Testimony 6/5/03
Jim Ross

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. I personally have been involved in several aspects of boating for over 40 years and have been a user of the Potomac River and the C/O canal since the mid 1970's. I have seen the use of the river expand to include many more boats both non-motorized and motorized and feel strongly that there is a tremendous need for additional public and private boating facilities on the Potomac. Unfortunately, the GU boathouse if built as planned is entirely too large and far out of proportion with the other riverfront buildings. The rational for why the building needs to be so large is in conflict with my personal knowledge of boathouses and canoeing and rowing programs. However even to the average citizen it seems hard to believe that a program that intends to host less than two hundred athletes a year needs a building larger than 32,000 sq. feet. As currently designed this building meets their wants not their needs.

It is very worrisome to me that a W-1 or W-0 Zoning will be considered for this building. The W-0 Zoning appeared to be intended as a Zoning category that would be most protective of the environment and least impacting to the area being built on. GU will be making a mockery of the intensions of that Zoning of low impact by requesting numerous special exceptions and even a variance, in order to bypass the intensions of the new law. These special exceptions, when taken together will allow the construction of an enormous edifice which would be exactly the kind of building that the Law was created to protect against. It would be a bad message to the area builders who are watching this case closely wondering what can be built on a W-O area. This building would set a very bad precedent on what a W-O Zoning means when building in areas that were supposed to be low impact.

This commission has done a very good job of asking tough questions and demanding honest answers from both sides of this issue. The commission has to appreciate the fact that this building is the first of what will hopefully be a number of new boathouses on the Georgetown waterfront. We have heard testimony from the National Park that George Washington University is hoping to build there own boathouse in the near future. What size building will they request? Will they also request to include an indoor rowing tank? How far will there docks extend into the river? Clearly, you can only evaluate one building at a time but your actions in approving for the construction of this building will be precedent setting.

In conclusion I thank you for allowing for an open dialogue on this subject and encourage this commission to vote for a W-O Zoning and then not allow any structure to be built on that area of land. There is ample land to the east of the Washington Canoe Club that would allow for a more modest sized building to be built which would serve the on water demands of any Collegiate rowing team. Thank you

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
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