WESLEY HEIGHTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION SHEET

DATE: March 31, 2003

TO: The Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia, 727-6072

FROM: **GEORGE E. WATSON**

RE: Copy of Remarks Presented to the Commission March 17, 2003 in Case No. 02-35

TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING THIS SHEET): 2

MESSAGE: This is a copy of my remarks presented to the Commission at the March 17, 2003 hearing on Case No. 02-35 (Text Amendment—Definition of Building Height). The record was said to have been left open until 3:00 PM on March 31, 2003.

D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2003 MAR 31 PM 4:53

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-35
Exhibit 31

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-35
EXHIBIT NO.31

D.C. ZONING COMMISSION
2003 MAR 31 PM 4:54

Testimony before the DC Zoning Commission

Case No. 02-35 Text Amendment—Definition of Building Height
March 17, 2003

by George E. Watson

I am George Watson, President of the Wesley Heights Historical Society and a member of the ANC3D Zoning Task Force. I had not planned to testify tonight but have decided to provide a few remarks because I am concerned that the wording of the Zoning Regulations should be as simple and unequivocal as possible so that there is only one way the regulations can be read, applied and interpreted by all—zoning administrators, architects, developers, property owners and neighbors alike. The Wesley Heights Historical Society has had problems in dealing with the DCRA, both the multiple Building and Land Management Administrators and the Zoning Administrators, who seem to turn over with extraordinary frequency. There have been several newly-built or renovated properties in our neighborhood over the past ten years that appear to exceed the height, footprint and bulk limitations in the zoning regulations and in the Wesley Heights Zoning Overlay District. Most of these have had to do with the measurement of building height and where the base line and upper points for measurement are. The ANC3D Zoning Task Force prepared simple rewording of paragraph 199.1 in 11 DCMR eliminating any alternatives such as the curb, natural grade or highest point of the roof, parapet or the ceiling of the topmost living level. The zoning officials have always chosen the most liberal interpretation and allowed builders to erect structures that are totally out of scale for our neighborhood of mostly two-story single family residences.

I am concerned that the Office of Planning proposes to introduce into a paragraph now used for determining the allowable height of residential structures new wording that applies narrowly to commercial structures facing artificially-elevated overpasses and bridges near Union Station and the Whitehurst Freeway in Georgetown and possibly also the Southwest Freeway, not mentioned tonight. I urge you to adopt the new language for **a separate paragraph** so that the original paragraph will be easier to change in a future hearing that we have requested on measurement of building height applicable in residential neighborhoods throughout the city.

I also urge you not to consider alternatives suggested tonight that would allow developers to take the height measurements at places other than at the front of a building because they permit more liberal interpretations. These are just the sort of loopholes that delight developers and their lawyers.

Thank you for permitting me to speak.