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OFFICE OF ZONING

June 13, 2003

Carol Mitten, Chair
D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, N.W.
Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Zoning Commission Case No. 02-30
Georgetown University Boathouse – Map Amendment and Special Exception

Dear Ms. Mitten:

Enclosed for the consideration of the Commission in this case is the transcript of the proceedings of the Commission of Fine Arts on October 18, 2001, when the Georgetown University plans for the proposed boathouse were unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
ARNOLD & PORTER

Nathan W. Gross, AICP

Cynthia A. Giordano

Cc: ANC 2E
Capital Crescent Trail Coalition
Washington Canoe Club
C & O Canal Association

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 327

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.327

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

COMMISSION MEETING

Washington, D.C.

* * *

The meeting of The Commission of Fine Arts was convened at 10:02 a.m., Thursday, October 18, 2001 at the Pension Building, 441 F Street, N.W., Suite 312, Washington, D.C. 20001, J. CARTER BROWN, Chairman, presiding.

In Attendance:

Members of the Commission of Fine Arts

J. CARTER BROWN, Chairman

HARRY G. ROBINSON, III, Vice Chairman

CAROLYN S. BRODY

EDEN RAFSHOON

DONALD A. CAPOCCIA

BARBARALEE DIAMONDSTEIN - SPIELVOGLE

PAMELA NELSON

Staff:

Charles H. Atherton, Secretary

Sue Kohler, Historian,

Frederick Lindstrom, Architect

Jose Martinez-Canino, Architect

MR. MARTINEZ-CANINO: The Park Service is presenting a proposal in coordination with the Georgetown University and that involves a land swap between the two parties to allow the university to build a boathouse upstream from the Washington Canoe Club.

Now we did show this project to the Georgetown Board at their October meeting where they enthusiastically received the proposal in concept.

We will have Mr. John Parsons here from the Park Service, Alan Brangman from the university, Tony Johnson, as well as Stephen Muse, who is the designer, the architect for the boathouse. He used to be a member of the Georgetown Board but since he's left us, he's more involved with this project now.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: A revolving door.

Mr. Parsons, let me lust tell you and the other presenters we have an enormous agenda today and we're trying to fast-track where we can. My hunch is this project is going to sail through without a murmur. I think it's one of the prettiest and most appropriate designs that have been brought to us in a long time and I would love to see, because now we circulate all these drawings and plans to the members in advance, I would to take a kind of straw polling, knowing that your feelings are not easily hurt, to see whether the rest of our good fellowship here agrees in principle. If so, we can go through very quickly.

MR. ROBINSON: In principle.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: We want to get into the details but we just want you to recognize that the court is basically with you, so we don't need endless justifications.

MS. DIAMONDSTEIN-SPIELVOGLE: It's really charming.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Delightful. But say what you will. We don't want to--

MR. PARSONS: I was waiting for a motion.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Well, let's put it this way. Do members have particular questions or comments about this design?

MS. DIAMONDSTEIN-SPIELVOGLE: Perhaps it would be nice to hear a paragraph from the creator.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: I think we should. I think that's only fair. We don't want to invoke cloture here.

MR. PARSONS: Let me just say a couple of words to the new members. The Georgetown waterfront park is something we've been working on since 1985. We, the Commission, approved this plan in 1987. It's a transfer of jurisdiction of all of this asphalt parking lot on the Georgetown waterfront, 10 acres of it which was purchased for

freeway purposes that's now going to become a park. And part of that plan developed a boathouse zone, which extended 1,100 feet upstream from the Key Bridge to align with the towers of the university. We all went out and took a boat trip, believe it or not, to determine that line.

All of that land that you see up there is owned by the National Park Service but we have no authority to give land to a university, so we're entering into a land exchange, but before we do that we're going through the approval process. It has to be zoned. It has to be approved by the Planning Commission and you folks. So that's why we're here, in an unusual partnership of a private university proposing something on park land. Thank you.

MR. BRANGMAN: Thank you, Mr. Parsons. My name is Alan Brangman. I'm the university architect and executive director for facilities planning at Georgetown University.

In the interest, Mr. Chairman, of brevity, I'm going to skip my portion and I'm also going to volunteer skipping the coach's portion so we can get directly to the architect, Stephen Muse, to give you a quick presentation of the project. We certainly are here available for any questions, should you have them.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: That is terrific. Thank you. Welcome.

MR. MUSE: Actually, you can skip mine if you'd like to.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Well, cut to the chase.

MR. MUSE: I will make this short.

As John said, the site is a product of this land swap with the National Park Service. We think this is a good thing because it allows us to build this new boathouse. in the vicinity of the other boathouses, as opposed to scattering these on the river, and really come up with something that's more of a boathouse district, as we find in Philadelphia and other places.

The site that we have, the issues that we're dealing with, it's a site that has the Washington Canoe Club to the east, of course the river to the south, parkland to the west, and a very steep slope to the north with the bike path separating this new building from the slope. It slopes about 30 feet to the canal and then up 30 more feet to the road and then up to the university but we have a site that's very long and thin. It's about 110 to 120 feet deep and about 400 feet long.

One of the first things we did in doing this building was the crew coach Tony Johnson and Frank Rienzo, Bill Kirwin and I visited virtually every boathouse between here and Boston and we found that most of the boathouses were on deeper sites, there were boathouses that you could enter from inland, find a vestibule, work your way out through the boat basin out through the river, and we just don't have a site deep enough to do that.

So what we've done is we've taken this boathouse and really pulled the sides apart into side wings, which allows us to have the main body in the center, two flanking wings and two hyphens. This does a couple of things for us. Number one, the size of this building is about 30,000 square feet. Although that's on the smaller side of what most universities are building today--for example, Princeton's facility is quite a bit larger than that--it is still larger than the Washington Canoe Club and the Potomac Boathouse, so we're working with the scale of this.

And by pulling the wings out this way we can make an entry facade for the side that's on a wing that really relates to the scale of the adjacent building. It also allows us to start to develop public spaces on the property, one of which we see as a point of drop-off here at the entry. There will be no parking on the site. By agreement with the Park Service parking happens off-site. There's a public green between our building and the river.

Then there's what we called a working yard on this side. This is where if the visiting team comes in with their trailers to drop off their shells, this is where that will occur. If it's a nice day and you want to work on a shell, that's where this will occur. So the working yard is relay hidden from view when you arrive on the property.

The way all this plays out is in a building that have five boat bays, three of which are perpendicular to the water where the boats go out, turn 90 degrees at the water and are placed in the river, two of which are parallel to the river. The shells are brought out, brought down and dropped into the river.

There's also an indoor rowing tank. This is a facility that allows the crew team to expand the training season. It allows 24 athletes to sit within this tank and the water moves through the tank to simulate rowing on the river, and that will happen on this side. And this is at the point of entry where you come in and directly see that tank to announce what this building is about.

On the second floor we have--most of these boathouses have a big room somewhere. We have this large room in the center. Depending on the different programs of the university, these rooms take on different uses. They might be strictly social rooms. They might be training rooms. In our case it's very much of a training room. If Tony Johnson has his say it'll be totally a training room and not used for anything else. That's being negotiated.

And the side wings have the men's locker room and the women's locker room and the vertical circulation happens in the hyphens between the wings.

What all of this looks like is if you're approaching past the Washington Canoe Club, coming in from the east, this is what you see.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Charming.

MS. DIAMONDSTEIN-SPIELVOGLE: I love that.

MR. MUSE: This is the small facade, the small wing of the building facing that direction. You can see the bike path and the slope that I mentioned before, then of course down to the river.

You enter at this point and you come in through a gallery, which is meant to allow views of the river, views of the rowing tank, and casework, which will be a collection of all that stuff that's collected in boathouses--trophies, team photos, newspaper clippings, historic ores. All of that will. be in this gallery so as you pass through this it will announce or give you a sense of the history of the program.

Then about 120 feet beyond this facade we get the main wing of the building projecting out towards the river.

We are very much trying to play off of these two scales that we have on the site--the scale of the arrival, which we think should be small, and the scale from the river, which we think should be large. So when you turn the corner and get out onto the river, this is what you see.

We have the gallery that I mentioned before, that you pass through to the main body, which projects out towards the river. Three boat bays in this location, that big room at the top and porches, some covered, some not covered, facing the river.

This is that working yard that I mentioned, which is surrounded by porches, and we have the men's locker room and the women's locker room on the second floor.

MR. CAPOCCIA: It's all shingle?

MR. MUSE: It's stone and shingle and I'll get to that in just a second.

And if you're on the bike path coming past this building we're once again going to show off the rowing tank. There will be some connection with those passing by on the bike path with what's happening in this building.

Then beyond that you have to remember that there's this 30-foot slope which is up into here, so you're really looking down on the top of this building. So we think that the roofscape should be interesting to see it from that point of view. So that's why we have this active and hopefully nice-looking roofscape.

What all this looks like when you get out on the river, seeing it in context with the Washington Canoe Club, is this.

The question about materials. We see it as fieldstone down below on the first floor. We see it either as wood shingle or slate shingle on the second floor. There's a terrific boathouse, one of the two that they have at Harvard, and when you arrive at this building you believe that it's a red-stained wood shingle; you get there and you realize it's red slate. It would cost a bit more up front but, of course, for the maintenance on the river it would be a great material, so that's something that we're looking at.

Then we're going to contrast the natural colors of the greys stone and the grey shingle with very, very deep blue shutters, deep blue doors on the boat bays, and in the long run what we're trying to do is come up with a palette that is both appropriate for the river in terms of these natural materials but also with the greys and the blues in a very subtle way that announces that this is for Georgetown University.

Any questions that you have I'd be happy to answer.

MR. ROBINSON: Very nice.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Really nice job.

Do we have a motion to approve?

MR. ROBINSON: So moved.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: No objection; so ordered. Congratulations.

MR. MUSE: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: I sweated away in that building at Harvard in those rowing tanks; they're real torture chambers.