CARTER BARRON EAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

1337 Hamilton Street, NW, Washington, DC 20011 Phone: 202-723-6320

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
'00 MAY 11 P2:40

May 9, 2000

Mr. Anthony Williams
Mayor of the District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Williams: Ms. Cross-Reid; FYI

The Carter Barron East Neighborhood Association recently participated in a hearing before the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA), concerning an application for a special exception to locate a school at 5000 14th Street, NW (Case #16569). While our organization is satisfied with the outcome of that case, we are disturbed by the inordinate amount of time we wasted waiting for our case to be heard. Unfortunately, our experience of delays is commonplace for groups appearing before the Board. We hope that in bringing our experiences to your attention, you will be able to direct the Board to find better mechanisms to schedule their public work.

This case was scheduled for hearing in the afternoon session from 1 - 6 pm of April 18; it was fourth on the agenda. Even on the morning of April 18, the staff of the BZA could not predict at what time the case would be taken up during the session and urged interested persons to arrive at 1 pm. At least one member of our neighborhood, a woman with an 8-month old baby, arrived at that time. The rest of the persons involved in our case arrived no later than 3 pm, having been informed by the architect for applicant that the case first on the agenda, in which he was also involved, would take at least two hours. Seven members of our community were present that afternoon in the BZA hearing room, all of whom took off from work or other responsibilities in order to be heard. In addition, at least six persons representing the applicant were also waiting for their chance to present their request. All these people waited patiently for two and a half hours, only to be informed that the BZA would not conclude the hearing on the previous case in time for our case to be heard that day. At 5:45 pm we left, with a new hearing date of April 26 at 9 am. (Of course none of the community members were asked if that was a convenient time; as far as our presence was concerned, it was "take it or leave it.")

If the hearing had started promptly on April 26, I probably would not be writing this letter just about losing one whole afternoon. However, our hearing on the 26th started not at 9 but more that one and a half hours late, at 10:40 am. There was no other case scheduled before ours on the agenda. The members of the BZA did not enter the hearing room until 10:30, and the chairperson offered only a perfunctory apology for the delay and no cogent explanation of the delay. Such treatment of the public's time and effort is inexcusable. Again, we had the mother and infant and three other members of our community, plus the

BZA
Case No. 16569
Exhibit No. 37

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16569
EXHIBIT NO.37

applicant's representatives. One member of our community had to leave after waiting an hour and a half to go to a business appointment she had scheduled for late morning, expecting that the BZA case would have concluded by that time. Besides our case, the room was full of citizens waiting to participate in a major issue -- the renewal of the George Washington University campus plan. Everyone was kept waiting for undisclosed reasons or no reason at all.

Our organization firmly believes that citizens should be encouraged to participate in the hearings of the city's boards and agencies. The delays that we experienced in this case clearly discourage participation. It must be possible for hearing boards to do a better job in scheduling their public sessions. Please let us know what steps you will take to ensure that this situation improves.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Ferger

Kathryn Ferger, President

cc: Ms. Charlene Drew Jarvis, Councilmember Ward 4
Ms. Sharon Ambrose, Councilmember
Mr. Lloyd Jordan, Director of DCRA
Ms. Sheila Cross-Reid, Chair of BZA