ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 1B

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS / LEDROIT PARK / SHAW / UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

P.O. Box 73710
Washington, DC 20056-3710

July 22, 2002

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Geoffrey Griffis, Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment
Office of Zoning
441 4th Street, N.W., Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

BZA
Case No. 16901
Exhibit No. 34

RE: 1906 Vermont Avenue
BZA Application No. 16901

Dear Mr. Griffis:

This letter setting out the position of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1B with regard to BZA Application No. 16901 is being sent late because, as detailed below, the ANC wished to give the applicant as much time as possible before the hearing to work out an agreement that was a condition for receiving ANC support. For that reason, the ANC requests that the requirement of Zoning Regulation 3115.1 be waived (that the written report of the ANC be submitted seven days in advance of the hearing) and that this report be accepted as the position of the ANC and given "great weight."

At the regularly scheduled meeting of ANC 1B (notice of which was properly given) on June 6, 2002, at which a quorum (seven members required) of nine members was present, the members of ANC 1B voted by a vote of 4 in favor, 3 opposed and 2 abstentions, to support the application for a special exception to allow an accessory parking lot on square 333 lots 824 and 825 (1906 Vermont Avenue) with two conditions. The Commissions support was conditioned upon the Prince Hall Grand Lodge (the applicant) meeting with members of the community and arranging to provide nine parking spaces for members of the community and the applicant reaching an agreement with members of the community (including specifically the caretaker of the Evans-Tibbs House, a National Historic Landmark immediately adjacent to the property, and the Westminster Neighborhood Association) on the landscaping and screening of the parking lot. Despite repeated reminders of this obligation to receive the ANC support, the applicant has failed to meet any of the two conditions for the ANC support. Therefore, ANC 1B opposes the granting of a special exception for an accessory parking lot as described in BZA Application 16901.

The ANC held an extensive hearing on this special exception request. In addition to the legal counsel for the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, a number of representatives of that organization spoke in favor of the special exception. These representatives stated that traffic and noise from the parking lot would be minimal because the parking spaces were to be reserved for members of the board of directors.

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16901
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There were over a dozen members of the community that requested to speak during the hearing. All members of the community urged the ANC to oppose the application.

There were several issues of concern raised by members of the community. Concern was expressed that the property directly abuts a National Historic Landmark and was in the Greater U Street Historic District and therefore a parking lot was not in keeping with the historic character of the neighborhood. Similar concerns were raised because the property fronts on the community's only National Park – the African American Civil War Memorial. It was stated that a parking lot was not the image the community wanted to present to visitors and tourist that would be coming to our community to visit this important monument. Members of the community also expressed concern about additional noise and traffic, especially since the applicant intends to use a narrow alley to gain access to the parking lot.

In addition, it was noted that the applicant purchased the two lots that comprise the property in 1998 and was aware the lots were zoned residential when it purchased them. Members of the community stated they believed it was unfair for those that had relied upon the residential zoning in purchasing their homes or renting their apartments to now be subject to the additional traffic and noise from a parking lot where they had reasonably expected housing to be built. Finally, members of the community expressed concern that the applicant currently operates an illegal parking lot directly south of the proposed new parking lot. That illegal parking lot is on lots that are zoned residential, for which there is no current special exception, for which no certificate of occupancy exists and on which the applicant recently illegally constructed a guard shack (apparently without permits or Historic Preservation approval).

The undersigned Chairman of the ANC also is the Single Member District Commissioner for this area. I spoke at the hearing in opposition to this special exception, reflecting many of the concerns raised by the numerous members of the community that came to oppose this application.

As the position of the ANC is entitled to great weight, we ask that you deny the application for a special exception for an accessory parking lot at 1906 U Street, Application No. 16901. If you should have any questions, you may contact me on 202-246-1878.

Sincerely,

Glenn J. Melcher
Chairman

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July 22, 2002

To: Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001
Fax: (202) 727-6072

From: Glenn J. Melcher
Chairman ANC 1B
SMD Commissioner 1B02
(202) 246-1878

Number of Pages (including this cover sheet): 3

Comments: Please see attached letter to BZA regarding Application No. 16901

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