Board of Zoning Adjustment

Proposed Addition to
An Existing Non-conforming Single Family Dwelling
Detached Structure at 6919 Sixth Street, NW
Case No. 17349

Faith Wheeler
September 13, 2005

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Thank you, Chairman Griffis, for giving me the opportunity to testify before you about this application.

I am Faith Wheeler, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for Single Member District 4B02, in which the property in question lies. I have lived in Takoma for almost 27 years, just a few blocks away from 6919 Sixth Street.

You asked on July 12, 2005 that we focus on how the construction meets the following tests, stated in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, Section 223.2:

a) The light and air available to neighboring properties shall not be unduly affected;
b) The privacy of use and enjoyment of neighboring properties shall not be unduly compromised;
c) The addition, together with the original building, as viewed from the street, alley, and other public way, shall not substantially visually intrude upon the character, scale and pattern of houses along the subject street frontage.

Mr. Taylor's addition does not meet any of these tests.

This addition occupies much of what was the gracefully sloping back yard of the back lot of 6919 6th Street. But rather than nestling into the topography, respectful of the architectural lines and rhythms of the neighboring homes, it towers over the adjacent yards of neighbors and their fences.

It is clearly visible from Cedar Street (perpendicular to Sixth Street), as it protrudes into the space that is back yard for every other house on the 6900 block of Sixth Street.

It is worth noting that the most recent vote of the ANC 4B on this issue opposed Mr. Taylor's addition, 4 – 3. This vote was taken at a Special Meeting on June 11 of this year.

It is important to the residents of Takoma to preserve and respect its uniqueness and not build out to the maximum allowed and beyond. I urge you to reject Mr. Taylor's request for a special exception to build his intrusive addition.

Thank you.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia
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Faith Wheeler
July 12, 2005

Thank you, Chairman Griffis, for giving me the opportunity to testify before you about this application.

I am Faith Wheeler, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for Single Member District 4B02, in which the property in question lies. I have lived in Takoma for 26 years, just a few blocks away from 6919 Sixth Street.

I reiterate my opposition to Mr. Michael Taylor's application for a special exception to permit an addition to the existing single-family bungalow at that address.

Mr.Taylor, of MITA Remodeling, LLC, presented to DCRA and to HPO inaccurate plans for the 44' addition to his newly purchased 29' home on Sixth Street. Without a site visit, the inaccurate drawings appeared to meet regulations if the garage were demolished. So, on that basis, DCRA initially approved them. However, HPO would not allow the demolition of the garage. A stop work order was issued. Mr. Taylor was asked to rectify the discrepancies between his drawings and the actual site conditions and to bring the construction back into compliance with the lot coverage under zoning regulations.

Meanwhile, at the June 2004 ANC 4B meeting, Mr. Taylor also misrepresented the proposed addition to the Commissioners. I pointed out the inaccuracies in the plans, among them, the grade shown of the back yard. I asked if he planned to backfill over half of the full-sized windows in the basement of his addition in order to match the level grade shown in the plans. At that meeting, the ANC 4B voted to support Mr. Taylor's addition.

At the September 23, 2004 HPRB hearing, we learned that Mr. Taylor had previously been before the HPRB about a stop work order in Mount Pleasant.

It would seem that someone who is the principal of a remodeling company and who has been before the HPRB about a stop work order would be especially aware of the need to present an accurate plan, adhering to the zoning and historic preservation rules and regulations.

At the September HPRB hearing, I voiced my concern about this illegal addition in regard to "1) the historic and architectural integrity of the community of Takoma, and 2)

the precedence it could set for Takoma and all residential neighborhoods in Washington DC."

Last month, the Historic Districts Coalition of Washington DC formally issued a statement against illegal additions.

At ANC 4B's regular May 2005 meeting, a motion was presented in support of Mr. Taylor's addition and failed. A special meeting of the ANC 4B was then called in June at which, after much discussion, I presented a motion in opposition to Mr. Taylor's addition. That motion passed.

Mr. Taylor now is asking the BZA to grant him a special exception to allow him to continue to build his illegal addition which intrudes upon the neighbors' light, air and privacy of use and enjoyment of their properties. He has suggested that the neighbors in the adjacent properties take unusual measures to protect themselves against the adverse conditions that would be created if Mr. Taylor is granted a special exception to implement his illegal plan. This is completely backwards. Mr. Taylor is the one whose property needs to adjust to the neighborhood, not vice versa.

As I said in my September testimony before the HPRB, "Takoma prides itself on its historic, purposeful diversity in various aspects of community life. However, diversity requires mutual respect and thoughtfulness of one's neighbors and surroundings. This oversized addition does not respect the architectural lines and rhythms of the neighborhood nor the value placed on the natural elements of plantings and space integral to the 'look' and life of the neighborhood."

It is important to the residents of Takoma to preserve and respect its uniqueness and not build out to the maximum allowed and beyond. I urge you to reject Mr. Taylor's request for a special exception to build his intrusive addition.

Thank you.