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June 18, 2003

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

D.C. Zoning Commission
2003 JUN 23 PM 3:38

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

Dear Ms. Mitten and Members of the Commission:

The Applicant's submission of June 16, 2003 in this case (Georgetown University and the National Park Service) included a document consisting of a series of short statements or "bullets" designed either to summarize important factors or to clarify issues that have arisen in the first two public hearing sessions. *Unfortunately, three pages in the middle of the document consisted of duplicate bullet statements. Attached is a revised copy that leaves out the duplication.*

We apologize for any confusion or inconvenience.

Respectfully submitted,

N Gross

Nathan W. Gross, AICP

Cynthia Giordano

Cynthia A. Giordano

Enclosures

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 334

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.334

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY BOATHOUSE

Map Amendment and Special Exception
Zoning Commission Case No. 02-30
June 16, 2003

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Planning – Waterfront Park and Boathouse Row

- The Georgetown Waterfront Park Plan was prepared by the National Park Service in 1987 and approved that year by the National Capitol Planning Commission. The Plan has been refined over the years since by the 1989 Non-Motorized Boathouse study by NPS and work of the Georgetown Waterfront Commission and its boathouse committee in cooperation with many other organizations and individuals.

- The Georgetown Waterfront Park Plan includes a designated boathouse zone that includes the Georgetown site. This zone was delineated by NCPC, the Old Georgetown Board, the Commission of Fine Arts, the HPRB and the C & O Canal National Historic Park Advisory Commission.

- The goal is to create green space in the new park, preserve natural and valuable wild open space in the Potomac Palisades, while clustering boathouse locations in the more urban location on either side of Key Bridge. The boathouse zone includes and complements the Potomac Boat Club and the Washington Canoe Club.

- The GU boathouse will free up a significant shell storage area at Thompson's Boathouse for use by high school rowing teams and by individual citizens renting boats. Because of the forthcoming construction of the Swedish chancery on the outdoor storage area adjacent to Thompson's, the loss of capacity will be significant, potentially causing some high school programs to close.

- It is important for progress to continue in creating the planned Georgetown Waterfront Park. It is also important for young people and other citizens to have access to crew and boating as recreational, character-building activities.

- The land swap between the University's one-acre parcel on the Potomac Palisades waterfront and the National Park Service site in the designated boathouse zone is environmentally beneficial given the higher environmental quality of the Palisades parcel. There will be no net loss of parkland.

- There are no significant wetlands, vegetation or wildlife on the boathouse site, which was altered substantially in the 1960s. Official environmental reviews of the land exchange by federal and local agencies found that the exchange was environmentally preferable. The exchange agreement indicated that a boathouse would be built on the site. The D.C. environmental review process will occur in the building permit process.

- By contrast, the existing GU boathouse site a mile to the northwest on the Potomac Palisades waterfront is rated as high-quality wetlands with significant and valuable plant and wild life. It is in fact buildable and usable, although the boathouse would need to have an elongated design because of the narrow site.

- This recreational project will bring life and added interest to the city's waterfront and help put our city on a par with other cities such as Boston and Philadelphia, where non-motorized boating activity adds to the vitality of the waterfront and the city as a whole.

- The boathouse site is directly south of the University campus, from which the crew team members and other participants can walk or bicycle to the site. Therefore, the site can be free of parking space other than a vehicular turnaround area and be a quiet, environmentally positive use of waterfront land.

- Spectators for the occasional regattas will congregate almost entirely in the vicinity of Thompson's Boathouse and Washington Harbor, which is the finish line for races. There will be negligible congestion of spectators at the boathouse itself. The Thompson's/Washington Harbor area is an established commercial area with a pedestrian walkway and bikeway along the riverfront.

Design, Scale, Setbacks

- The building's size is minimized by minimizing the number of shell storage spaces. All spaces will be used on a daily basis. We have left out specialized areas that often add space to boathouses: social/great room, multiple offices, live-in caretaker's apartment. Our great room is devoted to rowing machines. Even the porch overhang is devoted to exercise machines. ***See the attached floor plans, showing this and the functional allocation of space.***

- The building's size is minimized by designing each space based on its program. Spaces are multi-use where feasible. E.g., there is no shop room; rather the shop work occurs in one of the storage bays; the team rooms double as changing rooms for visiting teams.

- All storage is inside the building. Consequently, there will be no fences, secondary storage structures or unsightly outside storage. Several of the older boathouses on the Potomac are smaller and not elevated above the flood level. They would be larger if they were built today. Being small, they have outside boat storage, security fences and lack of public access to the waterfront.

- Although the site is relatively narrow, we have created side wings instead of a deeper more square building. The side wings are lower in height and bulk, and the east wing relates to the scale of the Washington Canoe Club.

- A national-class, university boathouse has certain dimensional requirements needed for the school and the crew team to be competitive. Racing shells for 4-8 rowers are much longer than canoes or kayaks. Following are the square footages of some other

university boathouses: Wisconsin – 52,000 s.f., Princeton – 34,000 s.f., Harvard – 41,000 s.f. plus outside storage. Thompson's Boathouse is 25,371 s.f. plus outdoor storage of 20,140 s.f.

- Questions have been raised as to whether the boathouse could be any smaller. Minor reductions in size would have a major impact on the GU program while not appreciably reducing the size of building and are not clearly justified in the public interest.

    - The architectural design review agencies for this site, other than the Zoning Commission, did not question the scale of the building, but instead praised the design techniques that break up the scale of the building and relate it positively to the only nearby building, the Washington Canoe Club.

    - It is not uncommon for new buildings to be larger than nearby historic buildings.

    - Other than the WCC building, the site is surrounded on three sides by open space and water, providing no particular context for scale. There is no reason to overly minimize the size of the building, as it will be pleasing for the public to look at.

    - The architectural design and materials of the proposed boathouse are of high quality and will present a pleasing and suitable view for the public, especially those using the Capitol Crescent Trail and the C & O Canal Tow Path (partial and winter view).

    - The design was highly praised in approvals by the Old Georgetown Board and the Commission of Fine Arts in 2001. The public will also enjoy the views of shells and other non-motorized boating activity on the river.

- Should the building's height be lowered?

    - The two side wings are significantly lower than the central section. The east end of the east wing is the same height as the WCC building.

    - The only way to lower the roof of the central section is to reduce the roof pitch (and only by a minor amount), or go to a less attractive flat roof, which would also cause mechanical elements to be on the roof.

    - The flat roof and exposed mechanical equipment could be viewed from the canal towpath. Our position has always been to design an interesting, varied roofline so as to reduce the scale of building and provide an interesting view from the C & O Canal.

- Suggestions have been made to relocate the rowing tank and the exercise machines to the campus so as to reduce the size of the building. There are several critical reasons for having a complete boathouse of a collegiate standard:

- Training requires a complete workout, typically instruction and practice in the rowing tank and on the rowing machines, as well as paddling in the river. Coaches supervise and instruct the athletes in the tank and at the machines. 75% of GU's rowers begin as novices, so training is critical.

- These student athletes already devote significant amounts of time to the sport. Their workouts must be efficient so they have time to complete their studies. Efficient use of the coaches' time is also important: it is impractical to have some training sessions on campus and some at the boathouse because the coaches can't' be in two places at once.

- The tank and machines are used year-round by a significant number of participants – approximately 180 on two men's and two women's teams.

- Thompson's Boathouse and the Potomac Boat Club both have exercise equipment, which is a normal part of a crew workout.

- If the rowing tank (on the ground floor) were relocated, the women's locker room above could still not be moved to the ground floor because it must remain above the 100-year flood level, which is 9 feet above the first floor elevation.

- Note that, unlike most other boathouses, the University is subject to Title IX requirements, so that equal space is required for women's as for men's teams, e.g., changing/locker areas.

- The setback from the Capital Crescent Trail is ample. Proceeding from the trail to the boathouse: the bike trail is 10 feet wide, followed by a grass strip that is three feet wide, then the 12-foot-wide access road. Finally, the building is set back 5 to 8 feet from the access road. ***See the attached drawing of the boathouse with dimensions of the above elements indicated.***

- The boathouse cannot be set back farther from the riverfront without impinging to a degree on the above setbacks from the bike trail. The use of the bike trail will not be affected by the presence of the boathouse.

- The setback from the riverfront of 15 feet at ground level provides a more than adequate space from the river. Also, the boat ramp extends over the water and effectively increases the front yard on the river. The linear design, in our opinion, fits comfortably on the site, with ample setbacks from both the river and the bike trail.

- The Georgetown boathouse will be appealing to look at from the Capital Crescent Trail as architecture, as a point of activity and interest, and as a use that clearly belongs on the waterfront. It will be the western end of the boathouse row concept in the approved Georgetown Waterfront Park Plan. This is an urban setting where buildings along the tow path and bike trail are normal, expected and interesting. Historic buildings are also a positive part of the setting of the canal in Harper's Ferry. The great length of the C & O Canal will continue to be almost entirely in a rural or

forested setting. Historically, this entire section of the Potomac riverfront has accommodated many buildings, including boathouses no longer present.

- The C & O Canal Association would prefer that no boathouse be located on this site or visible from the towpath. In addition to the above comment, we respond that the government agencies directly responsible for the C & O Canal National Historic Park have approved the boathouse zone or the GU design. These include the C & O Canal National Historic Park Advisory Commission, the National Park Service, the Old Georgetown Board and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

- The C & O Canal Association, as a private voluntary association, has had the opportunity to participate in or advise on these decisions via public hearings and public meetings, such as those of the Georgetown Waterfront Commission. Design, Scale, Setbacks

Boathouse – Operations and Access

- The small sailing program referenced in the original zoning application of August 6, 2002 is no longer part of the program. There will be no sailing from the boathouse.

- For practices and regattas team members will walk or bicycle to the boathouse, as they do now to Thompson's Boathouse.

- When the shells need to be brought to or taken from the boathouse for regattas (which are relatively infrequent), the trailers will be towed along the 12-foot-wide access road, use the turnaround area to the immediate west of the boathouse and go out.

- The shells of visiting teams will sometimes unload at the Georgetown Boathouse and sometimes at Thompson's Boathouse.

- Visiting crew teams will be shuttled to the end of K Street, leaving a short walk to the boathouse. The visiting team's bus(Es) will return to campus and park there during the event.

- The large majority of spectators will go to the finish line, which will always be the Thompson's Boathouse area. The Georgetown Boathouse will never be the finish line, thereby eliminating the risk of major congestion there.

- Some spectators will park in Georgetown within walking distance of Washington Harbor and Thompson's Boathouse, or they may park on the Georgetown campus and be shuttled to the waterfront. Shuttles will run as continuously as required by demand.

- For this purpose the University's buses either hold 28 or 32 passengers, and the larger size has a turning radius of 32.5 feet. The relevant part of K Street has a width of 47 feet with numerous driveways and no parking areas. Drop-off at Washington Harbor will be still easier, as K Street is wider and are drop-off areas.

- The Applicant's team discussed the parking management plan with staff of the D.C. Department of Transportation before Dot's report was submitted. DOT approved the plan, as well as the access road, the turnaround area on site and the emergency access plan.

- Emergency access will use the 12-foot-wide access road together with the 10-foot-wide bike path as the emergency access route.

- Regattas occur on Saturdays or Sundays, when numerous tourists as well as Washington area residents go to Georgetown's restaurants, retail stores and entertainment establishments. Regattas will not create any unusual congestion.

- All in all, neither operation of vehicles nor congestion of people will impede the free flow of bikers and pedestrians on the Capital Crescent Trail.

- The existing rowing and paddling lanes on the river have been discussed with the current president of the Washington Canoe Club. (It was the previous president of WCC who said there had been no discussion.) The dock will only extend 70 feet out from the shoreline. This dock is still 48 feet from the existing WCC paddling racecourse. With cooperation and use of established rowing lanes in the river, the paddlers from the Washington Canoe Club will not be adversely affected. The river is very wide at this location and can be cooperatively shared. ***See the attached aerial photograph with the race courses drawn on the river.***

- The cooperative use of the river is entirely workable, especially compared with a large boathouse row such as Philadelphia's. See the aerial photograph attached, showing that WCC's existing racing lanes are not at all affected by the GU dock, as there is approximately

- When either Georgetown University or the Washington Canoe Club (or George Washington University) has a regatta or race, the entire course is cleared for their use. There is no conflict on racing days, just as there is no conflict between basketball and hockey at the MCI Center.

- WCC's peak racing season is in summer and fall, when Georgetown's crew program is not active.

- Will there be social functions or alumni gatherings at the boathouse? The design does not include a great room designed for social purposes. The large room in this boathouse on the second floor is largely filled with rowing machines. The fireplace is present because this is a traditional feature in a boathouse.

- An evening event at the boathouse would be problematic because of the isolated location, absence of street lighting and absence of on-site or nearby parking.

- Regarding the issue of wakes from coaching launches:

- All of the non-motorized racing boats, rowing shells and canoes, prefer flat water, with a minimum of wind and no wakes from powerboats.

- There is a 6-mph, no wake zone, on the Potomac River, above Memorial Bridge. Rowing shells (and racing canoes too) exceed that speed, however shells are designed so that they create very little wake.

- The Harbor Patrol does patrol this part of the river. They perform safety checks and ticket drivers who are out of line. These have most often involved simple thoughtlessness or drunken (power) boaters.

- There are launches made that we refer to as "wakeless" launches, because they create minimal wake. As Coach Johnson stated at the public hearing, Georgetown plans to convert to the wakeless launches after relocating to its own boathouse. The back of the dock will be a good location to store these boats.

- The rowing coaches on the river use motor boats that are large enough to rescue rowers if they should capsize. The police, in general, let the rowing coaches follow their crews, for coaching and safety reasons, as long as they do not disturb other boaters who are always asked to follow the no wake zone rules.

- Finally, most of GU's crews row down river when they can, where creating a wake is allowed, weather and other boat traffic permitting.