

**TESTIMONY OF DR. BRUCE HERWALD BEFORE
THE ZONING COMMISSION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ON CASE NO. 05-21A PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENTS
INVOLVING VETERINARY HOSPITALS**

Dear Commission Members:

My name is Dr. Bruce Herwald and I am a licensed and certified veterinarian in the District of Columbia with hospitals/clinics on Capitol Hill, Dupont Circle and MacArthur Boulevard. I am a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. I appear before you today in opposition to those portions of the proposed text amendments that affect veterinarians. The Commission will appreciate that as more people flock to live in the District, the District must provide certain services to retain them, such as veterinarian hospitals and clinics. While I agree from a neighborly perspective that such hospitals and clinics should not board dogs because of the noise and waste products associated with them, that limitation should not apply to “pocket” animals such as gerbils and hamsters or cats, ferrets, birds, and rabbits. None of these animals pose noise or pollution problems to neighbors and are not allowed outside the hospital premises.

Accordingly, I suggest that the definition of “Veterinary Hospital” be revised as follows:

“An establishment used by a licensed veterinarian for the practice of veterinary medicine, as well as boarding of animals but not as a boarding establishment for dogs, which may also provide overnight care for animals including dogs as part of their medical care. The boarding of animals other than dogs must be an accessory use not in excess of 50% of the useable space of the building where boarded.”

However, the larger problem with the proposed regulations is to remove veterinary hospitals as a matter of right in the C-2 through C-4 zones and requiring that they be permitted only as a special exception in those zones as well as the industrial zones. This “draconian” approach is a throwback to the early 1900s when veterinarians were not considered real doctors and appears to be related to the “doggy day care” problems experienced in some residential

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zones and goes too far. As I mentioned above, veterinary hospitals would not be allowed to board dogs under my proposed definition unless such “boarding” was for a very short period related solely to medical care and under such circumstances should be allowed as a matter of right in the C-2, C-3, C-4, CM and M zones. The Commission needs to keep in mind that animals come from residences and not office buildings and that pet owners need to be in close vicinity to our hospitals.

A natural outcome of the proposed regulations if passed as currently written is that there will be no new veterinarian hospitals in the District if a special exception is required. Landowners will be loath to tie up their properties for six months to a year based on a contingency that the prospective buyer obtain the special exception as a condition to closing. So the Commission should view this proposal as one that does not serve the interests of the District’s burgeoning and pet-loving population.

Finally, I request that the Commission allow specialty or emergency veterinary hospitals to be located in the C-2, C-3, C-4, CM and M zones in the District as a matter of right with the limitation that there be no animal boarding of any kind other than that related to medical care. Currently, there is only one such facility in the District in Friendship Heights. These types of facilities are utilized for surgery for animals in either a non-emergency specialty such as hip replacement or emergency life threatening situations.

I thank the Commission for this opportunity to speak and am open to any questions it may have.

cc: Office of Planning
Jennifer Steingasser
Steve Mordfin