Statement before the Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia
In re Case No. 02-30
John V. Wells
June 5, 2003
(5300 Cushing Pl., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016)
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For many years, there has been a drastic shortage of boathouse space on the Potomac River. Thompson's Boat Center, a publicly owned boathouse owned by the National Park Service, has been the only public boathouse on the river, and it has been forced to accommodate Georgetown University, George Washington University, 12 area high schools, several rowing clubs, and over 100 single scullers and kayakers. Potomac Boat Club and the Washington Canoe Club have been full for many years. Thompson's Boat Center has been so overcrowded for the past decade that most of the high schools using Thompson's have been forced to store their boats outdoors in a fenced-in compound.

Unfortunately, that compound is on land controlled by the Swedish Embassy, which plans to build an embassy on the site. When that land is taken, nearly 800 high school rowers using Thompson's – including students at Wilson High School and other D.C. schools – will lose the opportunity to row on the Potomac.

They will lose that opportunity *unless* more boathouse space is found on the Potomac, and soon. The National Park Service, which controls most of the land along the Potomac, has been working for almost 20 years to find space along the Potomac for another boathouse. They have identified the site just upriver from the Washington Canoe Club as the best site for Georgetown University to build its own boathouse, so it can move its boats out of Thompson's, so high school crews can have space inside Thompson's, so they won't have to cancel their rowing programs when the Swedish Embassy is built.

So this is not about a "private" boathouse. This is about a public boathouse – Thompson's Boat Center – which will have to shut down high school rowing on the Potomac River if the Georgetown University Boathouse is not built. Is there space somewhere else on the river for the boathouse? Perhaps, in theory, but there is strong opposition to every other space where a boathouse could be built. It's taken almost 20 years to get the stars aligned to get this boathouse built. If it's not built now, on this site, it will probably not be built for at least another decade – and several generations of high school students will lose the opportunity to row on the river.

I strongly urge the Commission to ***approve*** the proposed zoning application.

ZONING COMMISSION
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Exhibit 281
ZONING COMMISSION
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EXHIBIT NO.281