NCPC
NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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May 13, 2004

Mr. Geoffrey Griffis
Chairman
District of Columbia, Board of
Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Case No. 17145

Dear Chairman Griffis:

We understand that the District of Columbia Office of Property Management has submitted a variance application to allow public events and a temporary parking lot at the site of the old convention center. The parking lot may be in operation for up to ten years. Since the record on this matter is still open pending the Board of Zoning Adjustment's final decision making on June 8, 2004, I request that this letter be incorporated into the record.

Since the old convention center site is still owned by the District of Columbia and has not been sold to a private developer, any project developed on that site is subject to NCPC's review authority under Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)) and NCPC's in-lieu of zoning approval authority for District projects in the Central Area (40 U.S.C. § 8722(e)). Therefore, it is inconsistent with the District Zoning Regulations (Sections 106.4 and 106.5(c)) for the project to be zoned and we question whether this matter is properly before the BZA.

The applicants should be aware that they are required to submit any project on the site to NCPC. While we hope to see detailed design plans for the project, we would also need to understand the reasons for developing a parking lot as an interim use and, if it is an appropriate use, whether the design provides sufficient landscaping for such a large area of surface parking. We would also look at the impact of the project on the federal property and interests in the area, such as Mt. Vernon Square, the abutting National Park Service park reservation and Massachusetts Avenue, New York Avenue, and 9th Street, NW, all of which are Special Streets under the Comprehensive Plan.

The BZA should also be aware of a covenant applicable to the old convention center site that requires the reopening of the underlying portions of 10th and I Streets, NW. In a Memorandum

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of Agreement signed in 1995, the District agreed to reopen those streets following construction of the new convention center when the debt on the existing convention center is retired. We understand that the BZA has requested that the MOA be entered into the record. If the BZA chooses to make a final decision on this matter, it should require that the project provide for the reopening of 10th and I Streets NW, either as part of the temporary project or immediately upon retirement of the debt.

Finally, I want to correct an assertion previously made by the applicant that NCPC does not oppose the parking lot project. Since the project has not been submitted to NCPC for approval, our Commission has taken no position and any assertion to the contrary is incorrect.

My staff will be seeking a consultation meeting with the Office of Property Management and the Washington Convention Center Authority. In addition, please feel free to contact me or Ms. Christine Saum, Director of the Division of Urban Design and Plans Review, at 202-482-7200 with any questions from BZA or the Office of Zoning staff. I thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP
Executive Director

cc: District of Columbia Office of Property Management
District of Columbia Office of Planning
Washington Convention Center Authority