



Gangplank Slipholders Association

November 2, 2017

Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, I come before you this evening to speak on behalf of the historic liveboard community at Gangplank Marina and to share our concerns about the adverse impacts we face as the Wharf seeks approval for the second Phase of the massive Wharf project. These include concerns about livability, affordability and sustainability. The Zoning Commission has recognized our unique role in previous proceedings under this PUD. We ask for that consideration again in the impending next Phase of this project – a phase that most directly affects our homes and way of life, both during and after construction.

The Gangplank Liveboards

For those Commissioners that have joined this body since approval of Phase I, the Gangplank Liveboards are a small community with a unique history, lifestyle and ongoing contribution to the Southwest DC community.

The Wharf itself celebrates our unique role with a historic marker (Exhibit 1) noting how the Liveboard community was started as affordable housing rather than filling the Southwest waterfront with just “pleasure crafts.” Despite being small in number, we may be the largest liveboard community on the East Coast. Likely due to the protections we received from this Commission during the earlier stages of this PUD, the number of floating homes at Gangplank fell by just five percent.

Since the last time we came before this Commission, there have been four babies born to Gangplankers (Malikai, Mika, Kaden and Margaret), and we understand that a fifth baby is on the way over on C Dock! We have also expanded the number of retirees on fixed incomes, a family with a physically disabled but hugely huggable son, and added new residents from a wide array of occupations including bartender, government worker, musician, construction worker, etc. We continue to demonstrate the vibrancy of a naturally occurring mixed income community united by a shared love of the water and a willingness to accept the challenges of living aboard.

As a tight-knit Southwest DC community, we make positive contributions to our neighborhood. Our residents volunteer regularly at local schools and community associations. Last month we again hosted our Boat Home Tour, opening up our floating homes to the curious and in the process we raised nearly \$7,000 that we donated to worthy causes such as St. Augustine’s Church, Amidon-Bowen PTA, Friends of Southwest Library, DC Sail and Potomac Riverkeeper.

Direct construction impacts: Liveboard Concerns

We are unique in another very important way – we are the only Southwest residents that will literally be living within the proposed Phase II construction site. We have been adjacent to and impacted by the four years of construction in Phase I and now face another five years of construction activity in Phase II. We have special concerns about Phase II construction including safety, noise, ingress and egress, and

continuity of the services and facilities that are necessary to the community. We have asked for work hour limits and advance notice on anticipated disruptions in service. We have not yet reached an agreement with the Wharf on a transition plan that covers these important issues.

We remain particularly concerned about transportation. During the period in which our current parking lot (Exhibit 2) becomes a large hole in the ground, the Wharf proposes moving our parking as much as three-quarters of a mile away, limiting access to it and not providing us with shuttle service to our lot, or connecting us to the new Southwest Shuttle service being provided to their new residents in Phase I.

We would note that when Mill Creek Residential took away 75 parking spaces during expansion of The View apartments, they agreed to provide those residents with round the clock transport to a remote parking lot.

Additionally, we will not have adequate drop off/pickup spaces for temporary ingress and egress of goods and people to our floating homes. They have proposed just two unenforced spaces for everyone – Liveboards, Entertainment Cruise Lines’ big ships, contractors, etc. This contrasts sharply with the guarantees we received under the Phase I transition plan.

Post Construction

1. **Affordability:** We recognize that the cost of living is rising for all of us in Southwest. We have conceded to paying more, including a 42% increase in slip fees [our base rent] over the next four years. In addition, we have agreed to pay market rates for parking in the future, which is another significant increase in our total fees.

The Wharf claims to not know what they will charge beginning in 2022, and so we have asked for both greater certainty and a reasonable bilateral mechanism to ensure that we are not driven out of our Southwest community. GPSA wants the Wharf to define how “market rate” will be determined, and wants further fee increases to be incremental so that family budgets can absorb them. We would note that multiple appraisers were used to determine market value for the small vendors operating at Eastern Market. Without meaningful, enforceable commitments, many in our community face economic displacement.

2. **Post Construction: Continuity of Services:** We also want to ensure that existing services and amenities continue after the completion of construction – the same promise that was made by the Developer during Phase I. These services are necessary to maintain our households and our boats.

The Wharf PUD is vested within the 1958 zoning regulations that recognized that we need a 1:1 ratio of parking spaces due to the unique nature of a floating home. Neither marina uses nor floating home uses have been adequately represented in the Comprehensive Transportation Report (CTR) for Wharf Phase II. The Wharf is providing designated parking areas for residents in its apartments and condos, and we request an area in Parcel 10's public garage be allocated for our community's needs. There are currently 79 spaces being used by Liveboard slipholders and we want them to be available for future use by the marina.

We request that during the construction of Phase II and until we have complete access to the Parcel 10 parking garages, that interim parking be within a walkable 0.5 miles, or that full shuttle

service be provided if the parking location exceeds that reasonable distance from the marina entrance. As an example of how the CTR does not provide for Liveaboard-specific needs, this plan's Loading and Drop-off areas (2 spaces on the other side of Parcel 10) are too far away to be useful in daily marina life, much less in an emergency evacuation, and residents are forced to compete for these limited spaces against large commercial operations and others.

3. **Enforceable, Durable Commitments:**

GPSA's concerns are heightened due to past failures by the Wharf. In 2012, the Wharf promised the District and GPSA that it "is fully committed to maintaining a vibrant liveaboard community at the Gangplank with a minimum of ninety-four (94) liveaboard slips." They have not adhered to that commitment – they have made no effort to reissue five unused licenses. We note that Final Order 11-03 says that parking for the marinas was to be built during Phase I, but now we are told there is no parking for us there. Moreover, there are no plans to even commence restoring the community until after Phase II is complete and then there is no concrete plan for doing it.

In exchange for rebuilding the marina, the Wharf is asking that Liveaboards be legally prohibited from any future challenges of the development. Given concerns about some Phase 1 processes and outcomes, plus the lack of adequate solutions to ongoing problems such as bus traffic, our Liveaboards are reluctant to grant such unlimited support.

Conclusion

In the Final orders for ZC11-03 and ZC11-03a issued by this Commission, the liveaboard community was provided with some limited protections to ensure our survival.

Unlike the agreement incorporated into the final order for ZC11-03a, we are currently being offered:

1. A reduction in necessary facilities;
2. An increase in fees and parking costs;
3. The direct inconveniences of construction; and
4. Little or no accommodation for the above.

As we face Phase II, which includes direct redevelopment of our marina, we ask that these existing commitments be extended and modified to circumstances as they now exist to protect a vulnerable community.

Mayor Muriel Bowser announced at the Capital Yacht Club's May 7, 2017 Flag Raising event that, 'If you live on the water now, you should be able to continue to live on the water.' At this juncture, the ability of Gangplank's residents to continue living in their floating homes is uncertain. We ask that the Zoning Commission continue its history of support for our community as we seek the continuity we were promised, and the sustainability that everyone aspires to.

We thank you for your attention to our situation, and for your immense public service.