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Frederick L. Hill, Chairman  
Board of Zoning Adjustment  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 200-S  
Washington, DC 20001

**Re: BZA Case 19629**

Dear Chairman Hill and Board Members:

I am co-owner and resident since 1975, with my husband Lawrence Rickards, of the house and property at 1710 Hobart St. NW. Our home is within 100 feet of the proposed construction under discussion.

I am writing to oppose the zoning variance requested in Case #19629 which would allow construction of a new garage on an alley lot in RF-1 zone (Square 2588, Lot 827) to the rear and west of 1665 Harvard St, NW and overlooking 1701 Harvard.

First, we recognize that the garage proposal has been scaled back from a single-family dwelling proposed earlier. However, since it still presents many of the same problems for neighbors, we still share objections to the requested variance that have already been stated in neighbors' earlier letters, including: Letters in Opposition from Christiane Frischmuth (10/18/17), Elizabeth Argetsinger (10/24/17), and Loic Pritchett (10/21/17); Requests for Party Status in Opposition from Geoffrey Stuart Dow (10/10/17), Carl Balit (10/13/17), Brian Maney and Barbara Stauffer (10/15/17), Cynthia Stevens (10/22/17), Steven Dunn (11/29/17) and Silvia Zucchini (12/19/17).

Second, in this letter, we would simply like to point out several inaccuracies, impracticalities and false assumptions contained in the Pre-Hearing Statement of the Applicant dated 1/30/18, as updated 2/14/18.

1. Section II states that the height of the garage is 15 feet. That is only five feet lower than the earlier-proposed dwelling and at least five feet taller than any other garage on that alley. At 15 feet tall, many objections to the earlier proposal remain.
2. Section II further states that "the Project now features motion-activated floodlights along the public alley and the public pedestrian alley, as well as the installation of a fish-eye safety mirror at the corner of the building" – While I appreciate this gesture to alleviate neighbors' concerns, I have zero confidence that these features will be maintained, based on Applicant's track record for maintenance of this lot. When the floodlight bulbs burn out or the mirror is broken by a big truck, it seems unlikely they will be replaced by this absentee owner. Then we immediate neighbors (and the many other pedestrian users of the public alleys) will be stuck with the same safety issues those features were meant to alleviate.
3. Section V ó B suggests that the revised proposal "provides an area for the planting of screening trees" – between the rear of the garage and the yard of 1701 Harvard. But tree or shrubbery roots go where they need to for survival and would soon destroy the very retaining wall that would keep the proposed garage from sliding into the yard of 1701 Harvard.

4. Section IV-B-3 says "The Property currently is used as a parking pad and generally is not pervious." As far as I know, the pad has never been paved. It is, in fact, completely pervious. The absentee owner/Applicant may be unaware but, digging down a bit, I believe you'll find mud, gravel, cinders, random bricks and large rolls of old carpet laid out (in the distant past) to keep drivers' feet cleaner.

If my house were not well uphill of Square 2588, Lot 827, I would be very concerned about where rainwater will go if any building covers most of the lot; the path of least resistance would seem to be the yard and/or basement of 1701 Harvard St.

5. On a related note, Appendix A (drawing of proposed garage) indicates that the roof would slant downward to the rear, toward the yard of 1701 Harvard. Assuming a gutter on the rear will collect rainwater, a downspout still has to drain somewhere. Maybe more importantly, someone will have to keep the gutter and downspout clear to protect the structural integrity of the above mentioned retaining wall, yard and basement of 1701 Harvard. With all due respect, based on prior history, it's not likely to be the Applicant.
6. The recent revisions to plans (as posted to BZA website 1/30/18 and 2/14/18) include three skylights in the roof. These appear to be features of a dwelling. The skylights also seem incompatible with the designated storage area (Section A-A in the 2/14/18 version). Maybe the intent is to provide natural light into the overhead storage cabinets, but I'm confused.
7. The very slight reduction of garage width in the 2/14/18 revised plans apparently is sufficient to make some of the originally-requested relief unnecessary. But the reduction seems counterproductive. On this undeveloped lot, the Applicant can currently rent two open-air parking spaces, which surely can continue to generate more income than a one-car garage that will take quite awhile to pay for itself. But if a one-car garage is all the Applicant now truly wants, then the setbacks could be made even bigger and thus easier to get approved.

This observation, combined with the skylights and excessive height, makes me wonder if the Applicant still hopes to expand the single-car garage into a dwelling in the future.

Finally, on a broader note:

We understand that, in a perfect world, the engineering issues (new drainage and through whose yards) would be resolved during the permitting process. Likewise the construction-phase issues (how drivers and pedestrians will navigate a closed alley for weeks or months). But we simply do not have confidence in that process to protect the interests of adjacent neighbors.

For all these reasons, we urge the Board to deny the requested zoning variance.

Sincerely,



Cynthia W. Pratt