# 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

October 10, 2002

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

RE: 1902 and 1906 Vermont Avenue
BZA Application No. 16938

BZA
Case No. 16938
Exhibit No. 19

Dear Mr. Griffis:

At the regularly scheduled meeting of ANC 1B (notice of which was properly given) on September 5, 2002, at which a quorum (seven members required) of nine members was present, the members of ANC 1B voted **unanimously to oppose** the special exceptions and variances requested by the Prince Hall Grand Lodge for an accessory parking lot to be located at the premises located at 1902 and 1906 Vermont Avenue, NW, as detailed in BZA Application 16938.

As the BZA is aware, this applicant previously applied for a special exception/variance for an accessory parking lot at 1906 Vermont Avenue (BZA Application No. 16901) on a vacant parcel of residentially zoned property. Concerned members of the community that opposed a parking lot on this residentially zoned property discovered in their research that the accessory parking lot operated by the applicant at 1902 Vermont Avenue did not have a certificate of occupancy and was illegally being used as a parking lot. That illegal use continues – without any authority from the District of Columbia Government – to today. When the applicant was informed that members of the community (and the undersigned Chairman of ANC 1B and also Single Member District Commissioner for the area) intended to urge the city to close down the illegal parking lot, the applicant filed a separate application for a special exception/variance for the property at 1902 Vermont Avenue. The Office of Planning recommended that the two applications be combined. Over the objection of the ANC and members of the community, the applicant withdrew these two prior applications. The applicant is now before the BZA with this combined application, Application No. 16938.

At the ANC hearing on September 5, a representative of the applicant appeared, but declined to speak. Several members of the community appeared to speak in opposition to the application.

There were several issues of concern raised by members of the community. Concern was

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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. Further, it was suggested that there were several parking lots in the community (but located more appropriately in commercially zoned areas) approximately the same distance from the applicant's facility at 1000 U Street, which could provide parking for members of the applicant, thereby making this accessory parking lot in a residential neighborhood unnecessary.

In addition, it was noted that the applicant purchased the two lots that comprise the property at 1906 Vermont Avenue 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 at the premises located at 1902 Vermont Avenue, and has done so with impunity for years. 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). Members of the Commission and the community voiced strong opinion that the applicant should not now be rewarded for operating illegally by flaunting the zoning regulations of the District of Columbia.

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 well as of members of the community that had contacted me to express their opposition but were unable to attend the meeting..

As the position of the ANC is entitled to great weight, **we ask that you deny** the application for a special exception/variance for an accessory parking lot at 1902 and 1906 Vermont Avenue, Application No. 16938. If you should have any questions, you may contact me on 202-246-1878.

Sincerely,

Glenn J. Melcher
Chairman

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# FACSIMILE

October 23, 2002

To: Geoffrey Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
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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. 16938