Statement by Arthur Fawcett
on Zoning Change to Permit Construction of a
Rowing Facility for the Georgetown University

Good evening. I am Arthur Fawcett. I am a long-time rower, having started sixty years ago when I was thirteen years old. I am a member of the Potomac Boat Club. I am a city planner and have served on the staff of the National Capital Planning Commission as well as the Administrator for Policy and Planning of the D. C. Department of Parks and Recreation. I am currently President of Washington Parks and People, a nonprofit organization that raises private funds for parks and for environmental and recreational programs in the Washington area. I am speaking for myself tonight.

Rowing has great benefits for its participants, especially young people. It is a sport that promotes physical conditioning and teamwork. It also can be a lifelong recreational program; I have been active in it for more than fifty years. It is growing rapidly in this area, with hundreds of school and college rowers as well as nonstudents in boating clubs.

The site in question here is a good one. This stretch of the Potomac River is excellent for rowing, with good surface conditions and long straight stretches that work well for racing and competitive practice. Obviously, rowing facilities must have access to the river, and the opportunities for this are limited; the Georgetown Waterfront Park group has now placed tight limits on possible sites for them. Objections have been raised to the placement of a boathouse in a park, but since virtually all of Washington s waterfront is now parkland, the boathouses must be in the parks, as they are in other cities. In addition, as a recreational facility, the boathouse is an appropriate use for a waterfront park.

This boathouse is a very attractive design, and is not substantially larger than university boathouses in other areas.

There have been objections to the boathouse on an environmental basis. But it impossible to build along a river without some environmental disturbance. Here, I think disturbance will be minimal. I have spent many hours at the Potomac Boat Club, watching Blue Herons resting on the float and beavers swimming by in the river, largely ignoring the activity in the boathouse. I cannot believe that this site is a wetland, since it was excavated years ago for the Potomac Interceptor Sewer. The area will flood on occasion, but the Washington Canoe Club and the Potomac Boat Club have dealt with floods for many years--in Potomac s case more than one hundred thirty years.

The boathouse is consistent with public plans for the waterfront, most of which have called for better access to the river for recreation. I understand that the project has been approved by the Old Georgetown Board, the Fine Arts Commission, and the local ANC. I recommend very strongly that this project move ahead.

District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 285
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.285