

## Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

---

**From:** Adom Cooper <cooperadom@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 16, 2021 10:12 AM  
**To:** DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)  
**Subject:** Case 20-34\_Testimony Adom M. Cooper

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the DC Government. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know that the content is safe. If you believe that this email is suspicious, please forward to phishing@dc.gov for additional analysis by OCTO Security Operations Center (SOC).

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Adom M. Cooper and I am a SWDC Ward 6 resident. I have lived in the community since 2014 and have watched the purposeful erosion of the community's soul [at the hands of development and gentrification](#). My demand is simple: **reject this development, unless/until the project design is an example of equity and inclusion per the SW neighborhood plan with 1/3 market, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units.**

The Jemals Cotton Annex will promote the sterile environment found in large buildings like the Modern on M complex, and it will actively gentrify this neighborhood by attempting to stomp on the existing vibrant community present in the area. For these reasons, I ask that you **reject this development, unless/until the project design is an example of equity and inclusion per the SW neighborhood plan with 1/3 market, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units.** This development project would be irresponsible to the community and would actively harm the residents who have lived here for decades. Given that this is [in a D-8 Zone](#), the project's 8% planned affordable housing is not enough for such a change in the historic preservation to mixed-use. This is the bare minimum required by law, illustrating that Douglas Development is interested solely in checking necessary boxes and has no interest in community preservation. This will lead to actively racist outcomes. When only 8% of units are affordable and the Black median household income is \$42,000, less than a third that of White households, this project, by design, inherently excludes the majority of Black residents from being able to afford to live there.

**In addition to the issues with equity and affordable housing, we have a blatant conflict of interest in this case.** Even if this project had 100% affordable units, without the necessary, though imperfect AMI affordability context, discussions on this project should stop on a dime when a conflict of interest is present. At the ANC 6D meeting on March 8th, the developer presented about the project and stated that it was planning to give \$100K to the SW Community Foundation as a community benefit. The ANC voted 7-0-0 in approval for the project and ANC 6D Commissioner Andy Litsky was one of the approval votes.

Commissioner Andy Litsky sits on the Board of Directors for the SW Community Foundation. He is one of five Board members and the foundation's public site does not list any other staff. At the bare minimum, Litsky maintains a 20% influencing interest on all Board decisions for the Foundation. This is the same foundation that the developer will give a lump sum of \$100K for community benefits. This is an egregious conflict of interest and should automatically disqualify both Commissioner Litsky from input on this case and any previous conversations with his involvement. Litsky did not make his involvement with SW Community Foundation known when he voted in his ANC capacity approving the project, knowing the Foundation's Board will have a

ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO.20-34  
EXHIBIT NO.21

chance to determine how the \$100K is used, and has not recused himself from any discussions. A disinterested observer can see how problematic these facts are. **How can anyone be expected to discharge the duties of an elected official properly when they are negotiating in an official government capacity for money that will explicitly benefit them privately?**

For argument's sake, here is an example of a community benefits agreement situation gone awry. The Southwest Neighborhood Assembly (SWNA) previously had issues with another project [called the Bard, slated for the corner of 6th and I Street SW](#). This case did not involve such a blatant conflict of interest and still has problematic facts. In July 2014, SWNA filed for historic preservation of the site. In September 2014, SWNA withdrew its historic preservation application, negotiated a [community benefits agreement with the developer for \\$60K](#), and took the lump sum of cash. There is no documentation as to what happened to the money. [In December 2014](#), then-SWNA president Kael Anderson stepped down. This situation is in the same vein and cannot be allowed to continue under any circumstances.

The fact that myself as a private citizen had to discover this Litsky's involvement in the SW Community Foundation and write about it in my testimony is evidence enough that this project will not represent the pulse of the community, but the profits of a few individuals who happen to be elected officials.

As a member of the community that has had to experience my neighborhood becoming [the most gentrified place in the United States](#), I demand that you reject this project as-is **unless/until the project design is an example of equity and inclusion per the SW neighborhood plan with 1/3 market, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units**. And at the bare minimum, do not continue any discussions until Mr. Litsky publicly makes his SW Community Foundation Board of Directors position known, explains why he chose to vote in approval for the project in light of this, and recuses himself.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Adom M. Cooper

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)