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Office of Zoning
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 2001

Dear Commissioners:

This letter contains the points that I raised during the District of Columbia Zoning Commission meeting held on Monday, November 22, 2004 at 6:30 p.m. This meeting covered the hearing for Case Number 04-11 (PUD and related Map Amendment at Square 3788, Part of Lot 811-611 Emerson Street, NE).

A written recap of my testimony in favor of development by Rocky Gorge follows:

I believe that all parties to this project want housing to be developed on the site now owned by Rocky Gorge. This is especially true when compared to the alternatives mentioned during the meeting:

- District of Columbia Police Crime Lab
- DCPS School Bus Lot
- Asphalt plant

The neighborhood is in agreement that residential development is the preferable alternative.

The disagreement, I believe, is over the neighborhood amenities associated with this project. This includes such items as signage, landscaping, and traffic concerns. I feel that all parties represented at tonight's meeting are not that far apart on the amenities' issue. If so, a consensus should be achievable if all parties - ANC Commissioners, Concerned Citizens of North Michigan Park (CCNMP) and neighborhood citizens - would meet and openly discuss their issues.

Several speakers complained that the construction of residential housing would result in negatives for the neighborhood. Three of these negatives are crime, housing costs and traffic. In my opinion, the first two issues carry little weight. I cannot see how the building of residential units has any correlation to crime. However, in the absence of development, crimes have been committed at the site before Rocky Gorge acquired it. The site was neither secure nor monitored by anyone. As a result, stolen cars were often taken there to be stripped and torched. In addition the site is a neighborhood nuisance. Neighborhood children would often go to the site and play

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EXHIBIT NO. 46

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amongst the bricks, cement blocks, and other dangerous items. This neglected site also became a haven for vermin and for mosquitoes attracted to the stagnant water available after each rainfall. I cannot see how residential housing could engender more crime or be more hazardous than the current state of affairs.

The cost of housing issue also may be overblown. Rocky Gorge had paid $2.01 million for the lot, will pay thousands more to remediate it and, by their estimate, will pay thousands more in per unit construction costs. If true, I believe Rocky Gorge would be hard-pressed to price its housing at the neighborhood definition of 'affordable' housing.

However, I do agree that traffic congestion is a legitimate issue. The majority of the neighborhood traffic problems are due to two concurrent construction projects. The first is the Taylor Street Bridge construction, which is a multi-year project that affects southbound traffic. The other project involves the never-ending construction on Gallatin Street NE (between 6th Place and South Dakota Avenue). The District of Columbia had widened and then reinforced Gallatin Street to support traffic to and from the salt dome. In reality, this street has never been fully available since June. Neighborhood traffic problems will not appreciably improve until these projects are completed.

I also suggested that the Rocky Gorge Emerson Park project build two distinct entrance/egress points. Emerson Street has been identified as one entrance/egress while others are being considered. The city's response to a major fire could easily block the Emerson Street entrance/egress. There are two fire hydrants near the Emerson Park property: 1) The first is within 20 feet of 611 Emerson Street, and 2) the other is at the intersection of Emerson Street and 6th Place NE. If any of the properties at or above 629 Emerson Street, NE require fire and rescue service, the Emerson Street entrance/egress will be blocked, thus requiring a second entrance/egress point. This is a legitimate issue that requires attention.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Oliver

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