Whit and Abbie Fosburgh
4887 MacArthur Blvd., NW
Washington, DC 20007

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May 11, 2003

Washington, DC Zoning Commission
Carol Mitten, Chair
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Case # 02-30, Georgetown University Boathouse

Dear Ms. Mitten and other Commission Members:

We are writing in support of the proposal by Georgetown University to build a boathouse on the Potomac River upstream of the Washington Canoe Club. As 10-year residents of the Palisades and long-time advocates of rowing on the Potomac, we believe that the proposal in question is in the best interest of our community, the Potomac River, and the broad goal of river access and use.

Georgetown University has been working for more than 20 years to build a boathouse on the Potomac. One visit to Thompson's Boathouse, which Georgetown currently uses for its rowing programs, illustrates the problem. The facility is massively overcrowded, with several schools rowing from temporary outside racks. The crowding in and around the docks is unsafe and degrades the overall rowing experience for college and high school students, as well as the general rowing community, which is typically forced to row from Thompson's due to the lack of Potomac River access in and around Washington. When Georgetown builds its new boathouse, it will free up a huge amount of space at Thompson's for other programs, including several high school programs that Georgetown University helped to start (such as Wilson High School). This issue is even more critical given the fact that the outside storage area will be eliminated when construction of the Swedish Embassy begins.

The new Georgetown boathouse will also support outside rowers and help make Washington DC a major center for athletes training at the national level. Washington already hosts many oarsmen and women who compete for the US at international regattas, including the Olympics. But Washington does not have any indoor training tanks (where athletes can row during the winter), forcing these athletes to leave Washington during the winter months or do without a basic training tool. The Georgetown Boathouse will have these tanks and they will become a major training tool for the Georgetown athletes as well as rowers from different programs.

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Exhibit 133

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District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.133

The site proposed by Georgetown is an excellent site for the boathouse. It lies directly beneath Georgetown University and is located in an area that has been specifically designated for boathouses by the National Park Service. Georgetown currently owns land about a mile upriver from the proposed site, in the heart of the Palisades. It also has a valid right of way along the bike path to the Palisades site. Georgetown will give up this site, and its right of way, in exchange for the downstream site adjacent to the Washington Canoe Club. The disruption of building and operating a boathouse on the Palisades site is obvious. There would be visual and environmental impacts from such development on the pristine shoreline of the Palisades.

To the contrary, the downstream site will enhance the appearance of the waterfront and will cause no significant environmental impacts. The proposed Georgetown boathouse also will not have any real impact on the Washington Canoe Club or area paddlers. The Club has peacefully coexisted next to a rowing facility (Potomac Boat Club) for more than a century, and it will coexist next to the Georgetown boathouse. Long-term, the interests of rowers and paddlers on the Potomac are the same – to enjoy and use a clean and healthy river for another century. The threat to this goal comes not from another boathouse but from floating restaurants and other for-profit waterfront development schemes that threaten to alter the Georgetown waterfront forever. This is, in part, why the ANC, the Old Georgetown Board, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the Georgetown Waterfront Commission have overwhelmingly approved the Georgetown boathouse now being considered by the Zoning Commission.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment, and please feel free to contact us if we can provide additional information or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Abbie Fosburgh

Whit Fosburgh