Madame Commissioner and Board

My Name is Kerry Stowell and I have been a Watergate Resident for some 20 years.

We seem to have 3 positions testifying at these meetings before you.

The "let's keep the Hotel" group.
The "let's change it to apartments" group.
The History enthusiasts…

In 1930 the Shipstead Act gave the commission of Fine Arts the authority to review the designs of private construction projects within certain areas of the National Capital…The act said, basically…we have these historical places and no one…no one may change modify or revise them architecturally. Of course you know that Rock Creek Park is one of those designated and that the Watergate Complex abuts it and so it remains in a protected area.

In 1962, a marvelous concept was presented to the Capitol. It was called the Planned Unit Development or PUD as we slang-call it. The PUD was sometimes described as a city within a city. It was to combine residential….business…and commercial… all in a nice neat package. The original Watergate PUD was to include specifically-6 buildings….3 residential-2 office-1 hotel – and a lot of neat shops. It worked and it works to this day designated as a special Purpose zone.

On one side of Virginia Avenue, is the Foggy Bottom Historical District. Charming row houses …brick paths…small flowered gardens….all protected by Historical designation.
Commissioner Maria Tyler spent her life…not a week not a month not a year…but her life…pushing for this designation…and we finally saw it happen.

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On the other side of the Watergate Complex is the Kennedy Center...whose vision called "Extending the Legacy" a total cultural center with rehearsal halls and pedestrian path from the downtown Monuments to the Center...realizes a magnificent concept which will unite the flow of history and culture.

So...here we are...on one side of the complex we have Foggy Historic...on the other side we have Cultural DC with paths to the monuments ...straight ahead...we have the Potomac River... and in the middle we have the Planned Unit Development of 1962.

What could be more wonderful than to protect that area. What greater gift could you, the Zoning Commission give to the Capitol of the United States...the Capitol of the World...than to say...this is our legacy....this is our past and our future...come...take a look at what we gift to you.

It's not whether a hotel is making top dollar or not...that can be fixed...what cannot be fixed is tampering with History.

I am here to represent History. As a matter of fact...you, the members of the zoning Board are also. I read of your decisions every day.

In closing....I have to ask...what's the hurry?
We've not had a bid before...and next time it might be more attractive.

In the meantime...why not give some of the hotel bidders in the background a chance of upgrading and running this boutique hotel in the middle this very special-historic place. Why not?

Thank you...