Government of the District of Columbia
Office of Zoning

May 20, 2004

Sheila Rabb Weidenfeld
3059 Q Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Re: Z.C. Case No. 02-31 / Georgetown University - Boathouse

Dear Ms. Weidenfeld:

The Office of Zoning is in receipt of your letter dated May 11, 2004, regarding the above-referenced case.

The Zoning Regulations are strict regarding the timeliness of submissions into case records. The record on this case is closed; therefore, your letter cannot legally be included in the above-referenced file.

Thank you for your letter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to me at (202) 727-0330.

Sincerely,

Alberto P. Bastida, AICP
Secretary to the Zoning Commission

Enclosure

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-31
Exhibit 115

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-31
EXHIBIT NO.115

ZC 02-31

SHEILA RABB WEIDENFELD
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Washington DC 20007
202.337.1647
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May 11, 2004

Ms. Carol J. Mitten
Chair
D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Ms. Mitten:

On April 11, 2004, I received a copy of the May 19, 2003, *D.C. Zoning Commission* transcript (Case no. 02-31) of the Georgetown University Boathouse. I was totally taken aback by an erroneous comment made by Sally Blumenthal when she stated that the C&O Canal Advisory Commission was in full support of the boathouse as proposed. That is not and has never been the case. To the contrary, the Advisory Commission has never approved it--either its size, design or, in fact, the land exchange itself. In fact, from the beginning, members of the Commission have expressed strong reservations about the location, suggesting that below, rather than above, Key Bridge might be better and have less impact on the national historical park. When I brought the content of the transcript to the attention of the C&O Advisory Commission days later at our April 16 quarterly meeting, it was unanimously moved that as chairman of the Advisory Commission, I write the Zoning Commission "expressing our strong displeasure that our position on the proposed Georgetown Boat House was totally misrepresented at the hearing and that the record be corrected." As a follow-up, I met with Kevin Brandt, Superintendent of the C&O Canal, and John Parsons and Sally Blumenthal of the National Capital Regional Office to determine how and why the Commission was misrepresented. No answers were forthcoming.

As a result, I found it necessary to review the Advisory Commission's meetings, going back more than 20 years, to determine exactly what the commissioners did or did not support. What I found was surprising and disturbing. The subject of the boathouse or its particular site came up for discussion on six occasions. Only last year, at the June 30, 2003, meeting, was a motion ever made regarding the boathouse. At this meeting, John Parsons and Sally Blumenthal presented the proposed boathouse design, with photo-simulations, elevations, and other information. Commissioner Ferial Bishop, representing the District of Columbia, made a motion that the Commission goes on record as being concerned about the size and height of the boathouse. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Emmie Woodward and passed by all members present. This perhaps explains why none of the members of the commission (many of whom have served over 20 years) recall supporting the exchange or boathouse design.

I also reviewed the plans related to the Georgetown waterfront that are referenced in the 1995 Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact. While there may be other documents that would increase my understanding of the sequence of events, I doubt they would substantially alter the following underlying points.

First, the 1987 Georgetown Waterfront Plan and the 1989 Special Study on Non-Motorized Boating identify the site of the proposed Georgetown University boathouse as approximately one-half acre in size and intended for a small boathouse of approximately 4,000 square feet.

Second, the 1995 EA and FONSI were based on this plan with the noted exception of the increase from approximately one-half to one acre.

Third, the Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation was completed in 1998 limiting the size of the boathouse to a footprint of 15,000 square feet and 40 feet in height.

This may explain why the public was led to believe at the time of the environmental assessment that an approximate 4,000 square foot boathouse would be built on an acre of land no more than 1,100 feet upstream of the Key Bridge. It is, at least, what we on the Commission thought was the case. Perhaps this is why no public comments were received when the document was put out for review.

Considering the above and the level of controversy surrounding the size, height, and location of the boathouse, combined with the misrepresentation of the Commission's position at the May 2003 Zoning Commission hearing, the boathouse will be a key item for discussion at our next Commission meeting in July.

Before the Commission can make an intelligent assessment, we will be inquiring as to:

- How the boathouse grew from 4,000 square feet to nearly 20,000 square feet
- Why the EA/FONSI omitted any reference to any boathouse, much less a greatly expanded boathouse, or why it wasn't then or isn't now necessary to revise or redo the NEPA compliance.
- Why the Commission has been misrepresented as having gone on record as supporting this project when it is quite clear that such is not the case.
- Why concerns for circulation, views, etc. were not addressed in the EA when it was quite clear that the boathouse could have some bearing on these attributes.

In view of these issues, it would be appropriate to suspend all action on the proposed boathouse until the C&O Canal Advisory Commission has an opportunity to discharge its legislated responsibility to review and comment on this matter to the Secretary of the Interior.

Sincerely,

Sheila Rabb Weidenfeld

Sheila Rabb Weidenfeld
Chairman
C&O Canal Historical Park Advisory Commission

cc: Terry Carlstrom
John Parsons
Larry Schuette
Sally Strain
Fred Mopsik
C&O Canal Park Advisory Commissioners

TO: MS. CAROL MITTEN
Chair
DC Zoning Commission

FROM: SHEILA RABB WEIDENFELD
Chair
C&O CANAL PARK HISTORICAL ADVISORY COMMISSION

DATE: MAY 11, 2004

NO. OF PAGES INC. COVER: 3

ATT: Alberto Bastida
Sharon Sanchez