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Ms. Carol Mitten
Chair, Washington DC Zoning Commission
441 Fourth Street, NW
Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001

Wednesday, May 14, 2003

Dear Commissioner Mitten:

I write to you today in support of Case # 02-30, the Georgetown University Boathouse, which is scheduled to come up for consideration before the Commission on Monday, May 19, 2003. The Boathouse project will be a tremendous boon to the community that will enhance recreational opportunities for all Washingtonians, and I strongly encourage the Commission to give the project its approval.

First, allowing the boathouse to be built will increase opportunities for rowing on the Potomac River. The sport of rowing has become increasingly attractive to people over the past decade because it is environmentally sensitive (it produces no pollution), universally accessible (anyone with the interest can learn to row in minutes), and physically demanding. Presently, there is more demand for rowing than can be accommodated by the present boathouses on the Potomac. The private Potomac Boat Club is oversubscribed and has a waiting list for membership. The only public facility on the river is Thompson's Boat Center, where Georgetown occupies two of the eight available bays. This has forced some community groups to store their shells outside, exposing the boats to risks of theft, vandalism, and damage. By allowing Georgetown to construct its boathouse, there will be less congestion at Thompson's, which will allow more people to use the Potomac from that location.

Second, by approving the Boathouse proposal, the Commission will add a great resource to the DC community. Allowing the Boathouse to be constructed will allow a land exchange between Georgetown and the National Park Service to go forward, which will forever protect the Potomac Palisades from development. Allowing the Boathouse to go forward will also result in Georgetown surrendering a one-mile right-of-way along the Capital Crescent Trail, which will further protect that recreational treasure from encroachment. Allowing the Boathouse to be built will add indoor rowing tanks to the DC rowing community, which Georgetown has promised to make available to community groups and other users; these tanks are invaluable for preliminary training of people who are new to the sport and provide facilities for advanced rowers to train when the Potomac becomes unrowable during the winter months.

Georgetown has long dreamed of constructing a new boathouse on the Potomac. Its previous efforts to do so in the 1800's were destroyed by fire and flood. This new boathouse represents Georgetown's faith that rowing is a sport that it here to stay, and the university alone is willing to bear the cost of constructing an aesthetically-pleasing facility that will stand the test of time. I urge the Commission to approve the proposed boathouse at its May 19 meeting.

Sincerely yours,

Alexander G. Henlin

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 168

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.168