COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

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September 21, 2004

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

RE: Case No. 17055 (Knollwood)

Dear Mr. Griffis:

I am writing to ask that the Board of Zoning Adjustment deny the application of the Army Distaff Foundation, Inc. and that you uphold the decision of the BZA in 1991 that created a 25 year moratorium on major structural additions at Knollwood.

When the BZA first allowed the Army Distaff Foundation to build its facility ("Knollwood") in 1959, it did so because the facility would be confined to the center of the property. Over the years Knollwood has continued to expand, and always where it most affects neighbors. In order to secure support for its 1991 major expansion, Knollwood promised a moratorium on further expansion until 2016. Perhaps this was a poor business decision given Knollwood's present desire, but that was the deal.

As you know from comments I have submitted in other special exception cases, I find these matters to be vexing because often they are portrayed *ad hominum* – as if the issue is about the quality of the institution itself. I have no doubt that expanding the number of independent living units and providing for dementia-impaired residents is worthy. But that is not the issue.

Minimizing adverse impacts to adjacent property owners, and ensuring integrity to the zoning process are both at issue. It is especially this latter point that I find most troubling. Special exception institutions expand incrementally, often gaining each approval (as in this case) by saying "this is it," and then coming back for more. If the Board sanctions this process, then neighbors will become less willing to seek compromise and will no longer trust any proposal as final. No good comes from such distrust.

ANC 3/4G has conditioned its approval on Knollwood reaching a mutually acceptable agreement with its neighboring community. If that is to have a chance, then you must deny the application at this time.

Sincerely,

Phil Mendelson

PM/ms

BZA
Case No. 17055
Exhibit No. 136

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17055
EXHIBIT NO. 136