Judy S. McLaughlin
1924 Tenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

July 17, 2002

ZONING COMMISSION
D.C.
2002 JUL 24 PM 4:00

Mr. Jeoffry Griffis
Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

Dear: Mr. Griffis:

I am writing in opposition to the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge's (Lodge) request for a special exception and zoning variance that would permit it to extend and continue to use its property (1902 Vermont Avenue, NW; Square 333, Lot 800) as a parking lot. I reside in a single family house between the Lodge (located at 1000 U Street, NW) and the parking lot in question. I object to the Lodge's request for a special exception and zoning variance for the following reasons: neighborhood blight; underutilization of urban space; the party's indifference to the needs of the community; the party's arrogance; traffic congestion, and lack of interest the Lodge has shown in the neighborhood.

First, the Lodge's open parking lot creates blight in the neighborhood. The neighborhood that surrounds the parking lot is historical and is being revitalized. People take pride in their homes and are renovating them. Next door to the Lodge and a few hundred feet from the parking lot in question is the African American Civil War Memorial, a symbol of pride and freedom to Americans, especially African Americans. The open parking lot makes the neighborhood look depressed and run down.

Second, the Lodge's parking lot underutilizes urban space. The parking lot does not use the space efficiently. Open parking lots, like the one in question, are usually temporary amenities until developers can build structures on them. The Lodge's lot is zoned residential. Prior to the Lodge's purchase of the land, a large apartment building occupied the land but unfortunately was destroyed by fire. The lot should remain zoned as residential and be developed again with a residential structure on it. As a private parking lot, it serves only as a luxury to its members and adds nothing to the community.

Third, the Lodge shows indifference to the needs and to the appearance of the community. The only needs that the Lodge cares about are its own. For example, the Lodge owns a dilapidated and abandoned row house at 1922 Tenth Street, NW. This house is attached to my house. It has remained in a dilapidated and abandoned condition for at least twenty years and was condemned by the D.C. Fire Department. The Lodge did not care anything about the community to rehabilitate it. It was not until the African American Memorial Foundation and the District approached the Lodge in the mid 1990s

BZA
Case No. 16901
Exhibit No. 41

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16901
EXHIBIT NO.41

with funds that it did anything. What the Lodge did was to attach plywood to the front and back of the dilapidated structure then paint it. To this day, the dilapidated structure remains underneath. Each day and night the members of the Lodge walk past this dilapidated house and do nothing more than to look at it when they go to their lodge from their parking lot. The house is nothing more than a rat hotel and a welcome to vagrants. There also was a vagrant who would climb over the fence and use it as a homeless structure. Although the Lodge could not develop or build a new structure because it is too narrow, they would not rehabilitate the existing structure. The Lodge sits on the property without selling it, improving it, or doing anything with it. This shows the Lodge's arrogance that it does not care what it does and does not answer to anybody. The Lodge does not exhibit any civic interest in our particular neighborhood.

Fourth, the zoning variance and special exception should not be granted because of this arrogance. District of Columbia records reveal that in 1976 the party obtained a special exception and zoning variance to operate a 21-space private parking lot on the site. Instead, the Lodge took upon itself to operate a 29-space parking lot at the site. Furthermore, the Lodge's authority to utilize this site expired ten years ago, but yet, it continues to use the site as a parking lot. Even now, instead of waiting until they receive a variance from the District, the Lodge has already paved over the back half of the lot in question with parking spaces, as if it can obtain a variance at any time it chooses. To my knowledge, the Lodge has not even made an effort to ask how the residents of the neighborhood who live next to the Lodge and parking lot feel about expanding the parking lot. Another way, the Lodge exhibits its arrogance is that the Metro subway station, U Street-Cardozo station Tenth Street exit is adjacent to the Lodge, and so there is no need for a special parking lot. Instead, they would prefer to take up and use residential space every night of the week in order to attend their private meetings and functions.

Fifth, congestion is likely to become a big problem in the alley that runs from the Lodge (at Tenth and U Streets, NW) to the parking lot if the special exception is granted. This alley is also used by the residents (who reside in the 1900 blocks of Tenth and Eleventh Streets, NW) who use it to access their homes so that they can park in their back yards. Although the lot is currently enclosed with a low chain link gate approximately three and one-half to four feet high, it is likely to be removed so that Lodge members can use the alley as a thoroughfare to drive to the parking lot. The alley is very narrow and only allows one car to pass in one direction at a time. The alley is too narrow and not designed for this type of traffic. If the chain link fence is removed to create a new entrance/exit to the parking lot, then there is likely to be a backlog of cars lined up in the alley attempting to access the parking lot. Residents who use the alley will be unnecessarily inconvenienced by this increased traffic and will have to wait to access or leave their properties until the members are able to enter the parking lot and find parking spaces.

Currently, when a Lodge member is unloading food from his car to take to the Lodge, many times he parks at the U Street entrance of the alley to take the food inside the lodge.

This restrains and sometimes precludes residents who live on either side of the alley from accessing their homes from the alley.

Because of the blight, under utilization of urban space, traffic congestion, the Lodge's indifference to the neighborhood, and the Lodge's arrogance, I object to the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge receiving a special exception and zoning variance to expand and continue to use its parking lot. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Please enter this letter into the record as an objection to the Lodge's request for a special exception and zoning variance to continue using their property as a parking lot.

Sincerely,

Judy McLaughlin
Resident

Judy S. McLaughlin
1924 Tenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

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Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210S
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First, the Lodge's open parking lot creates blight in the neighborhood. The neighborhood that surrounds the parking lot is historical and is being revitalized. People take pride in their homes and are renovating them. Next door to the Lodge and a few hundred feet from the parking lot in question is the African American Civil War Memorial, a symbol of pride and freedom to Americans, especially African Americans. The open parking lot makes the neighborhood look depressed and run down.

Second, the Lodge's parking lot underutilizes urban space. The parking lot does not use the space efficiently. Open parking lots, like the one in question, are usually temporary amenities until developers can build structures on it. The Lodge's lot is zoned residential. Prior to the Lodge's purchase of the land, a large apartment building occupied the land but unfortunately was destroyed by fire. The lot should remain zoned as residential and be developed again with a residential structure on it. As a private parking lot, it serves only as a luxury to its members and adds nothing to the community.

Third, the Lodge shows indifference to the needs and to the appearance of the community. The only needs that the Lodge cares about are its own. For example, the Lodge owns a dilapidated and abandoned row house at 1922 Tenth Street, NW. This house is attached to my house. It has remained in a dilapidated and abandoned condition for at least twenty years and was condemned by the D.C. Fire Department in the late 1980s. The Lodge did not care anything about the community to rehabilitate it. It was not until the African American Memorial Foundation and the District approached the

Lodge in the mid 1990s with funds that it did anything. What the Lodge did was to attach plywood over the notice of condemnation and to the front and back of the dilapidated structure, then paint it. To this day, the dilapidated structure remains underneath. Each day and night the members of the Lodge walk past this dilapidated house and do nothing more than to look at it when they go to their lodge from their parking lot. The house is nothing more than a rat hotel and a welcome to vagrants. There also was a vagrant who would climb over the fence and use it as a homeless structure. Although the Lodge could not develop or build a new structure because it is too narrow, they would not rehabilitate the existing structure. They sit on the property without selling it, improving it, or doing anything with it. They sit on it forever. This shows the Lodge's arrogance that they don't care what they do and they don't answer to anybody.

Fourth, the zoning variance and special exception should not be granted because of the Lodge's appearance of arrogance. District of Columbia records reveal that in 1976 the party obtained a special exception and zoning variance to operate a 21-space private parking lot on the site. Instead, the Lodge took upon itself to operate a 29-space parking lot at the site. Furthermore, the Lodge's authority to utilize this site expired ten years ago, but yet, they continue to use the site as a parking lot. So in other words, they ask for and receive a variance, let it expire, then act as though they can get another variance whenever they please. Even now, instead of waiting until they receive a variance from the District, the Lodge has already paved over the back half of the lot in question with parking spaces. Another way, the Lodge exhibits its arrogance is that the Metro subway station, U Street-Cardozo station Tenth Street exit is adjacent to the Lodge but is seldom, if ever, used by the Lodge members to attend their meetings. Instead, they would prefer to take up and use residential space every night of the week in order to attend their private meetings and functions.

Fifth, congestion is likely to become a big problem in the alley that runs from the Lodge (at Tenth and U Streets, NW) to the parking lot if the special exception is granted. This alley is also used by the residents (who reside in the 1900 blocks of Tenth and Eleventh Streets, NW) who use it to access their homes so that they can park in their back yards. Although the lot is currently enclosed with a low chain link gate approximately three and one-half to four feet high, it is likely to be removed so that Lodge members can use the alley as a thoroughfare to drive to the parking lot. The alley is very narrow and only allows one car to pass in one direction at a time. The alley is too narrow and not designed for this type of traffic. If the chain link fence is removed to create a new entrance/exit to the parking lot, then there is likely to be a backlog of cars lined up in the alley attempting to access the parking lot. Residents who use the alley will be unnecessarily inconvenienced by this increased traffic and will have to wait to access or leave their properties until the members are able to enter the parking lot and find parking spaces.

Currently, when a Lodge member is unloading food from their cars to take to the Lodge, many times he parks at the U Street entrance of the alley to take the food inside the lodge. This prohibits residents who live on either side of the alley from accessing their homes from the alley.

Sixth, litter is a problem in the neighborhood, especially between the Lodge and the Lodge's parking lot on the 1900 block of Tenth Street, NW. Currently there are no trashcans in the Lodge's parking lot or anywhere near to it. The closest trash cans are the two that are irregularly maintained by the Metro Transit Authority on the plaza of the 10th and U Street entrance of the U Street – Cardozo metro station. Debris tends to collect on the sidewalk in front of the homes that are located between the Lodge and parking lot. With the expanded parking lot, there will be more pedestrian traffic which will exacerbate the litter problem.

In addition to the litter on the Tenth Street side, litter poses a big problem to the alley that connects the parking lot with the Masonic Lodge. At the end of the alley right outside the gate that closes off the Lodge's parking lot, is a pile of trash that has been there for months. There are Lodge members who climb over the gate and walk through the alley from the parking lot to get to the Lodge. I have never seen any of them or the Lodge's parking attendant remove this debris. This trash and debris attracts rodents and other undesirables and poses a health hazard to the residents who live in the houses nearby. I do not believe that if the Lodge is allowed to extend their parking lot that they will diligently keep trash or other debris away or acquire trash cans on their parking lot to dispose of the litter.

Another reason why I object to the expansion of the Lodge's parking lot is the increase in noise it will create. After Lodge meetings, usually around 11:00 p.m., when the members are walking to their cars, they congregate together to talk usually on the sidewalk in front of my home and the other homes on my block. Although, it is reasonable to expect to hear noise outside as a city dweller, to hear noise and people's conversations coming from outside every night at bed time is unreasonable.

① indifference to community

Last, the party does not exhibit any civic interest in our particular neighborhood. To my knowledge, the Lodge has not even made an effort to ask how the residents of the neighborhood who live next to the Lodge and parking lot feel about expanding the parking lot. ② arrogance

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Please enter this letter into the record as an objection to the Lodge's request for a special exception and zoning variance to continue using their property as a parking lot.

Sincerely,

Judy McLaughlin
Resident