GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E

Representing the communities of Burleith, Foxhall-MacArthur, Georgetown and Hillandale

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October 13,2000

The Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

BZA
Case No. 16555
Exhibit No. 59

RE: Application No. 16555, DUMBARTON OAKS

Madame Chairman and Members of the Board:

The following statement was approved by Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E at its regularly scheduled, duly noticed public meeting of September 5, 2000, at which all commissioners were present.

Rarely does an ANC's advisory role in the stewardship of great places carry as much meaning as it does in the case of Dumbarton Oaks. The significance of this very special property, its history, its beauty, the many elements that make it a world-renown treasure, all are factors that we have been mindful of in assessing the proposal before us.

But Dumbarton Oaks is more that a product of its history; it is a living, working research institution and library. It was with the intent that the property fulfill its research library functions that it was deeded to the Trustees for Harvard University. In addition to carrying out its programs of research, Dumbarton Oaks regularly opens it world famous gardens and renowned museum galleries to the public.

Over the sixty years of its existence as a research organization, Dumbarton Oaks has continued to acquire significant numbers of volumes for its library. These acquisitions have filled the Dumbarton Oaks Mansion, pushing other research and administrative functions into ever-decreasing remaining space. The result is a 100%overutilization of space. The need for the construction of a new library and other improvements and renovations is unassailable.

In selection the site for the new library and the related new gardeners' service area, Dumbarton Oaks has followed a rigorous process of assessment of the historical significance of the landscape and the development of appropriate treatment recommendations. The Cultural Landscape Report process has been guided by some of the leading historic landscape practitioners in the United States. A collaborative process between the historical landscape and architectural and landscape design team has produced the proposal to site a new library between the wooded Dell and the McKim Meade White collection of buildings known as the Service Court.

Additionally, service functions are proposed to be relocated to an area behind the Fellows Building, where two small service buildings are to be constructed. As proposals have been developed, Dumbarton Oaks has consulted with leading professional organizations, including the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Garden Conservancy and numerous individuals. The resulting consensus is a rarity in the development of projects of this type, and Dumbarton Oaks and their consultants are to be applauded for their successful efforts in this regard also.

The proposal before us has met with almost universal support for its sensitivity to the historic landscape, appropriateness to its setting and quality of overall design. It is remarkable, given the previous criticism voiced by some opponents of previous proposals, that, according to press reports, these same former critics now speak so strongly in support of the current proposal.

COMMISSIONERS:

Scott Polk, District 1 Fran Goldstein, District 2 Peter Pulsifer, District 3 Barbara Zartman, District 4
Matt Payne, District 5 Bill Starrels, District 6 Mark Ryan, District 8

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In weighing its position on this project, we have been helped by the quality and dedication of the individuals and professional consultants who are guiding this project. This begins with the Dumbarton Oaks Director, Edward L. Keenan, who demonstrates remarkable openness and transparency with regard to all the factors that are at play in developing the plans for the property. His stewardship is already resulting in improvements in the public places of Dumbarton Oaks, particularly in the coordination with the National Park Service for better integration for the gardens and park.

In weighing our position, we are helped by the exquisite care with which the design team of Hartman-Cox Architects and James Urban Landscape Associates have approached this project. We are reassured by the results of this collaborative process that only the finest and best approaches will be taken, sensitive to the previous work by Mildred Bliss, Beatrix Farrand and others who have had such an important hand in making Dumbarton Oaks what it is today. The thoroughness of the master planning process that has been undertaken, the care in selecting the most appropriate sensitivity in the plans that are being considered.

And the role that Mary Oehrlein (who has recused herself from all discussion of decision about the project before the Old Georgetown Board) will play in this project can only be reassuring. The known steadfastness of her commitment to the preservation of historic properties sets a standard that should serve this project well.

Dumbarton Oaks has stated a commitment to their responsibility to neighbors' concerns that arise during the construction process; the ANC's "Cooper Rules" have already been adopted as the minimum standards for operation of excavation and construction vehicles. Consultation has begun even as preliminary plans were being developed.

For all of these reasons the ANC makes its recommendation for this project, with the knowledge that required public bodies will review the project to assure that the very best practices are being planned for all of the elements of the project, but with great weight being given to the endorsement of the fundamental elements of the plan presented to the ANC.

To implement these conclusions the following motion was passed by a unanimous vote of the Commission:

> **ANC 2E greatly values the gardens, the museum collections, and scholarship at Dumbarton Oaks, which fully deserve their worldwide reputation for excellence. We applaud the goals of modernizing the facilities to better serve the public, of enhancing the value of the collections, and of broadening scholarship and fellowship within the institution. In the program represented in the West Property Master Plan, including the construction of a new library facility and service buildings, we believe Dumbarton Oaks has achieved the delicate and appropriate balance between preservation and modernization of its facilities and infrastructure.**
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> **ANC 2E supports the approach embodied in the West Property Master Plan presented, including the construction of a library, the placement of cooling towers, the construction of two service buildings and parking improvements the Fellows Building, change of use to the current Director's Residence and Gardener's Cottage and the renovations and disabled accessibility changes within existing buildings.**
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> **Because of neighborhood concern for truck traffic and disruption from excavations and other potential neighborhood impacts, ANC 2E recommends that the BZA require meetings with the community as represented by the ANC to gather community input and to inform the community as to developments in the project.**

Sincerely,

Peter Pulsifer

Peter Pulsifer
Chair, ANC 2E