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637 Acker Pl, NE
Washington, DC 20002
October 29, 2003

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001

Regarding BZA case 17043; appeal to be heard November 4.

As a member of the community, I am writing in support of the appeal by the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association. The Board should rescind Certificates of Occupancy 51289 and 51290, which were improperly granted by the Zoning Administrator. The Board should reduce the number of beds allowed at the Capitol Hill Healthcare Group and the Capitol Hill Community Hospital, since BZA determined in 1999 that the facility required 276 parking spaces to avoid a negative impact on the community, and there are now a maximum of 176 spaces. Alternatively, the Board should amend the Certificates to require the Capitol Hill Group (CHG) or its successors to provide 176 parking spaces. If CHG cannot provide 176 spaces, BZA should correspondingly reduce the number of beds permitted.

BZA should rescind Certificates 51289 and 51290 because the Zoning Administrator does not have the authority to reduce the number parking spaces that CHG must provide. The zoning regulations delegate authority in this case strictly to the BZA, so it should rescind these Certificates.

The Board should not reduce the amount of parking that CHG is required to provide because that would have a significant adverse impact on the neighborhood. On-street parking is already strained to capacity. If the parking requirement for Capitol Hill Group is reduced, the facility's employees and visitors will further compete with the community for scarce on-street parking. Given that the facility operates 24 hours a day, staff will continue to park on the street during hours not covered by the residential parking permit program. This would exacerbate the personal safety hazard for those forced to walk long distances from their cars to their homes at night. **When coming home late at night, I have often had to park as far as three blocks from home. If the parking requirement for CHG is reduced, the parking problem in the neighborhood will become untenable.**

In 1991, BZA required 176 parking spaces for 130 beds and 250 employees at CHG. In 1999, when CHG wanted to expand to 162 beds and 340 employees, BZA required it to provide 276 parking spaces. Today, CHG has 177 beds and over 300 employees, yet the Zoning Administrator has improperly agreed to reduce the number of required parking spaces to just 85. There is no evidence of any change in the scale of operations at CHG's facility. The owners appear to have sought the new Certificate of Occupancy for the sole purpose of reducing parking requirements.

CHG may claim that the condition of the underground parking garage is such that it is not feasible to provide 176 spaces. CHG was already required to renovate the garage and provide those spaces in BZA's 1999 order (although CHG did not comply with that order). If there was any question about the condition of the underground garage, CHG should not have sold off its aboveground parking lot in 2001, thus losing 100 additional parking spaces.

Any claims by CHG that it cannot correct the deficiencies in the underground garage in order to provide 176 spaces should be met with extreme skepticism, as CHG's statements are not trustworthy.

BZA
Case No. 17043
Exhibit No. 82

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17043
EXHIBIT NO. 82

For example, CHG previously owned an abandoned apartment building (known as The Louise) at 214 7th Street, NE, across the street from the hospital. For years, CHG engaged in demolition by neglect, and eventually applied for a formal demolition permit (ironically claiming that it needed to use the land The Louise stood on for additional parking spaces). CHG argued that it was not feasible to renovate the building. However, CHG had no grounds for demolition, and was denied the demolition permit. CHG eventually sold the property to the Holladay Corporation, which rehabilitated The Louise, and sold it for approximately $900,000. This building, which CHG argued could not be saved, was featured on the Renovator's House Tour in October 2003, and the Capitol Hill Historical Society is nominating The Louise for a Mayor's Award for Excellence in Design (see enclosed articles). The point is that CHG falsely claimed that it was not feasible to renovate the Louise. CHG defines what is feasible in terms of what is in its short-term financial interest, and not what is actually possible or practical or in the community's interest.

In addition, CHG Hill Group has a history of violating BZA orders, and acting in bad faith with the community. For example,

- For the entire period from 1991 to 1999, CHG failed to provide the 176 off-street spaces required under Order 15542.

- The Zoning Administrator's representative determined during an inspection in 2000 that CHG had not made the underground parking garage fully usable. Therefore, CHG was not in compliance with BZA Order No. 16407 requiring it to provide 276 parking spaces.

- CHG's sale of the square 865 surface parking on 7th St. violated the requirement to maintain 276 parking spaces set forth in Order No. 16407. CHG was issued a Notice of Infraction in 2002 for failure to provide the number of parking spaces required under BZA Order No. 16407.

To remedy this situation, the BZA should take the following steps:

1) Revoke the Certificates of Occupancy 51289 and 51290 because the Zoning Administrator issued them without authority and without input from BZA or the community.

2) Consider reducing the number of allowable beds, since CHG cannot comply with BZA's 1999 order to provide 276 beds. In the alternative, BZA should determine if the deficiencies in the underground garage have been corrected, and whether there are 176 usable parking spaces that are currently available. If there are, BZA should require Capitol Hill Group to provide all 176 parking spaces. If less than 176 off-street parking spaces are in useable condition, then the Board should reduce the number of beds permitted at the facility accordingly. Any increase in beds in the future should be contingent on correcting the deficiencies in the underground garage and providing 176 parking spaces.

3) Any future application to reduce the parking requirements or increase the number of beds should be considered through a public process by the BZA, with opportunity for discussion of the adverse impact that the change will have on the surrounding residential area.

Sincerely

William Silagi

William Silagi

To list an event in this calendar, please e-mail ccncalendar@yahoo.com.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Barracks Row Festival. Oct. 4, 10 to 6. A ribbon-cutting ceremony, music, and food will be offered to celebrate the beautification efforts. Celebrate with city officials and your neighbors as we welcome this newest hot spot (8th St. SE between F and G Sts.).

National Book Festival on the National Mall. Oct. 4, 10 to 5. Featuring more than 80 award-winning and nationally known authors, illustrators, poets, and storytellers to delight you with their readings and performances. www.loc.gov. (Between 7th and 14th Sts. NW).

DC Open House Weekend. Oct. 4-5. Cultural Tourism DC hosts this annual event of walking tours and special activities at the museums, including the new City Museum. Visit www.culturaltourismdc.org for a full schedule of events around town.

1st Annual CHGM Benefit Golf Tournament, Monday, Oct. 27. Spend a beautiful fall afternoon playing golf at Tantallon County Club and do good at the same time. Scramble Format, $150 per person, $600 team of four, includes cart, lunch and dinner.Call Jane Rutherford at Capitol Hill Group Ministry 202.544.0631 for entry information.

Blessing of the Animals. Oct. 4 at 1. Honor the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi by bringing your companion animals to the west steps for a brief liturgy and sprinkling of the pets with water for blessing. www.cathedral.org/cathedral. Washington National Cathedral (Massachusetts and Wisconsin Aves. NW).

2nd Annual Young Filmmakers Program Film Festival. Oct. 4, 12 to 2. Heroes and Hope's Young Filmmakers Program, along with Capitol Hill Computer Corner, teamed up 8-13 year olds to create, script, shoot and edit the short documentaries. Reservations, 301.320.7701. Lincoln Theatre (1215 U St. NW).

Walk to School Day. Oct. 8 at 7:30. Capitol Hill Cluster School parents and kids will meet at Lincoln Park in the morning to join in advocating the effort to bring safety to communities by walking. Pre-walk festivities at the park. (11th and East Capitol Streets.)

Capitol Hill Garden Club Bulb Sales. Oct. 11, 18, 25, 8 to 4. A hint for gardeners looking for something special - those who shop earliest in the fall have the best selection of bulbs from which to choose. Bulb prices range widely, with the smallest bulbs costing the least. The more you buy, the



THE LOUISE, A RESTORED BOARDING HOUSE AT 7TH AND MASS. AVE., IS ON THE THIRD ANNUAL RENOVATOR'S HOUSE TOUR WHICH WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18 FROM 10:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M. TICKETS, WHICH ARE $20.00, ARE AVAILABLE AT RANDOLPH CREE (325 7TH STREET, SE) AND TROVER BOOKS (221 PENNSYLVANIA AVE., SE). FOR CREDIT CARD PURCHASES BY PHONE, CONTACT ANDREA RYAN AT 544-5894. FOR GENERAL INFORMATION, CALL JOHN BURST AT 547-3336. SEE PAGE 82 FOR MORE DETAILS.



The Old Naval Hospital - Progress!

By Rob Nevitt

How many years have many of us wondered whether 921 Pennsylvania Ave. had a future, except as a crumbling fixture where occasional meetings took place in frigid or tropical conditions? There is a history of several groups working to give the edifice another direction, notably the Friends of the Old Naval Hospital. With them, the CHRS funded a study by the Urban Land Institute to try to give definite shape and hard numbers to what that direction might be. Here is a brief update on progress.

Until recently, CHRS had not endorsed any particular plan for the building, except the general proposition that it should be restored and be put to community use. At a Members Meeting in 2002 we invited any party to present whatever plans they had to carry out those general goals. Following that, the board resolved (see the issue of the CHRS *NEWS*) to support the
plans of the Old Naval Hospital Foundation (ONHF) for what they call "the Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital." Their plans for the site include a new and expanded home for the overcrowded Southeast Branch Library, after-school homework and Internet access programs for neighborhood kids, meeting and performance space for community groups, and office space for community organizations.

The city has published a "Request for Proposals for the Lease of the Old Naval Hospital." Proposals are due on December 1 and will be evaluated by a review board, which will include a member of the community. They will make recommendations to the Office of Property Management, which in turn will make a recommendation to the Mayor.

The ONHF has announced that Thomas J. Regan, Jr., is preparing the Foundation's response to the RFP, which is news of considerable magnitude. Mr. Regan has a graduate degree in engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has been project director for a long list of landmark developments here and overseas. It is the quality of the list that stands out. Of particular interest, he was executive director of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, and managed development of the new City Museum and the U. S. Navy Memorial & Visitors Center. These are projects requiring sensitivity to the site's historic fabric. They are also of large scale. Closer in size to the ONH project, he was project manager for the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, the Marriott Family Library at the Bullis School in Potomac, and the Fillmore School renovation for the Corcoran College of Art and Design.

We support the Old Naval Hospital Foundation's concept and plans. There is still a competition process and nothing is a given, but we think they have a definite advantage with the addition of Mr. Regan to their team. We will keep the membership posted as events unfold and plans come to fruition.

CHRS Nominates The Louise Project for Award

Photo by Nancy Metzger



The Capitol Hill Restoration Society has decided to nominate the restoration of the Louise Apartment House at 7th and Constitution, N.E. for a Mayor's Award in the category of Excellence in Design (restoration and rehabilitation). For over 20 years the building stood abandoned in the middle of a parking lot across from the Capitol Hill Hospital. Several times the owners requested demolition permits – the nearly-roofless building had shaky walls and a resident population of rats. As part of the town house development proposed by Holladay Corporation for the site, the Louise was rehabilitated and now stands as an anchor in the row of surrounding three-story houses. In its new life, the Louise is a single-family residence with a basement apartment, an interior garage and a roof deck—and a reminder that derelict buildings can have a new life. It sold for in the neighborhood of $900,000.



Photo by Roxanne Walker