

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Alexandra Hezir <shezir@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 7, 2024 4:12 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Cc: John Byrnes
Subject: Case 21177 District of Columbia Department of General Services

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Dear Chairman Hill and Board Members,

Our names are Alexandra Hezir and John Byrnes and we reside at 1120 5th St. NW. **We urge the Board of Zoning Adjustment to deny the special exception relief sought by the District of Columbia Department of General Services for the proposed temporary relocation of the Central Cell Block to 501 New York Ave NW.** We echo our neighbors' concerns about noise, traffic, safety, character of the neighborhood, and the city's lack of engagement with our community. The city's approach has been to deny or minimize the adverse effects on the community; the mitigation measures proposed are not sufficient to avoid undue adverse impact to the community.

We write further to ask that, if the BZA were to grant approval:

- **The BZA should impose a firm time limit on the special exception for use as a jail.** (Subtitle X section 901.5.) The city has indicated that this will be a temporary CCB, with functions returning to the Daly building. The BZA should hold the city to this promise. If the BZA were to grant approval, we would ask that the BZA impose a strict time limit on the special exception, consistent with the city's promise that these functions will return to the Daly building.
- **The BZA should require any future use of 501 New York Ave. be consistent with the character of the neighborhood.** Separate from the timing of the Daly building renovation, the city's proposed renovation would double the number of cells in the building and remove office space from it. Our concern is that this makes 501 New York Ave. NW only suitable for a jail or other mass detention purposes, as returning the facility to police office space would require additional expenditure of taxpayer funds and renovation to a building that had just undergone an expensive conversion. Effectively, the city's proposed renovation would put a permanent place of detention in our neighborhood. There has been no discussion about what use 501 New York Ave. NW would have when the CCB is returned to the renovated Daly Building, much less how such use would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning in our neighborhood. Any special exception from the BZA should be for one time, at most.
- **The BZA should condition any special exception on the city's fulfillment of its promises regarding mitigation and harm so that the community has some rights if the city falls short.** The city has claimed, for example, that detainees who are not arraigned will not be released from 501 New York Ave. The city has also claimed there will be minimal impact from traffic and noise pollution. The city's promises should be made express requirements of the special exception (Subtitle X section 901.4.) If it turns out in practice that the harms are greater than what the city has claimed, or its mitigation measures are inadequate, the community should have some mechanism to force changes in operation or additional measures.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Hezir & John Byrnes

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