**Testimony M. Pope Barrow**
**District of Columbia Resident**
**Before DC Zoning Commission**
**in**
**Georgetown Boathouse Case**

**June 19, 2003**

May I provide copies of my testimony to the Commission in writing please.

Madam Chairperson and Members of Commission, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the proposal by Georgetown University to build a boathouse on the Potomac River on a parcel of currently unzoned land approximately 300 yards upstream of Key Bridge.

I am a canoeist, bicyclist, and a D.C. resident and voter. My address is 816 E. St., SE.

I am strongly opposed to Georgetown University's boathouse proposal, and to the rezoning of the land by this body that is necessary for the boathouse to be built.

There are many reasons to be opposed this oversized and poorly situated structure. Most of these have been well articulated by others in this and previous meetings. Therefore, I will focus on one issue that has not bee adequate considered.

This facility (I am reluctant to call it a boathouse since it contains so many things other than boats, a rowing tank, training facilities, fundraising cocktail lounges, etc.) is in the wrong location.

The building should be located downstream of the Washington Canoe Club, not upstream in an area that presently contains natural vegetation and streamside habitat.

Construction will present a serious threat to the physical stability of the historic old Washington Canoe Club building. Both the pier and the placement of a hard structural surface upstream will cause changes in water flow and will increase erosion and sediment patterns downstream of the project. This historic structure, which has withstood flooding for many decades, would suddenly become vulnerable to devastating damage during floodwater occasions.

Right now, trees, underbrush, and porous soil upstream protect the Washington Canoe Club. Replacing this environment with asphalt, bricks, and concrete –and piers in the river--will alter the high water flow of the Potomac River in many ways—all potentially devastating for the Washington Canoe Club. There will be nothing upstream to absorb the monumental impact of floodwaters and protect the canoe club. Without the existing vegetative and soil barrier, the canoe club will wind up sitting in a gigantic whirlpool of floodwater, filled with trees and debris until it is ultimately battered to pieces.

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For anyone who has ever seen the incredible power of the Potomac River in flood (and I doubt that any of the architects and engineers involved with the design of this structure have ever had the occasion to observe that phenomenon), this is no idle concern.

Secondly, building anything in a location that replaces streamside natural vegetation with bricks, concrete and manmade structures will always have a very negative effect on the river environment, the riparian zone, and water quality, and eventually even on the Chesapeake Bay.

The negative effects of building structures, or even allowing farm animals, on the immediate shoreline of rivers have been recognized for a long time. That is the reason that the Federal government and the State of Maryland, for example, are willing to pay farmers to fence their streams to keep cattle and horses out of the streamside area. Under the Conservation Reserve Program, the Department of Agriculture is making payments to landowners to fence off and put trees and brush in the streamside zone of Chesapeake Bay tributaries.

So with one hand the government pays people to stay out of river and streamside areas, keep buildings and domestic animals out of those areas, and plant vegetation.

And with the other hand this commission, another part of government, may allow Georgetown to do just exactly the opposite.

No wonder people find our government policies so confusing.

I urge the Commission to protect the public interest by rejecting this zoning request. Georgetown should build this facility on one of the already devegetated areas downstream of the Washington Canoe Club.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.