

TESTIMONY OF TRACY HART
BEFORE THE ZONING COMMISSION
of the DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CASE NO. 21-18 (DANCE LOFT VENTURES, LLC)
Application for a Consolidated PUD and Related Map Amendment
@ Square 2704, Lots 64, 815, 819, 821, 823, 828, and 830-833

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2022

Chairperson Hood and members of the Zoning Commission,

Thank you for considering my written testimony regarding the application put forward by Dance Loft Ventures. I have lived in Washington DC since 1993, and in the Sixteenth Street neighborhood for 13 years.

I would like to focus my comments on the lack of integrity of the community consultation process managed by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4C, and unchecked by the office of Councilmember Janeese Lewis George. The Letter of Support from the ANC reads “the ANC does not find allegations of insufficient engagement or failure to provide an opportunity for neighbors to express their concerns to be credible”. Let me disabuse you of that.

In ANC 4C meetings, community members have no participant rights - we cannot see what other community members are logged on, we have to be unmuted one at a time, and can be re-muted at any time. Project proponents – e.g. developers -- have co-host rights, they can be seen by each other, by all those logged on, and can unmute and speak at any time. Furthermore, in the community consultation meetings specific to the Heleos project, meeting participants could only send chat comments to the co-panelists, and these comments could not be read by other participants.

I raised this concern to both to my Single-Member District Commissioner as well as to the ANC; they were unresponsive. So, in March 2021, I wrote to the constituent services representative in Lewis George’s office, to ask him to facilitate a more even playing field for community

consultations. Specifically, my concern was that our ANC and our SMD Commissioner did not understand the change in online technology needed to allow meeting participants to see each other and to co I was told that this issue would be raised to the Councilmember. However, in the 17 subsequent meetings hosted by the ANC, this muting of community voice continued.

In short, we have not been afforded fair and effective community consultation. I say this as an environmental impact assessment professional; my job necessitates demonstrating genuine and sufficient community consultation as part of the assessment process.

Our ANC has not represented the views of our neighborhood. Their Letter of Support for this proposed development misrepresents both the nature of the community consultation process as well as the developer's willingness to engage in good faith with the adjacent neighbors.

I ask that you deny this PUD application and related Map Amendment at this time. Specifically, I ask that you request a mediation between the developer and the adjacent neighbors, with a mediator which functions independently of the Councilmember's Office and the ANC.

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