soundproofing, together assure that musical activity will not intrude on the neighbors or neighborhood.

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17. ***In conclusion,*** on the basis of all the above, and as one who has lived through brownstone restoration in New York City, it is an honor to vouch for the Edmondses and what they are trying to do. They want nothing less than to revive the old and beautiful Studio House with young people learning music and art, and to keep the place open to the public. I can think of no worthier use of that distinguished property.

Sincerely,

F. M. Graves.

Frank M. Graves
President