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October 25, 2001

Ms. Sheri Pruitt
Secretary, Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 - 4th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: BZA No. 16710 - 5210 Klingle Street, N.W.

Dear Ms. Pruitt:

This letter is intended to address some of the concerns raised in the recent submissions of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3-D and several of the neighbors who are in opposition to Mr. Pande's request for a Special Exception.

On September 19, 2001, our office faxed three (3) drawings to the office of Mr. Pande's attorney, Howard Ross. These drawings were labeled: Proposed Porte Cochere with Covered Side Entry; Proposed Rear Elevation Facing Hawthorn Place; and Proposed Side Elevation. The scale designation of 1/4" = 1' - 0" was crossed out with a handwritten note "DRAWINGS REDUCED - NOT TO SCALE" added below, to convey that these drawings had been reduced for faxing purposes. I am aware that from time to time distortion in one direction (either vertical or horizontal) may result from the Xerox reduction process and/or the faxing process. These were the drawings which Mr. Pande caused to be delivered to the neighbors in opposition to his application for a Special Exception, so that they would be able to comment on these plans at the ANC meeting of October 3, 2001.

On the morning of September 21, 2001, Mr. Pande called to let me know that he had sent the drawings to Mr. Kennedy, that he had given Mr. Kennedy my office phone number and that if I didn't hear from him soon, I should give him a call and answer any questions that he might have regarding the design of the Porte Cochere. Mr. Kennedy and I talked later that day, and I answered his questions regarding dimensions, especially in relation to the existing canopy, as well as material selection and general explanation of the design. I also discussed with Mr. Kennedy that I had met with a representative of "Bedco Mobility", the chairlift manufacturer, and that following that meeting it was decided that mounting a track to a masonry wall would be more attractive and less obtrusive. As a result we shifted the stairs 12" to the north and decreased the width of the stairs by 6". There was no change to the roof line of the canopy. I re-worked this stair location on the drawings, and I then faxed this change to Mr. Kennedy later that day.

On October 1, 2001, our office taped the three drawings showing the proposed design onto larger sheets of paper, and labeled these A-1 through A-3. The only difference in design between the drawings prepared on September 19th and these drawings was the 12" shift of the stairs to the north, and a 6" narrowing of the stairs in accordance with my September 21, 2001 fax to Mr. Kennedy. We also prepared four (4) drawing sheets showing existing or measured conditions, and added notes regarding material designations, dimensions, and an outline referencing the existing canopy (to show the scaling back of the proposed design). These drawings were digitally printed at full scale and sent by Federal Express to Mr. Ross so that he could take them to the ANC meeting on October 3rd.

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BZA
Case # 16710
Exhibit # 46

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16710
EXHIBIT NO.46

In reviewing the correspondence sent this past week from a few of Mr. Pande's neighbors, I found four separate instances using the identical phrase: "[I/we] have seen the applicant's not-to-scale drawings A1-3". This is very disconcerting, especially considering that drawings A1-3 were to scale and noted as such. The drawings sent to Mr. Ross, and presented by Mr. Ross to the ANC at their October 3rd meeting, reflected the same elevation design as the reduced drawings delivered to Commissioner Finney and the neghbors who had stated their opposition, and the location of the stairway was only slightly modified as set forth in my facsimile to Mr. Kennedy on September 21, 2001. The notes and dimensions were added for clarification, in response to Mr. Kennedy's questions, and were not a change to the original version.

A number of the neighbors in opposition also referred to the drawings as "incomplete". They (A1 - A3) are complete by architectural standards for design drawings. Architectural plans typically do not show a wheelchair lift, but the stairway is shown and the chairlift would simply ride over the stairway.

From an architectural point of view, we were proposing a design that met the objective of safely discharging the disabled passenger from a vehicle and providing an accessible route, in a manner in keeping with the architectural character of the existing house and neighborhood. The stairway and platform lift would also be a means of egress from the house because it would all occupants to get away from the building in case of a fire or other emergency, should that become necessary for safety.

We feel that a covering over the chairlift is necessary for several reasons. The manufacturer of the wheelchair lift recommended the use of some type of roof or awning to protect the unit from exposure to rain, snow or ice. Indeed, a build-up of snow or ice could activate the chairlift's sensors, and keep the lift from operating. The ability to protect the stair from snow build-up and potential icy conditions, as well as to protect the disabled passenger on the wheelchair lift from rain or other uncomfortable weather situations, was deemed a prudent feature in keeping with the objective of the design.

The use of simple painted wood posts and wood railings with an architectural grade, laminated fiberglass roof was in keeping with the architectural elements of porches of some of Mr. Pande's neighbors along Hawthorne Place, as well as the wood posts and railings evidenced at Mr. Kennedy's house next door.

I explored a number of alternatives to the Porte Cochere, including excavation of the driveway. The response to this issue focuses on the topography of the site and the recommended standards for driveway design. According to De Chiara's Time Saver Standards for Site Planning, 1984, a general reference guide for the design profession, in designing a driveway the absolute maximum grade for all vehicles should not exceed 17%. According to Ramsey/Sleeper's Architectural Graphic Standards, Seventh Edition (1981), the maximum grade of a drive ramp should not exceed 16%, and a blend of 8% over 10 feet would be required prior to a level discharge area. According to the site and topography survey that we requested and Mr. Pande agreed to, the corner of the house is 31.64 feet from and 9.5 feet below the property line. Without allowing for a blend area at the top of the driveway, but only at the bottom, a driveway with a grade of 40% would be the result.* This would certainly not comply with established site planning standards.

*A blend of 8% over 10 feet would result in a change of grade of .8 feet with 21.64 feet left.
9.5 feet - .8 feet = 8.7 feet (vertical distance)
8.7 feet/21.64 feet (horizontal distance) = 40% grade

In addition, a person in a wheelchair would not be able to navigate such a steep grade without assistance. In the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (which do not apply here, but are offered as reference for good planning practices), *Any part of an accessible route with a slope greater than 1:20 (5%) shall be considered a ramp and shall comply with 4.8.* It continues *The least possible slope shall be used for any ramp. The maximum slope of a ramp in new construction shall be 1:12. The maximum rise for any run shall be 30 in...* It continues that in cases of existing buildings, ramps may be allowed with a slope not to exceed 1:8. A grade of 40% would be 1:2.5, but it would still be worse than this because only 30 inches of vertical distance is allowed between landings.

In conclusion, excavation of the driveway is not a practical alternative. What we have sought to do is to provide a driveway which complies with the recommended guidelines for a slope along an accessible route, leading to a stairway which complies simply with the requirements of the wheelchair lift. The covering of the car area with the access to and the stair itself, provides for a design which is cohesive as an element with the existing house and to the street; is similar to the porch type style along Hawthorne Place; and provides the flexibility in the safe loading and unloading of the passenger from the vehicle.

Sincerely,

Randy Davis-Ahmann

Randy Davis-Ahmann, AIA