

For Immediate Release

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September 24, 2015

Planners' Convenience Trumps Public Inclusion District Officials Say Translating ZRR Too Costly and "Not Legally Required"

On Monday September 21, 2015, the DC Zoning Commission denied requests by several ANC Commissioners, citizens' groups, as well as many individuals, to have the Office of Planning translate the Zoning Regulation Review (ZRR) into several languages, including Spanish, spoken by many Washington residents.

"For all English as a second language and low-literacy residents, equal opportunity participatory governance is important! It's a human rights issue," proclaimed Claudia Barragan, DC resident, DC planning practitioner, language access advocate.

Further, Commissioners denied requests for an extension of time and a proactive educational campaign by the Office of Planning so that all District residents, including limited-English speaking neighbors, may review and comment on the complete revision of DC's zoning code, known as the ZRR.

"We have extended this enough," declared Zoning Chairman Anthony Hood, who said the ZRR has been an *"eight-year project."*

Sara Bardin, Director of the Office of Zoning, said that to allow limited-English speaking neighbors to participate in reviewing the entire book of ZRR proposed language would cost \$100,000 for each translated language or about \$100 a page. The ZRR is nearly 1,000 pages long and affects every DC neighborhood.

DC Office of Planning Deputy Director, Jennifer Steingasser qualified that the Office of Planning had already distributed a December 2012 two-page Fact Sheet produced in many languages at sixteen community meetings they had attended, sufficing for outreach to limited-English residents (see link below).

Vice-Chair of the Zoning Commission Marcie Cohen agreed and said, *"We have done as much as we are required to do,"* referencing an unpublished opinion by Alan Bergstein, attorney with DC's Office of Attorney General that translation of the ZRR is "not legally required." Mr. Bergstein's opinion is not currently on the public record.

Regarding the ZRR, the DC Zoning Commission has set a closing date of September 25, 2015 for public comment.

As of September 21, more than fifty District residents, citizens' groups, and ANC's have submitted comments to the Zoning Commission calling for an open and transparent urban planning process that would seek to include limited-English-speaking neighbors (see link below).

"We are discussing remedies for this serious oversight and discriminatory perspective by the City's zoning and planning officials," declared Sapna Padnya, Executive Director of Many Languages One Voice.

The ZRR will affect all neighborhood, residents, and all zoning districts throughout the entire City if and when implemented by the DC Zoning Commission.

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.08-06A
EXHIBIT NO.1003