George Dodds

10 December, 1999

President Neil Rudenstine
Office of the President
Harvard University
Massachusetts Hall
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear President Rudenstine:

Please find attached a copy of a letter I sent to Ned Keenan more than a month ago regarding the planned alterations and additions to Dumbarton Oaks. As a former DO Landscape fellow (1998-99) who is trained as an architect and has devoted much of my teaching and professional life to the question of altering buildings or sites, I felt compelled to offer my opinion on such an important matter. As my letter to Ned has yet to be acknowledged and as this matter is moving quickly towards a final decision, I have forwarded this letter to you for your consideration.

In my letter to Ned I cautioned that a wider vista was needed before embarking on such an ambitious and specious building project. As a DO fellow who daily struggled to carry-on research in a facility best suited for other matters, that new library facilities are needed is without question. It is a question of how, not whether. As I have underscored in my letter to Ned, the design standards of Dumbarton Oaks and Harvard University should set a standard of excellence, in this case for both landscape and architectural design. Basing one's building scenario on a site strategy that was problematic when it was first proposed three decades ago hardly seems acceptable today. I hope you will take seriously the question of the stewardship of the Dumbarton Oaks environment that has had an unfortunate history of mediocre planning and architectural decisions during the last 50 years. This new addition has the opportunity to improve the site rather than simply alter it. I am certain that with time the administration of DO will choose a more productive path and place for this project in what has become the much-contested territory of the Bliss and Farrand landscape.

Sincerely,

George Dodds
University of Pennsylvania
University of Tennessee

BZA
Case No. 16555
Exhibit No. 42A

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16555
EXHIBIT NO.42A