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Rec'd. 9.30.03 At the Public Hearing BZA

September 29, 2003

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

Re: Meridian International Center
Application #17070

Dear Chairman Griffis:

As a resident owner of a condominium townhouse located at 1602B Belmont Street, NW, directly across the street from the Meridian International Center, it is my pleasure to submit these comments in support of Meridian's application (#17070), provided that certain conditions, as detailed below, are met.

First, on behalf of all of us who petitioned the Board of Zoning Adjustment, we thank you for not granting Meridian's earlier modification of conditions request without a public hearing and allowing all parties the opportunity to further address the issues and effects of the proposed development in our neighborhood.

The current Order (No. 5802) requires Meridian to maintain 38 off-street parking spaces on a lot with two openings. Modifying it as requested by the applicant will result in an undue burden on the neighborhood. In order to lessen this burden, both Meridian and the proposed developer of the site, Crescent Place LLC, met with neighborhood representatives over the past 3 months to address our issues and concerns. After many meetings, much thought and research, and negotiation, the involved parties have entered into two Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), which our local ANC has submitted to the BZA for consideration. It is only with the inclusion of the entire MOU with Meridian, and those parts in the Crescent Place MOU relevant to parking (as detailed below), do I support the application currently before you.

Parking Requirements Must be Included in the Order

Before addressing the MOU's, there is a point in the application that is confusing. In its application, Meridian writes that the surface parking lot would be replaced with "two levels of an underground garage in new development". We have been told by the developer on many occasions, and it is contained in the Crescent Place MOU, that there will be three levels of underground parking.

Two levels of parking would not be sufficient to meet the obligations that Meridian and Crescent

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Place LLC have agreed to with the ANC. In its application, Meridian has stated that it will own 39 parking spaces in the new development for its use. With approximately 30 spaces per floor, in order to meet this requirement, two floors of underground parking would have to be built. But the developer has agreed to provide 89 parking spaces, which would necessitate the building of three floors of parking.

As I have detailed in my letter to you of July 28th, (see attachment) parking in the neighborhood is extremely limited, and with the many events and activities that occur at Meridian and the effects of the new development, it is essential that the conditions that both Meridian and Crescent Place have agreed to, including requiring the construction of 89 parking places on three levels, be incorporated in any modified Order.

Meridian MOU Must be Incorporated into Zoning Order

As described below, in the MOU's with Meridian and Crescent Place, we have sought to mitigate the effects on our neighborhood of the requested modification. Including them in the zoning order are necessary to help alleviate the burden of the new development.

The current order requires Meridian to have 38 parking spaces on its parking lot. But, during construction, those spaces will be lost. Therefore, in the MOU, Meridian has agreed to obtain access to 40 parking spots in the neighborhood for its use at all times. Since these spaces are over two blocks away and not easily accessible or known to its guests, Meridian has agreed to direct those attending events at its property to the parking areas and use valet parking attendants to park cars.

As it employs valet parking services to accommodate its employees, guests and visitors, Meridian has agreed in the MOU to park the cars on its lots and other off-site locations and make every effort to ensure that valet attendants comply with current valet parking regulations. Further, in order to minimize back-ups, they have agreed to utilize appropriate attendant staffing levels and to efficiently park cars on its other parking lot by utilizing a parking attendant in this lot.

Once construction is complete and Meridian begins to utilize the new underground parking spaces, access to those spaces will no longer be easy. Currently, the ground level spaces are easily accessible through two openings for entry and exit. In the future, the parking spaces will be underground and not be seen from the road and access will be through one gated underground entrance. Cars will less likely want to park in this lot, and to gain entrance, the gate will have to be opened.

In order to try to address these new challenges in our neighborhood, Meridian has agreed to station an attendant at the gate during its events. Even with the attendant, we know that traffic will back up on our narrow one way streets. Usually for Meridian's events, cars arrive all at the same time, while we currently experience difficulties now, they will only be compounded in the future as cars will have to be directed to the underground parking entrance, guests will have to be greeted by the attendant, and the gate will have to be opened for each car.

Since Meridian knows that its events and activities place a burden on the neighborhood because of noise, valet parking services, delivery trucks, and increased parked cars on our streets, they have agreed to allow its neighbors to park their cars in their parking lot at night when they are not conducting events. This has somewhat relieved the parking situation at night since about 10-20 cars take advantage of this lot each night. But, once construction begins on the lot, that privilege and those spaces will be gone. Additionally, Meridian has indicated to us that we will not have access to their underground spaces once they are built.

In order to help alleviate parking problems in the future, which as stated above will only get worse by the proposed development, Meridian has agreed to support the classification of 65 percent of the spaces on the streets that border its property (Belmont Street and Crescent Place) as "residential parking". This will add approximately 34 more residential parking spaces in our neighborhood.

Construction Effects

The actual construction of the new 30-unit housing and underground parking project will have additional direct impacts on our neighborhood, particularly as it relates to parking. Therefore, we have been meeting with the developer, as well, and have agreed to a separate MOU with them. Many items in that MOU pertain to parking that we would like to see incorporated in the new zoning order for the site.

Construction of the site will result in the loss of 6 parking spaces in front of the site to be used for construction staging. Additionally, parking spaces on the other side of the street may also be temporarily used, and the road will sometimes be blocked for delivery of large materials. The development will also bring in construction workers, and all their cars, not to mention truck traffic as the site is excavated and materials are brought in. In the MOU we have sought to address each of these issues.

It is only because of these MOU's that I and others can support the project. While we know it will not totally mitigate the impact of this project, we realize that property owners have the right to develop their property within proper zoning regulations.

We also realize what we have agreed to are just MOU's, but now in order to help ensure that all parties live up to their responsibilities, we need your assistance by incorporating the Meridian MOU and parking aspects of the Crescent Place MOU into your order for the site. Only if that occurs, that I can support the application.

Thank you very much,

Carl E. Schmid II

Attachment

CARL E. SCHMID II

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July 28, 2003

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

RE: Meridian International

Dear Chairman Griffis:

As a resident owner of a condominium townhouse located at 1602B Belmont Street, NW, directly across the street from the Meridian International Center, I hereby request that the Board of Zoning Adjustment not approve the modification of conditions requested by Meridian without a public hearing and further examination.

It is only recently that the neighborhood learned of the modification request filed by Meridian with your office. Modifying the requirement to maintain 38 off-street parking spaces on a parking lot owned by Meridian on 17th Street NW, as ordered by BZA Order No. 5802, will result in an undue burden on the neighborhood that the BZA should further examine through a public hearing.

Meridian is seeking to temporarily waive the 38 space parking requirement during the 18 month construction of a new condominium housing development that will be built on the land of the existing parking lot. The loss of these parking spaces during the 18 month period will cause a great burden on our residential neighborhood that must be addressed.

The current BZA Order that contains the 38 parking space requirement was dated February 24, 1960. At that time, the Office of Zoning was probably unaware that Meridian would conduct large events for themselves and rent out their facilities to others that bring in sometimes several hundred people and their automobiles. While Meridian has two parking lots-the upper one, with the 38 parking spots and a lower one, with approximately 40 spaces, these lots, when events are conducted at Meridian, fill up and cars are forced to park on our residential streets.

Additionally, in order to park the high volume of cars of those guests attending functions, such as lectures, meetings, weddings, bar mitzvahs, corporate dinners and fundraisers, Meridian employees valet parking services, which back up the narrow one way streets leading up to the two Meridian buildings. Many times the guests are from the diplomatic corps and have chauffeur driven cars that park illegally on our residential streets.

For each of these events, several trucks from catering companies, alcohol distribution companies,

and musical bands also utilize the residential streets and frequently block traffic. Sometimes, these trucks utilize the parking lot as a staging area. During the construction phase and with the building of the new housing on the lot, this area will be lost, which will further result in more traffic blocking the street.

Meridian's employees currently rent out 35 of the parking spaces between the two Meridian lots, while an additional 18 of their employees park on the street.

Parking is already extremely limited in the area, and the temporary loss of these 38 spaces for 18 months will make it even worse. Neighbors are concerned with 1) where Meridian's employees will park and 2) where guests attending Meridian and non-Meridian events will park. Meridian also allowed its neighbors to park in the lot during the evening when it was not conducting events for free, which greatly relieved the parking situation at night. Now, that privilege will be gone.

Also, during construction, the 6 residential parking spaces in front of the development site will be lost and used for construction purposes. Additionally, construction workers will be bringing their own cars into the neighborhood.

We are also concerned that after the site has been developed, and Meridian will have access to now 40 parking spaces in the basement of the new housing development, how Meridian's guests will access the parking spots of the gated parking entrance. Currently, Meridian guests can access the ground level parking spots with ease, without much on the street back up. In the future, accessing the underground spots may cause greater traffic backups on the street.

Since we just learned of this pending development and the evident loss of the parking lot just a few weeks ago, we have raised many of these issues with Meridian and others with the potential development company. [Note: The pending matter before the BZA directly involves Meridian and the loss of the 38 parking spots, but we do have concerns about the construction phase as it relates to truck traffic, truck staging and noise. Other neighbors have concerns with the actual development.] While Meridian has began to address our concerns, we feel more time is needed to resolve the many issues involved so that certainty can be gained and that there be an opportunity for public comment on the many issues involved in this matter. Also, it will provide time for the BZA to adequately review the matter and to examine other zoning issues associated with Meridian.

For the reasons stated above, I request that the BZA not approve the zoning modification requested by Meridian at this time and request that a public hearing be held on the matter.

Thank you very much.

Carl E. Schmid II