ORIGINAL LETTER W/ SIGNORS IDENTIFIED

April 21, 2003

Mr. Geoff Griffis, Chairman
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: BZA Case 16974 - Tudor Place Application for a Special Exception

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The undersigned are members of the Advisory Committee of the Citizens Association of Georgetown and a number of us have served on the CAG Board. Like the Advisory Neighborhood Commission which supported the Tudor Place application of Special Exception unanimously after a duly noticed public meeting at which the application was discussed at length, we are also in full support of the Tudor Place application without conditions.

We believe the letter dated April 15, 2003 signed by Ms. Barbara Zartman on behalf of the Association a) is fundamentally flawed in its premise of a "a single transparent and easily understood standard" by which Tudor Place should be judged, b) is truly regrettable in its conclusion of the supporting the Tudor Place application with specific provisos and c) does not represent the opinion of the membership of the Citizens Association of Georgetown. It is also very unfortunate in its implication that that Tudor Place has not worked with its neighbors or was sensitive to the community at large and that Tudor Place will schedule rentals regardless of community sentiments. On the contrary we know this not to be the case.

The Tudor Place application has never been noticed at a meeting of the Association, discussed at a meeting nor has a vote been taken by the Association. Indeed, the issue was not mentioned at the CAG membership meeting held on April 14, one day before the BZA hearing and just after the CAG Board meeting. Leslie Buhler was even present at the meeting to discuss an upcoming neighborhood reception. The bylaws also require the Board to report its actions to the membership at the next regular meeting and yet the Board failed to do so at the meeting on April 14.

Furthermore, the letter is precipitous in that prior to April 9, 2003, CAG never met with Tudor Place representatives despite repeated invitations from its director, Leslie Buhler, to Ms. Zartman beginning last fall. The original BZA hearing on this case was scheduled on February 18, 2003 and was postponed due to the tremendous snow storm. Why was there no prior contact, no invitation to Tudor Place to present its case at several of the membership meetings which have transpired and why did the CAG Board feel pressed to make this eleventh hour decision to testify before a DC regulatory body without consulting or informing the membership?

And as much as it pains us to say so, we think the following key sentence in the letter is simply disingenuous and alarmist:

'We bring to the BZA's attention our concern that [illegible]ts of this portion of

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Georgetown are impacted by the collective functions of the Great Houses. If extended to other Great Houses, for example, the standards in the current order - 10 very large evening events, permissible thrice monthly - would make for a very different quality of life in Georgetown. Consider three big June weddings at Tudor, at Evermay, at Dumbarton House, at Dumbarton Oaks, and at Halcyon House Consider unlimited 200 - person events occurring at several Great Houses simultaneously, and the collective burden this would place on the community."

We all know that this can never happen and will never happen. Paragraph 7 of Tudor Place's Application specifically limits rental functions for the purpose of weddings to less than 75 guests. "Very large evening events" are limited to two rental functions per year in the application.

In first page of her letter Ms. Zartman states that all of the 10 large events contained in the Tudor Place application "need have no connection with Tudor Place." This is simply incorrect. Only two are allowed to be rental events; any other non-rental events will be directly connected with Tudor Place; if CAG was confused on this a simple call to Leslie Buhler would have clarified the matter.

In an attempt to set "a single transparent and easily understood standard" is a fundamentally flawed premise. The letter refers to the "Great Houses" of Georgetown as if to place them all on the same level and incorporates references to several: Tudor Place, Dumbarton Oaks, Dumbarton House, Halcyon House and Everymay. These properties couldn't be more different in their current status, operations and future prospects. Let's have a look:

1. Tudor Place is without question the most significant 19th century house in Washington DC. It has been in the hands of the family of original builders the Peter family for most of its almost 200 years and its collections are items which belonged to the Peter family. In 1978 Armistead Peter gave an open space Scenic easement to the Secretary of the Interior, the first such easement of its kind (the NPS no longer accepts easements), and had already set up a foundation, the Carostead Foundation (named after his first wife Caroline and himself) to take care of the property. This foundation became what is known to us today as the Tudor Place Foundation which operates as a 501(c)3 foundation regulated by the IRS. Mr. Peter left two trust funds to provide for the upkeep. These trusts are insufficient to maintain such a high quality and original structure and such a fragile and original collection. It is certainly not sufficient to develop educational programs and exhibitions which were also a part of Mr. Peter's intentions.

2. Dumbarton Oaks, the largest property, is essentially an early 20th century house with a world class 20th century garden built by Mildred and Robert Bliss and donated by them to Harvard University for the purpose of housing research centers for Harvard scholars in the areas of Byzantine and Pre-Columbian studies, and the history of landscape architecture. Their public events are scholarly lectures and symposia in those three areas of study, and music concerts by subscription. Their Byzantine and Pre-Columbian Collections are open to the public and attract a modest attendance and the gardens attract a manageable, seasonal flow of visitors. Contrary to the implication in Ms. Zartman's footnote, there have never been weddings at Dumbarton Oaks, (rumor

has it there was one in the 70's) and they have not held any other kind of public event for over ten years. They clearly state that the facilities of Dumbarton Oaks are not available for the activities of outside groups and individuals (i.e. weddings). As a part of Harvard University, (with the largest endowment of any university anywhere) and with Harvard's considerable resources Dumbarton Oaks does not need to raise funds to a support their research centers or to maintain their gardens although they do charge admission to the gardens. It is operated as a non profit institutions but as far as I know there is no scenic, open space easement on the property. Dumbarton Oaks has a Permanent Special Exception from the BZA.

3. Evermay is the second largest of the five properties. It is privately owned by the Belin family who have lived in it for almost a century. It was considerably although skillfully renovated, improved and added to over the course of their ownership especially in the development of the fabulous garden. It is not open to the public or operated as an educational museum. It is located approximately 1/3 of a mile from Tudor Place, the same distance from Tudor Place as, say, the Convent of the Visitation. It is rented out for events, and the owners hold charity events at no cost. Events held there do not impact the residents of the same portion of Georgetown as Tudor Place. It is not a non profit institution and as far as I know there is no scenic, open space easement on the property.

4. Dumbarton House, originally built around 1800, is owned by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. It operates as the Society's Headquarters, and as a house museum of the Federal period. The current position of the house is not original (it was originally situated to the east on what is now the Q Street roadway). the house was heavily restored by Fiske Kimball and Horace Peaslee around 1930. A significant addition (mostly underground) was built in 1991 to hold public programs and rental events and it benefited from a gift by Mary Belin of Evermay of the lot of open space at the eastern end of the property. I am unfamiliar with the extent of the events although if there is a problem I am sure we would all know about it. This house is located approximately 1/3 of a mile from Tudor Place. It is operated as a non profit institution but as far as I know there is no scenic, open space easement on the property except perhaps on the donated Belin portion. Dumbarton House already has a Permanent Special Exception from the BZA.

5. Halcyon House, originally the home of Benjamin Stoddert, is a privately owned house. It is not open to the public, does not operate as a museum or hold public programs. It is rented out for events, and the owners hold charity events at no cost. While the exterior of the original Georgian house is still extant, the interior was beautifully renovated in the period style in the late 20th century. It is not located near Tudor Place. It is not a non-profit institution and as far as I know there is no scenic, open space easement on the property.

We feel it important to define and describe each of these "Great Houses" to make one point that each is unique and of all of them Tudor Place is undeniably in a class of its own. It is the only one of the Federal houses to be designed by an architect, Dr. William Thornton who also designed Octagon House and the US Capitol. It is the only one of these properties to be protected by a scenic open space easement. It is the only one of these properties with its original structure and building fabric still intact. It is the only one of these properties operating under specific guidelines and a foundation

established by the descendants of the original builder. It is the only one of these properties that houses a collection comprised of paintings. furniture, books, letters and clothes that belonged to a single family that included the first President of the United States. It is the only one of these houses whose current expressed purpose is to educate the public about the Georgetown family and the role they played in American history.

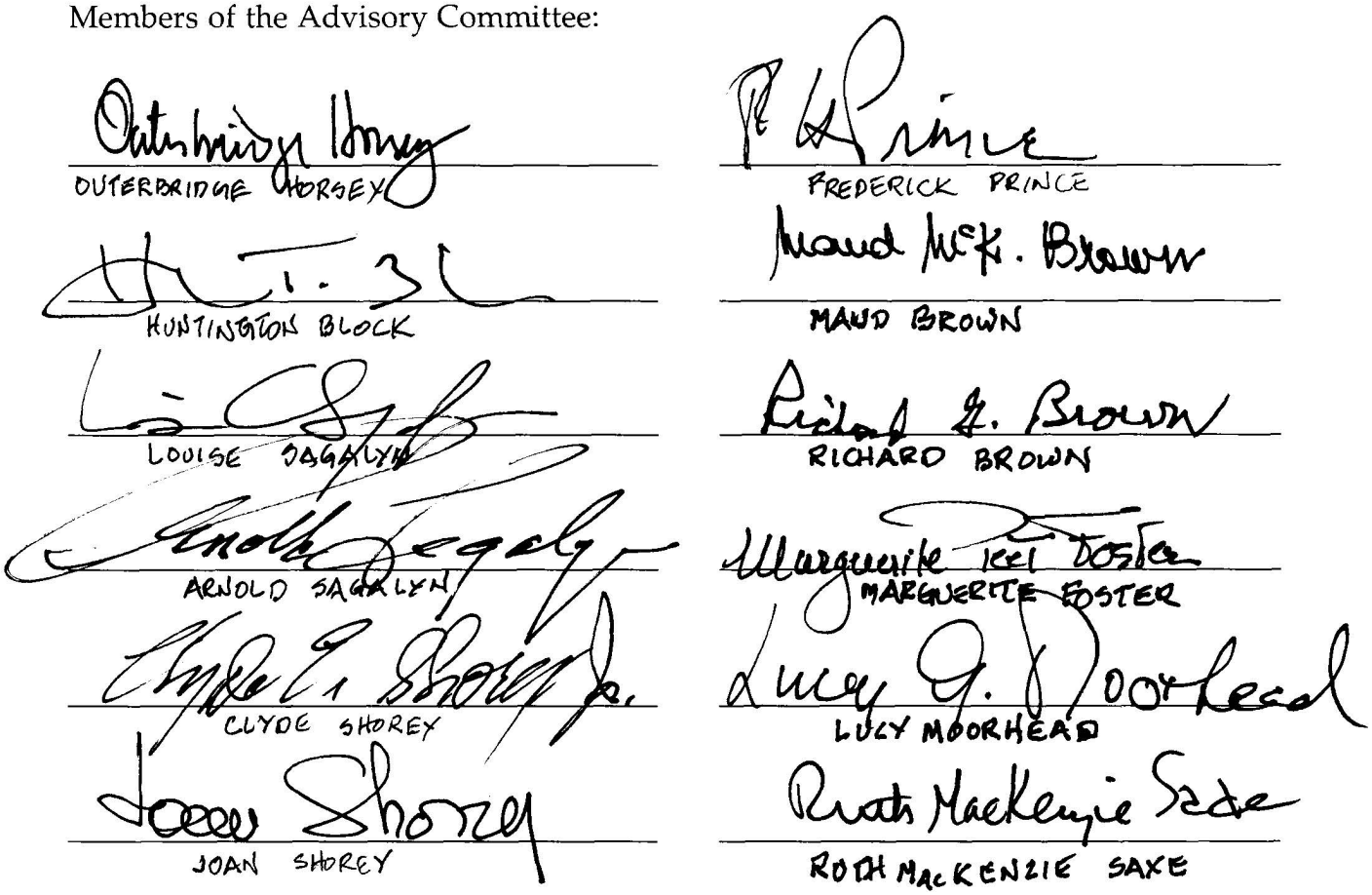
In short, Tudor Place is unique in Georgetown, in Washington and probably in the United Sates for its incredible combination of a rich heritage, the highest quality of architecture, preserved open space in a dense urban environment and and educational purpose benefiting the public. We believe that the CAG Board should be more sensitive to the unique stature of Tudor Place and more discriminating in its own honorable pursuit to protect the interest of community residents.

In summary we request that at a minimum the BZA regard the April 15, 2003 CAG letter as simply the opinion of the CAG Board and not that of the membership. We respectfully also request that the BZA evaluate this application in the context of Tudor Place's unique stature in the neighborhood and that it accept and follow the publicly debated and unanimous Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E approval of the application without conditions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Members of the Advisory Committee:



TERENCE W. COLLINS

JOHN HEDDEN

JOHN MACOMBER