GOVI MENT OF THE DISTRICT OF CO IBIA

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E

Representing the communities of Burleith, Georgetown and Hillandale
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January 15, 2003

Geoffrey Griffis, Chair
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 Fourth Street, NW
Suite 210 - S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Application No. 16971, Harry Belin, Evermay Society, 1623 28th St, NW

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board:

On January 7, 2003, ANC 2E held its regularly scheduled public meeting which was properly noticed and at which all seven commissioners were present, constituting a quorum. The above-referenced application was on the agenda and after representatives of the applicant gave a thorough presentation of the proposed plans for the use of the property, comments were offered by neighbors who identified themselves as living in close proximity to Evermay.

While some neighbors express no objection to the intended purpose of the applicant to establish a center for non-profit organizations at Evermay, all neighbors in their communications with ANC 2E object to the scope of the applicant's plan and the presumed intent to make Evermay into a conference center and venue for large social events. ANC 2E agrees with the contention of the neighbors that such activities as proposed would generate unacceptable levels of noise, traffic, parking problems and congestion, imposing a negative impact on the residential neighborhood. For example, neighbors point to the already considerable traffic on 28th Street generated by commuters and others cutting through Georgetown.

Some neighbors express the belief that the applicant's request for a zoning variance is an excuse to turn Evermay into a commercial venture. ANC 2E believes that the application is unclear as to the true purpose and dominant use of the property. Is Everymay to be a residence, a location providing office space to nascent nonprofit groups, or a venue for weddings, corporate parties, and other commercial ventures? The attention given to the latter – and the number of events proposed -- suggest that the request to operate Evermay under the auspices of a nonprofit organization is subservient to the principal activity of charging fees for events to support the maintenance of the estate.

The commission shares the annoyance and disapproval of the neighbors on learning that the numerous events which have for some time taken place at Evermay were unpermitted and illegal.

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Case No. 16971
Exhibit No. 26

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16971
EXHIBIT NO.26

In fact, it was brought to the Commission's attention that the availability of Evermay for rental is currently advertised on a number of web sites promoting catering services and locations for social events. Neighbors described an unacceptable level of noise and congestion from these events already occurring on the property. The issue was also raised with concern about security and safety in the neighborhood when, as apparently has happened, the facilities at Evermay might be rented to representatives of financial institutions who are the targets of demonstrators during meetings of the World Bank.

Additional concerns address the proposal by the applicant to allow the nonprofit organization to use Everymay to "help meet the significant costs" of preserving the buildings and grounds, "including its open space area, gardens and historic features." One neighbor commented that the economic hardship expressed in the application would be forced onto the residents through the inconvenience and disruption presented by the numerous money-raising events the application proposes. Furthermore, the applicant's proposal to convert an existing open garden area into a parking lot appears to run counter to the expressed intention to preserve the grounds at Evermay.

After the discussion, ANC 2E unanimously approved the following motion:

> While ANC 2E does not object to allowing a nonprofit organization to use the property at Evermay, ANC 2E does not support the application of the Evermay Society because: 1) the request to allow the Evermay Society use of the property for the purposes of the nonprofit organization appear to be secondary to the principal activity of charging fees for events to support the maintenance of the estate; and 2) the schedule of events as outlined by the applicant would generate unacceptable levels of noise, traffic, parking problems and congestion, imposing a negative impact on the peace and quiet of the residential neighborhood.

We trust our letter will be part of the Board of Zoning Adjustment record for the January 28, 2003 hearing and be given the great weight to which it is entitled.

Sincerely,

Tom Birch

Tom Birch
Chair, ANC 2E