02-24

Cynthia G. Jachles
2450 Virginia Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 962-1586

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Ms. Carol J. Mitten, Chair
Zoning Commission for the
District of Columbia
441 Fourth Street NW, Suite 225
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Proposal for Foggy Bottom Community Residents to use The George Washington University Lerner Health and Wellness Facility

Dear Ms. Mitten:

I take this opportunity to propose an additional category of membership at The George Washington University Lerner Health and Wellness Facility ("GWU Facility or Facility") to be known as Foggy Bottom Community Residents. I propose that 100 members from this category be allowed to join the Facility at this time, in addition to St Mary's Court, the Odd Fellows and the Remington. These three aforementioned buildings included in GWU's recent proposal will add nominal usage to the Facility and don't represent the overall demographics of the neighborhood. This class of 100 additional members would be within walking distance and not impact traffic or parking.

In 1999, as an alumna, I intentionally moved to Foggy Bottom to be able to take advantage of the facilities, culture and classes of The George Washington University. I don't understand why some activists in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood seek to prohibit the use of GWU's facilities by local residents as well as approximately 1,200 alumni in the Foggy Bottom area, who may wish to do so.

Residents, Location and Affordability

Foggy Bottom community members consist of many retired government and association staffers as well as working persons affiliated with government and non-profit organizations. I fall into the latter category.

Many of us cannot afford to join expensive health facilities and should be allowed to join GWU's facilities. In addition, the location of the GWU Facility is the closest "health club" to Potomac Plaza, Potomac Plaza Terraces, Columbia Plaza, Bonwit Plaza, The Elise, etc. All of these buildings house many long-time residents of

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Foggy Bottom, many of whom graduated from GW and/or utilize the University's resources. I believe that working persons who join the Facility would tend to use it on weekends when it is underutilized according to current usage numbers.

The argument to oppose opening the GWU Facility to area residents because it will compete with private health clubs is unfounded. To prevent GWU from offering memberships to Foggy Bottom residents constitutes, is in my opinion, restraint of free trade.

It has come to my attention that a proposal to convert the Health Club in The Watergate Hotel to a non-profit, if it is converted to condominiums, was discussed in a recent community meeting. Should this come to fruition, it would further weaken the argument that GWU's Facility would compete with private area health clubs.

Extending the Hours
Testimony previously presented to The Zoning Commission opposed late hours because it was believed that noisy students would congregate outside the Facility. Students can congregate in front of any building at any time and be disruptive. Extending the hours of the Facility would take students off the street and provide an outlet for energy thereby reducing the incidents of noise. Increasing the hours maximizes use of the Facility by more individuals as well.

Benefits to Elderly
I hope that the Zoning Commission recognizes that this Facility may also be used in the future by the GW Medical School and Exercise Science programs to instruct students about the positive effects of exercise and physical rehabilitation programs. Such programs would benefit the elderly and physically challenged populations in the Foggy Bottom community.

Summary
I greatly appreciate your consideration of the desire of many residents of the Foggy Bottom Community to use GWU's Lerner Health and Wellness Facility, who have been unfairly closed out of this fabulous resource. The addition of this class of members would be minimal and have no impact on the facility and traffic, according to GWU's recent usage study. That study indicated that 9.6 percent of current members use this facility and the maximum number of users at any one time has only reached 13 percent of the building's capacity, figures far below what the building can accommodate. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cynthia G. Jachles