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May 15, 2003

Carol Mitten, Chair
D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th St., NW, Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Georgetown University Boathouse

Dear members of the Zoning Commission:

I urge the Zoning Commission to approve the Georgetown University boathouse. I am a resident of the District of Columbia and have lived here since 1975. My wife teaches at Woodrow Wilson Senior High School. Three of my children have graduated from Wilson and my fourth is an 11th grader there. She has rowed for the Wilson crew since her 9th grade at Alice Deal Junior High School. I have enjoyed using the Potomac River often. I have rowed from and competed for the Potomac Boat Club, have canoed with families and friends, have sailed, and have often walked and bird watched along the river. I have always found that the sight of rowers, either in singles or larger shells, is a pleasing addition to the river.

The Potomac River is a great resource for DC, Maryland and Virginia. In the stretch we are addressing the Potomac is a wonderful mix of natural and urban. From my experience, the stretch from below Great Falls to Alexandria is a better mix of the natural and the urban with much more access and appropriate use than the Hudson River is to New York and the Seine is to Paris. In this stretch of the Potomac uses such as rowing are ideal. We should therefore applaud the Georgetown University boathouse and the other related improvements to rowing.

The boathouse is a public benefit in its own right and as an integral part of planned improvements for rowing on the Potomac River. The Georgetown University boathouse will enhance an illustrious rowing program for the benefit of the rowers, the University and the many Washingtonians that enjoy watching the graceful sport of rowing that has been actively pursued on the Potomac River for more than 150 years. The complaints that the boathouse is an intrusion on the parkland and harm to wetlands are mistaken. The boathouse is proposed on land long planned for boathouse use. It will come to Georgetown for a swap of land with the National Park Service. Such swaps are a legal and common step for the National Park Service. The development of the land the University is giving up and the right of way to it along the Crescent Trail would be

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considerably more intrusive and has been called "unacceptable" by the NPS. Therefore, it seems to me clear that the swap is in the public interest. The wetlands involved have, I also understand, been determined to be unimportant by the Army Corps of Engineers. Of course, it might be better to ensure no impact on wetlands. However, boathouses by their nature must be directly on the water's edge and must therefore almost always produce some wetland impact. It is therefore not a criticism but a positive attribute of the Georgetown proposal that the impact will be insignificant.

The approval and construction of the Georgetown University boathouse is also an important part of a larger plan to expand the capacity of the Potomac waterfront to support rowing and other non-motorized water sports such as canoeing, kayaking and sailing. All interested stakeholders and the public at large have been deeply involved in the planning of this expansion for many years. The plan involves a national park along the Georgetown waterfront, the construction on the Washington side of the river of boathouses by Georgetown University, George Washington University, and NPS for small rowing shells, canoes and kayaks; and the refurbishment of Thomson's boathouse for high school rowers. Under the plan on the Virginia side of the river a boathouse will be built for northern Virginia high schools. Each part of the plan is related to the other. If Georgetown University cannot build its boathouse, it cannot move out of Thomson's boathouse, and the high schools will soon have to curtail their existing rowing programs.

I urge the Zoning Commission to approve the application of Georgetown University to build its new boathouse.

Very truly yours,

Richard M. Hall