

Dave Powell AIA, AICP and Jeannine Jacokes
111 12th Street NE Washington, DC 20002

17 September 2006

The Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
One Judiciary Square, Suite 210 – South
441 Fourth Street, NW Washington, DC 20001

Re ZC Case 06-06 "Charter Schools Text Amendments"

RECEIVED
DC OFFICE OF ZONING
2006 SEP 18 PM 2:08
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 06-06
EXHIBIT NO. P3

Dear Zoning Commission members

We are writing to express our firm opposition to a last minute change to the charter school text amendment that allows schools with 16 or fewer students to locate as a "matter of right" in residential neighborhoods. As residents of Capitol Hill for the last 15 years, active members of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (Dave has served on the board and is currently serving on the zoning committee) with graduate degrees in planning (we have a firm understanding of urbanism, zoning, and historic preservation), and as parents of young children (ages 2 and 6), we feel very strongly that a charter school use of any size should require a special exception

At the 11 May 2006 Zoning Commission hearing on the text amendment, Dave testified on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) in support of the amendment as originally proposed (without the subsequent change allowing charter schools with 16 or fewer students to locate "matter of right"). As you know, CHRS is the oldest and largest civic association on Capitol Hill representing about a thousand members. In providing their support, CHRS suggested more specific tests for charter school special exceptions (similar to Section 223.2)

Our major concern is that the regulations as currently proposed, would allow a small charter school as a matter of right in our Capitol Hill neighborhood which consists mostly of R4 row houses on narrow lots. Charter schools could include not just early childhood and elementary schools, but also high schools, adult education, vocational schools, residential facilities, etc. This encompasses a much broader range of impacts than a child/elderly development center with 16 or fewer individuals that is currently allowed as a matter of right in an R4 district. Thus, uses falling under the broader definition of charter schools could be located in any row house with no public process that would give the community the right to comment on the impact that the school would have on their neighborhood. In addition, the change places no restrictions on the concentration of schools in any area. The cumulative affect of multiple schools in close proximity could overburden public services, cause significant parking and safety problems, and have an adverse impact on the use and enjoyment of abutting dwellings.

In Dave's position as a Senior Vice President / National Director for Jones Lang LaSalle, he manages the development of large commercial office projects that sometimes require complex zoning strategies and coordination with community groups. In Jeannine's position as Executive Director for Partner's for the Common Good (a socially responsible nonprofit lender), she provides needed loan capital for affordable housing and community facilities such as charter schools. We are very sympathetic to the difficulty that charter schools encounter in locating appropriate facilities. However, we feel strongly that charter schools of any size should be required to comply with the special exception process if proposed in residential neighborhoods.

Sincerely,



Dave Powell AIA, AICP



Jeannine Jacokes

cc Sharon Ambrose, Councilmember, Ward 6
Tommy Wells, School Board Member, District 3 (democratic candidate for Council, Ward 6)
Cody Rice, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (6A03)
Nicholas Alberti, Sr., Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner (6A04)
Ellen McCarthy, Director Office of Planning
Dr. Patrick Canavan, Director DCRA
Bill Crews, Zoning Administrator

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 06-06
EXHIBIT NO. 83