

April 4<sup>rd</sup> 2019

Chairperson Hill and Honorable Members of the Board:

I live in the Trinidad neighborhood where the Applicant, Jamaal S. Claggion, Ph.D., is proposing to build a six-unit apartment house at 1723 Montello Ave NE and has applied for special exceptions under BZA Case 19982. I write to state my opposition to this project, even though there are aspects of the Applicant's design which should be commended, such as the creation of two family-size units, and the green roof. Unfortunately, I believe there are problems with their latest plans, as shown Exhibit 37A, and more design work is necessary before the community and the BZA should be asked to formally weigh-in on this project. I'll describe my concerns below.

### **Fire Egress Concerns**

On Exhibit 37A Drawing Sheet A001, Unit #2 is described as a "1 Bedroom + DEN". The bedroom, listed as "Bedroom #2 (B02)", features a fire egress window onto Simms Place; however, there's no fire escape window-well for this bedroom window. In the Applicant's Prehearing statement (Exhibit 36), they write "The plans originally included window wells which are not permitted on Simms Place because the Right-of-Way is only fifty feet (50 ft.)." If the Applicant removed window wells which formerly provide egress for Unit #2, how does this design still meet code?

On Exhibit 37A Drawing Sheet A007, the cellar floor level is defined as 5'2" below grade. That same sheet shows the window for "Bedroom #2 (B02)" is above grade, which means the bottom of its sill is at least 62" above the ground. I believe fire code requires the bottom of egress windows to not exceed 44" from the finished floor. Given the lack of lack of window wells on Simms Place and given the window sill height, I again ask how does that cellar unit meet fire code?

I understand that the BZA's role is to consider the special exceptions, rather than diving into building code details such as fire-code; however, I believe the concerns raised here may require the Applicant to revise the design and the BZA should not be asked rule on design in flux.

### **Inadequate Trash/Recycling**

On Drawing Sheet A002, a small 3-ft x 2-1/2 ft trash closet is shown in the Southeast corner of the building. This is a six-unit apartment building: two 3-bedrooms units, three 2-bedrooms, and one 1 bedroom+den. That trash closet can barely accommodate one Supercan - never mind accommodating sufficient trash and recycling contains for six units. I honestly don't know whether building code requires a minimum number of trash and recycling containers per unit,

but the proposed design seems opposite to the District's recycling goals. If (when) our future neighbors run into trash problems, the whole neighborhood will suffer because 1723 residents may end up using public waste bins and/or their neighbors' barrels. Again, it seems the design requires refinement before the BZA should give it their final consideration.

Next door to the Applicant's building, there's an adjoining four-unit apartment building, address 1210 Simms Place NE. That building has two fewer units than the Applicant's proposal and yet it features an area that spans the full depth of the building where several trash and recycling containers are stored. A photograph of that area is shown in Figure 1:



*Figure 1: Full-Depth Trash Area for Adjoining Building*

I believe the Applicant may need a similar design solution at 1723 Montello to ensure that my future neighbors will not run into trouble with trash and recycling.

## Drawing Error

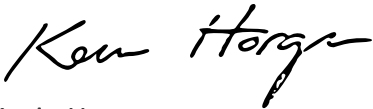
On Exhibit 37A Drawing Sheet A007, one can see the trash room door is located at the sidewalk level, requiring a projection into both the cellar and first floor units. The upper half of the trash room projects into the first-floor Unit #4's Bedroom #1, as shown on Drawing Sheet A002. The lower half of that trash room projects into the cellar-floor Unit #2's Bedroom #2; however, Drawing Sheet A001 doesn't show the trash room projection into that bedroom. I understand this is a minor drawing error, but it creates further doubt in my mind about the fidelity of the design at this stage.

## Summary

While I appreciate that the Applicant is including two family-size units in their plans, I believe the design is not yet finalized. I believe there's a high likelihood that the number of units and/or number of bedrooms may change from what is shown in Exhibit 37A and what they can ultimately submit to DCRA for permitting. I understand that minor changes always occur during the process of creating a detailed permit drawing set, but the issues described above may result in material changes to the first and cellar floor levels.

I believe the Applicant should address these concerns before asking the community and the BZA to support this project. In the event that a future design iteration creates an off-street area similar to 1210 Simms Place, I would kindly ask the Applicant to consider sizing that area so that it might also serve to locate utility meters away from the public sidewalk. It's unfortunate when the façade of well-designed building is marred with utility meters. A properly sized off-street area could also be used for additional bicycle storage, further mitigating the parking concerns that are deeply held by many of my neighbors.

Thank you,



Kevin Horgan

c.c.

Keisha Shropshire, ANC 5D02 Commissioner  
Clarence Lee, ANC 5D07 Commissioner, ANC 5D Chairperson