

GOVERNMENT OF
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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ZONING COMMISSION

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REGULAR PUBLIC HEARING
CASE NO. 24-23A

+ + + + +

MONDAY

FEBRUARY 5, 2026

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The Public Hearing of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission convened via teleconference, pursuant to notice at 4:00 p.m. EDT, Anthony J. Hood, Chairman, presiding.

ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

- ANTHONY J. HOOD, Chairman
- ROBERT E. MILLER, Vice Chair
- JOSEPH IMAMURA, Commissioner
- GWEN WRIGHT, Commissioner
- TAMMY STIDHAM, Commissioner

OFFICE OF ZONING STAFF PRESENT:

- MIKE SAKINEJAD, Zoning Data Specialist
- ELLA ACKERMAN, Acting Secretary

OFFICE OF ZONING LEGAL DIVISION STAFF PRESENT:

- JACOB RITTING, ESQUIRE

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ALSO PRESENT:

ERIC DEBEAR, ESQUIRE, Cozen O'Connor
LOU BOZA, A2 Design, Inc.
NICOLE WHITE, Symmetra Design
LATONYA HENDERSON, Cedar Tree Academy
MATTHEW JESICK, DC Office of Planning
NOAH HAGEN, DC Department of Transportation

The transcript constitutes the minutes from the
Regular Public Hearing held on February 5, 2026.

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(4:00 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We are convening and broadcasting this public hearing by videoconferencing. My name is Anthony Hood, and I'm joined by Vice Chair Miller, Commissioner Wright, Commissioner Imamura, and Commissioner Stidham. We're also joined by the Office of Zoning staff, Ms. Ella Ackerman, and Mr. Mike Sakinejad, who will be handling all of our virtual operations; also, our Office of Zoning Legal Division, Mr. Jacob Ritting. I will ask all others to introduce themselves at the appropriate time, if required.

The virtual public hearing notice is available on the Office of Zoning's website. This proceeding is being recorded by a court reporter and is also webcast live via Webex and YouTube Live. The video will be available on the Office of Zoning's website after the hearing. Accordingly, all those listening on Webex or with -- or by phone will be muted during the hearing, and only those who have signed up to testify will be unmuted at the appropriate time. When called, please state your name before providing your testimony. When you are finished speaking, please mute your audio. If you experience difficulty accessing Webex or with your telephone call in, then please call our OZ Hotline number at 202 -- I believe it's 202-727-0789 to receive Webex log-in or call-in instructions or if you have not signed up to testify. All persons planning to testify must sign up in advance

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1 and will be called by name at the appropriate time. At the time
2 of sign-up, all participants will complete the oath or
3 affirmation required by Subtitle Z-408.7. If you wish to file
4 written testimony or additional supporting documents during the
5 hearing, then please be prepared to describe and discuss it at
6 the time of -- at the time of your request when testifying.

7 The subject of this evening's hearing is Zoning
8 Commission Case Number 24-23A. This is Cedar Tree Academy Public
9 Charter School, modification of hearing of design review in the
10 NHR zone at Square 5861, Lot 89, again, 701 Howard Road Southeast.
11 Again, today's date is February the 5th, 2026.

12 The hearing will be conducted in accordance with the
13 provisions of 11-Z DCMR, Chapter 4, as follows: preliminary
14 matters; the applicant's case. The applicant actually has up to
15 60 minutes, but I think it's pretty straightforward. We may be
16 better served by us asking questions, so maybe we'll hit the
17 highlights and have ten minutes, unless my colleagues object.
18 We'll have reports of the -- of other government agencies, report
19 of the Department of Transportation, and report of the Office of
20 Planning, and report of the ANC; testimony and organizations
21 each -- organizations, five minutes; individuals, three minutes,
22 respectively -- and we'll hear in the order from those in support,
23 opposition, and undeclared; and then we'll have rebuttal and
24 closing by the applicant. At the time -- at this time, this
25 Commission will consider any preliminary matters. Does the staff

1 have any preliminary matters, Ms. Ackerman?

2 MS. ACKERMAN: Yes, I do. I have a lot today. Okay.
3 So there are two waiver requests for the Commission to consider.
4 The first is at Exhibit 14 and 14B. The applicant requested a
5 waiver for the late posting of the property -- it was posted 22
6 days instead of the 40 days prior to the hearing -- and a late
7 filing of the affidavit of posting. The applicant has provided
8 justification for the waiver of Subtitle Z, Section 402.3,
9 stating that the notice was mailed out to owners within 200 feet.
10 They held meetings with the original stakeholders, and the ANC
11 voted to support the modification. It was published in the DC
12 Register and OZ's website. And that's all I have for this first
13 waiver request.

14 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Ackerman. Again,
15 the ANC is 8A. Any objections to the request? Looking at my
16 colleagues, okay, any objections?

17 (No response.)

18 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Not hearing any, we will accept
19 that waiver. Any -- I think we -- did you do two waivers or one?

20 MS. ACKERMAN: Two waivers.

21 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Two. Any objections to either one of
22 those waivers?

23 (No response.)

24 CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. No objections. We will
25 accept it. And that's all five of us, because Commissioner

1 Stidham will let me know if she objects.

2 MS. ACKERMAN: Okay. Would you like me to still read
3 it or no?

4 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Go ahead and read it into the record.
5 Yeah, read it into the record.

6 MS. ACKERMAN: On Exhibit 18 and 18B, there's a revised
7 transportation memorandum, along -- to waive the requirements of
8 Subtitle Z-401.8 to allow the transportation plan to be filed
9 less than 30 days prior to the hearing. The original plan was
10 filed on time. DDOT's report was in the record on time, and this
11 revised plan is in response to something DDOT recommended, and
12 the applicant went ahead and added it to the plan prior to the
13 hearing. And that is all for that one.

14 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Again --

15 MS. ACKERMAN: Next up --

16 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Let me check again. Any objections to
17 anything you've heard thus far?

18 VICE CHAIR MILLER: No objections.

19 (No response from other Commissioners.)

20 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Ms. Ackerman, you may continue.

21 MS. ACKERMAN: Next up, I have proffered expert
22 witnesses. There are two, both of whom have previously been
23 accepted by the Commission already, but we are asking that you
24 accept them into this case specifically. They are Luis Boza with
25 A2 Design, Inc., in architecture, and Nicole White with Symmetra

1 Design, in transportation.

2 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Any objections?

3 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: No objections.

4 (No response from other Commissioners.)

5 CHAIRMAN HOOD: No objections. Great. All right.

6 That's it, Ms. Ackerman, I believe, with our preliminary matters.

7 You want to bring everybody up or anything else?

8 MS. ACKERMAN: I do have the exhibits that are new in
9 the record, if you'd like to hear those, and the applicant's
10 witness.

11 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Sure. Okay.

12 MS. ACKERMAN: Okay. At Exhibit 17 is the ANC report,
13 ANC 8A in support. Exhibit 16 is OP's report recommending
14 approval. Exhibit 15 is DDOT's report stating they have no
15 objections, but with a condition. On page 32 of the OP report
16 are DOEE, their comments, which support their sustainability
17 efforts. Letters in support we received were from Councilmember
18 White; Community Engagement and Corporate Impact; Mitchell
19 Services, LLC; Congress Heights -- Congress Heights Community
20 Development Corporation; and 8A06 Commissioner Robin McKinney.
21 Tonight the applicant has one witness. It's Dr. LaTonya Henderson
22 of Cedar Tree Academy. And then, lastly, the applicant is
23 planning on taking -- or planning on a ten-minute presentation.
24 And that is all.

25 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you. Let's bring everybody up,

1 and we will take a ten-minute presentation, and make sure we hit
2 all the highlights. I know we've seen a version of some of this
3 before, so let's bring everybody up that needs to come up.

4 MS. ACKERMAN: Working on that.

5 CHAIRMAN HOOD: So after we hear the presentation,
6 colleagues, I'm going to start off with Commissioner Imamura, and
7 then I'm going to come to Commissioner Wright, and then kind of
8 like the normal order. Okay. Mr. DeBear, whenever your team is
9 up, we're ready whenever you all are.

10 MR. DEBEAR: Thank you, Chair Hood and Commissioners.
11 We'll give a moment for two more. There's Lou, and Dr. Henderson
12 should be there as well. And while we're doing that -- and there
13 she is -- if Mr. Sakinejad could bring up our presentation at
14 Exhibit 20 --

15 MS. ACKERMAN: We're working on that right now.

16 MR. DEBEAR: -- or Ms. Ackerman.

17 (PowerPoint presentation shared on screen.)

18 MR. DEBEAR: Thank you. Again, my name is Eric DeBear
19 on behalf of the applicant, Cedar Tree Academy. As you all noted,
20 this is a modification with hearing to an approved design review.
21 We will give a ten-minute presentation and hit on the highlights,
22 as the Chair requested.

23 Next slide please. This is the subject property, 701
24 Howard Road, again, just noting the existing school being located
25 on this property.

1 Next slide please. To give a brief project background,
2 the Commission approved this case in March 2025, so a little less
3 than a year ago. At the time -- or that approval was for a new
4 school building with approximately 36,000 square feet.
5 Unfortunately, since that time, there have been fairly
6 significant changes to Cedar Tree's potential funding sources,
7 including OSSE's uniform per student funding formula, reducing
8 potential property funding for increased school capacity, and
9 then cuts to the U.S. Department of Education, which was going
10 to be relied upon to finance this capital improvement. And if
11 the Commission does have questions about that, Dr. Henderson is
12 here to answer them.

13 Next slide please. This modified project would
14 incorporate the existing school building with facade upgrades
15 along Howard Road, as well as a new rear addition. The school
16 is excited that we are able to achieve the same programming as
17 the original project that the Commission reviewed and approved.
18 That would be 32 classrooms, a new cafeteria, a kitchen, a
19 gymnasium, a library, and a parent center. There will be 34
20 parking spaces and a loading area, largely using the existing
21 parking area, as well as green space for students, and did want
22 to note that there will be more limited public space improvements
23 along Howard Road.

24 Next slide please. You can skip to the next slide. To
25 give a brief overview of community/agency engagement, the ANC 8A

1 is in support, as they were original -- in the original
2 application. The Office of Planning is in support; DDOT has no
3 objection; and we have five letters of support, including from
4 Redbrick LMD, the neighboring property owner of many of the
5 parcels that are being redeveloped.

6 Next slide. I'm now going to hand it over to Luis Boza
7 to discuss some of the architecture.

8 MR. BOZA: Hello. My name is Lou Boza. I'm with A2
9 Design, Inc., and I am going to present the design. Sorry, my
10 camera is over here, but the screen's over here (indicating), so
11 I'll try to do my best to look both ways.

12 So here you see a comparison of the old design, the
13 approved design, and our modified site plan. The original
14 approved design showed the -- had the building located on the
15 east side of the site. We were demolishing the existing building
16 and adding new parking. The proposed modification retains the
17 existing Cedar Tree School building and builds an addition
18 perpendicular to it at the back of the site.

19 Next slide please. That arrangement allowed us to take
20 advantage of a lot of the existing conditions, such as the parking
21 and the large open area on the right side -- east side of the
22 site. We've paid special attention to how kids cross the parking
23 lot from the existing school to the new school by restriping some
24 of the parking spots to allow for a dedicated pathway there. On
25 the east side of the school addition, we have access via a stair

1 tower and a ramp directly to the play area down on the -- on the
2 right side. We've -- we're reusing the parking, and we have some
3 modifications that allowed us to create a delivery and drop-off
4 and trash area in the existing parking lot.

5 Next slide please. The next few slides go through the
6 plan and the program. I'll kind of go over these quickly.
7 Generally, it's a similar program. By taking advantage of the
8 existing school, we were able to meet the same program goals that
9 we had in the previous design. On the first floor of the
10 addition, we have a cafeteria and a warming kitchen, a few
11 classrooms. Next slide. On the second floor, we have a
12 gymnasium, classrooms, and some office spaces. And the next
13 slide. And same on the third floor. The gymnasium's a two-story
14 space, so that's the big yellow box there.

15 Next slide. We have asked for some flexibility on
16 the -- on the solar panels. Currently, as submitted, we had
17 showed them on the roof of the existing building. We're currently
18 assessing the structural capacity of that roof to hold those
19 solar panels. It's a possibility that we will relocate those to
20 the roof of the addition over the gymnasium, but we're currently
21 determining that at this time.

22 Next slide. The materials for the addition are similar
23 materials to what we had approved in the previous design. The
24 only difference here is the color. We have decided we'd be using
25 a cementitious material on the project, which is essentially an

1 EIFS exterior insulated system and a series of corrugated,
2 perforated panels at key moments in the design. And then the
3 color is meant to parallel and connect the identity of the new
4 building to the school's colors and logo.

5 Next slide. So here you see the elevations. This is
6 the elevation from Howard Road. What you'll see here is the
7 Cedar Tree Academy signage that we're adding that faces Howard
8 Road, and off in the distance is the addition. We have a three-
9 story entry for the public, when the public uses the gymnasium
10 and the cafeteria. On the first floor is a large cafeteria, a
11 lot of glazing there that can look out onto the site. And then
12 the area with the sort of patterned windows is the gymnasium, so
13 we're trying to articulate that on the -- on the façade.

14 Next slide. The south elevation; this is the elevation
15 that faces the freeway. On the right, you'll see a vertical
16 element; that's an egress stair, but it's an open-air egress
17 stair encased by a metal panel for security, but that's the
18 playful stair that gives kids access to the playground as well.

19 Next slide. This is the east elevation that faces the
20 playground. Again, you'll see the open stair tower. Next slide.
21 And then the west elevation, what you see here on the left here,
22 this is a new ramp that we are required to add for egress from
23 the 500-year floodplain.

24 Next slide. So you'll see the approved design on the
25 left, the modification on the right. The goal was similar, to

1 create an architectural language that was playful in nature by
2 using colors and clearly articulated composition and elements to
3 create a set of rules that would allow the kids to start to
4 understand those architectural components.

5 Next slide. So here you see the Howard Street sort of
6 street frontage, the approved and the proposed. Again, we're
7 making -- proposing some modifications to the existing building
8 at the entry of the school, again, tying them to the materials
9 that we're proposing in the addition. We're also introducing a
10 canopy with the signage, you know, for cover for school drop-
11 off/pick-up, as well as a bike parking area.

12 Next slide. Here is an overall slide. You can see the
13 clearly articulated elements. Again, the green is an EFIS panel.
14 The orange is sort of a perforated metal panel. And the elements
15 that are articulated are the entry with the canopy; there's sort
16 of a vertical plane that stitches the existing building to the
17 proposed addition; the stair tower that is in the back; the
18 mechanical penthouse canopy above the cafeteria, and so on.

19 Next slide. This is a sort of eye-level view showing
20 the existing parking and the path from the existing building to
21 the play area. Next slide. Again, same slide as before, the
22 entry from the -- to the existing school.

23 Next slide. Sort of a closer view. The thing to point
24 here, you see this sort of plinth, we're calling it, below the
25 window wall here. This is about a four-and-a-half foot high

1 plinth. Again, because of the 500-year floodplain, the building
2 is raised up, so there's a stagger in all the floors. We've
3 tried to kind of stitch the two together compositionally by
4 allowing some of the lines to continue from the existing to the
5 old -- to the addition, but that plinth wraps around the entire
6 building, and so the addition sort of floats on it.

7 Next slide. And then, again, the rear of the building,
8 the stair tower. This is a vertical element that allows roof
9 access for maintaining the mechanical equipment and so on, but
10 also allows access to the playground and also serves as a visual
11 marker. From the freeway you'll be able to see this to identify
12 the school. Next slide. That's it. Thank you.

13 MS. WHITE: Hi. Good evening. My name is Nicole White.
14 I'm Principal with Symmetra Design. In the interest of time, we
15 can focus on the pick-up/drop-off plan. We can skip ahead to
16 that slide, if you don't mind.

17 (Requested slide shared on the screen.)

18 MS. WHITE: There we go. Thank you. So, in general,
19 the pick-up and drop-off plan will remain the same as the approved
20 plan and the same as the existing conditions. The site will
21 continue to operate with a one-way loop for onsite circulation.
22 However, there are two minor differences, compared to the
23 previously approved plan, one being the drop-off location, and
24 the second topic being queuing capacity. The drop-off location
25 is simply switched to the other side, because the building was

1 | previously on the other side on the approved plan. And then, in
2 | terms of queueing, the parking lot was previously separated from
3 | the loop, which provided a slightly larger capacity for queueing
4 | onsite, and so the queueing capacity has reduced from 24 vehicles
5 | to 20 vehicles. The demand remains the same as we originally
6 | projected. Once enrollment reaches maximum levels, we anticipate
7 | that two vehicles would need to queue along Howard Road in the
8 | designated pick-up/drop-off zone, and you can see that zone on
9 | Howard Road in the image and the two cars expected to queue on
10 | Howard Road. Mr. DeBear, I'll turn it over to you.

11 | MR. DEBEAR: Thank you, Nicole. Next slide please.
12 | And, finally, I just wanted to briefly go through the standard
13 | and the zoning relief that's being requested. Again, the scope
14 | of the hearing is, obviously, the impact of the modification on
15 | the original application.

16 | Next slide please. We are seeking five areas of relief,
17 | one of which minimum residential FAR was previously granted on
18 | the original case. I will go through the other four areas
19 | summarily. Next slide please. The rear yard, as you saw, we
20 | have no rear yard, because the rear addition will butt up against
21 | the rear lot line. That rear lot line is somewhat jagged, so
22 | there are areas where we do have a setback, but, ultimately, you
23 | would need it to go across the rear yard to go across the entire
24 | setback, so relief is required. There is no active use abutting
25 | the rear of the property. It's just federally-owned open green

1 space, along with the I-295 Interchange, so we do not project any
2 adverse impact of this rear yard relief.

3 Next slide please. Due to reusing or refashioning the
4 existing building as part of this project, there are a few
5 designated street design standards that we are requiring relief
6 from, one being the requirement that the ground level be 14 feet
7 of floor to ceiling in height, and other being that 50 percent
8 of the facade be, essentially, clear glazing, because, again, we
9 are reusing that existing building, and in the interest of finding
10 a financially viable project, we are limiting the changes to that
11 façade to the architectural elements that Lou outlined, which is
12 really the awning and the additional EIFS material. So, with
13 that being said, we are seeking special exception relief. We
14 don't project that to impact the neighboring properties, and we
15 do believe it still complies with the purposes of the NHR zone.
16 The rear addition, in particular, has definitely been guided by
17 those designated street design standards, although there is no
18 street frontage for the rear addition.

19 Next slide please. We're also seeking vehicular
20 parking relief. Unfortunately, there are existing regulations
21 that require us to maintain parking spaces, so long as a structure
22 or use remains. The Zoning Commission has actually taken proposed
23 action to eliminate those requirements, but, as of now, they
24 still remain, so we are stuck meeting the 37-space requirement.
25 Thirty-four spaces will be provided. Nonetheless, we believe

1 that we've met the standard for special exception relief, in that
2 we exceed the amount of spaces that were approved in the original
3 proposal, due also to the proximity of Metrorail and our ongoing
4 TDM and Performance Monitoring Plans.

5 Next slide please. And, finally, there is a
6 requirement in the NHR zone that all new construction or
7 substantial improvements achieve LEED-Gold certification. We
8 were pursuing LEED-Gold in the original proposal, but due to
9 incorporating the existing building, which is not LEED-certified,
10 achieving LEED-Gold on this entire project would be very
11 challenging and would be reliant on many of the conditions in the
12 existing building, including water use reduction, energy
13 performance, and other matters that LEED assesses. So we have
14 committed to achieving LEED-Silver certification for the
15 addition, itself, but not LEED-Gold or LEED-Silver for the entire
16 building. We did work with DOEE and OP, and they are supportive
17 of that relief as well.

18 Next slide. And, finally, I just wanted to identify
19 minor proposed changes to condition language in our order, really
20 just to account for some of the changes to the programming.
21 Again, we had obtained design flexibility for sustainability
22 features, so we would be amending or proposing to amend that to
23 reference LEED-Silver certification, as well as potentially
24 changing the location of the solar panels, as Mr. Boza discussed.
25 And then, in the TDM Plan, acknowledging the lesser number of

1 short-term and long-term bicycle parking and showers and lockers
2 that would be provided. And then, finally, amending the
3 Performance Monitoring Plan that was requested by DDOT to begin
4 in fall 2028, and that's simply related to the project being
5 pushed another year, due to this modification.

6 And, with that, I will conclude our presentation-in-
7 chief. We greatly thank the Commission for their time, and
8 hopefully we didn't go too long over the ten minutes. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you to Mr. DeBear and the team
10 for your presentation. Straight to the point. We greatly
11 appreciate it. Let's see if we have any questions or comments.
12 I'm going to start with Commissioner Imamura please.

13 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.
14 First, I want to just start off, I did not receive the memo to
15 wear black on the design review tonight, so, you know, that was
16 my faux pas, but, again, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 I only have a couple questions. I know that Dr.
18 Henderson is on. And, Dr. Henderson, I just -- my comments --
19 my first comment out of the gate here is, I know that this is
20 not the outcome that you had probably hoped for, but what I can
21 say is that Mr. Boza and his design team, I think, did a terrific
22 job in meeting the program requirements while still providing, I
23 think, what is -- what I would call a quality design solution.
24 So I appreciate the effort to provide the facade upgrades and Mr.
25 Boza walking us through some of the changes. I think what's

1 first on my mind is your description of the plinth and sort of
2 trying to align both of those buildings. I think you did a --
3 was successful and you did a great job, in terms of just sort of
4 the horizontality of it and trying to align some of those
5 fenestrations and architectural features. The use of, yeah,
6 materials and color at key moments, to use your phrasing, Mr.
7 Boza, I think, was successful. Also, the entry at Howard, I
8 think, was also successful, in terms of just use of color and
9 materiality. I was going to ask, "Why the change in color?". I
10 thought the original design solution was sort of this playful and
11 bright, colorful solution, but to match the school colors makes
12 sense.

13 I will say that one of my favorite elements of this
14 project, actually, is the stair tower, with sort of the open-air
15 egress and perforated panels, I think, is a neat element here,
16 and so I want to compliment you on integrating that into this
17 design solution. Also, I guess I'm supportive of LEED-Silver for
18 this addition. That seems to make a lot of sense. What I
19 would -- the question I do have, Mr. Boza, is moving the solar
20 panels or photovoltaics from the existing structure -- existing
21 building over on top of the gymnasium, it appears as if you're
22 losing square footage. So I wanted to ask if you could just talk
23 to that aspect of it a little bit and, I guess, how much renewable
24 energy are you losing? How does that impact your LEED-Silver?
25 How much are you -- how certain are you of your LEED-Silver? Are

1 | we in a pretty good spot with that, or is it just a couple points
2 | over? So just start with that, and then I've got a couple other
3 | questions.

4 | MR. BOZA: Yeah. So what we -- what we have determined
5 | is that the roof -- the amount of solar -- of power we can
6 | generate would meet the zoning requirements of the two percent
7 | over the gym. In fact, it's well over. I think LEED caps out
8 | at four points, so I think we'd be getting all the points in that
9 | new location as well for that. Our LEED consultant has told us
10 | that they do believe that LEED Silver is achievable, even with
11 | the moving of the panels to the existing location -- I'm sorry --
12 | to the addition.

13 | COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Okay. Very good. While we're
14 | talking about the photovoltaics or the solar panels, I noticed --
15 | I might have missed this, but they seemed absent on slide 20 and
16 | 21, not included in the renderings. So can you address that?

17 | MR. BOZA: Yes. I -- we did not model them in the 3D
18 | model. No, we have not, but there is a parapet on the roof. I
19 | don't think they'd be visible from the roof -- I'm sorry -- from
20 | the ground level, because they're kind of low-slope -- a
21 | ballasted system, so they don't -- they won't -- would unlikely
22 | project above the parapet wall of the -- of the addition.

23 | COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Okay. Good to know. There was
24 | a lot of special exception relief requested by Mr. DeBear, and
25 | I'm certainly okay with that. One of the things that struck me

1 | though is its proximity in the rear yard, right, to the highway
2 | there. So, Mr. Boza, if you could talk a little bit about your
3 | noise mitigation strategy for, I assume -- I guess, just whether
4 | it's the classrooms or the gymnasium or what have you, but --

5 | MR. BOZA: Yeah, we have to address that. We do have
6 | a -- we had a sound -- an acoustic consultant in the previous
7 | design that we will sort of check wall composition, the window
8 | types, all of that, to make sure that that is mitigated.

9 | COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: That's good to hear. And then
10 | my other question, coming back to DOEE's comments and sort of
11 | your collaboration with DOEE, I noticed that they had asked if
12 | you all could look at again if there's an opportunity or a chance
13 | to exceed the GAR from .2, to increase that a bit, and I'm curious
14 | if that's a viable option or if you all are looking at that. If
15 | not, why not?

16 | MR. BOZA: I don't know the answer to that, in terms
17 | of if we can increase it. What I do know is that we are -- we
18 | are providing more green area than we were in the previous design,
19 | by virtue of not using any of the portion of the site along the
20 | eastern side of the building.

21 | COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Okay. I would like to sort of
22 | tease that out, and for you all just -- certainly, you've met the
23 | requirements, but it would be great to -- just as a, you know,
24 | design responsibility and ethics, to take a look at that. The
25 | only other question or comment that I have for Mr. Boza is that

1 | you described a three-story entry into the gymnasium.

2 | MR. BOZA: Yes.

3 | COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: I regret that we didn't see a
4 | nice illustration of that, although we're not really focused on
5 | the interior, but my impression is, with what you've proposed in
6 | the original design solution and this -- and this now sort of
7 | modified design solution, I know that that three-story entry to
8 | the gymnasium will probably be pretty spectacular. So, I don't
9 | know, I guess for my own enjoyment, I guess I'd like for you to
10 | describe what that might look like.

11 | MR. BOZA: It -- Yeah. It's -- so it's probably smaller
12 | than you think, but it's -- where the two buildings come together,
13 | that entry will be dedicated for public use when they're using
14 | that gym. So as you enter that space, it's a small, essentially,
15 | elevator lobby that is probably 10 feet by 10 feet that rises
16 | about, you know, 25, 30 feet. And you have elevator access and
17 | you have stair access up as well. We are considering some
18 | openings that allow you to look up into the gym or down into that
19 | space, so I think we're trying to find ways to make it -- even
20 | though it's small in footprint, to make it exciting and
21 | experiential for people who are arriving there.

22 | COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Terrific. I'm happy to hear
23 | that, Mr. Boza. I have every confidence that you all will find
24 | a design solution that is equally as impressive on the outside
25 | as it is on the inside or vice versa there. Ms. White, I would

1 | like to have some questions for you, but this is pretty
2 | straightforward, and so -- in terms of just sort of a queuing
3 | exercise, and I think you did a terrific job, as you did before
4 | in the original design solution, so I don't have any questions
5 | and --

6 | MS. WHITE: Thank you. And I'm not offended at all.

7 | COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: All right. Very good. And,
8 | again, Mr. Chairman, I regret that I didn't wear my black tonight.
9 | Even Ms. White, as an engineer, wore her black tonight, so --
10 | but, with that, I yield back.

11 | CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Commissioner Imamura. When
12 | you mentioned it, I started looking around, and you're exactly
13 | right. So let's see, Commissioner Wright, you have any questions
14 | or comments?

15 | COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Just a couple. So, you know, I
16 | echo what Commissioner Imamura said. I am sure this is not the
17 | outcome that you hoped for, and I'm sorry that all the things
18 | going on in the world have affected your funding. So just two --
19 | I think you've done a good job of coming up with sort of a Plan
20 | B, and I think it looks good. I just have a couple of questions.
21 | One is, in the previous submission there was an outdoor
22 | playground.

23 | MR. BOZA: Uh-huh.

24 | COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Where is that on this property?
25 | I couldn't quite tell from the site plan.

1 MR. BOZA: Yeah, that's a good question. On the site
2 plan, you'll see a -- well, the entire space on the east side is
3 fenced --

4 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Is green space, yeah.

5 MR. BOZA: -- so that will be open green space. There
6 is a smaller rectangular element at the kind of Howard Road end
7 of that space that's --

8 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Uh-huh.

9 MR. BOZA: -- a fenced-in play surface; play equipment
10 for the younger kinds as well.

11 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Okay. Great. That -- I was
12 thinking that was what it might be, but I wasn't sure.

13 MR. BOZA: Yeah, I forgot to point that out.

14 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So that rectangle is the
15 playground. The other thing that I was wondering if there was a
16 possibility of is, I know you've -- you're protecting some of the
17 heritage trees that are along the front and that some of the
18 other front improvements can't be done, you know, widening the
19 sidewalk, things like that to -- because of the trees and because
20 of the transformer. However, I also sad to see that all of the
21 trees that were in the parking area have also disappeared. In
22 the previous submission, in the new parking area you had trees
23 every -- I don't know -- every five spaces or so. And I know
24 that, because you're dealing with an existing parking area, it
25 might be hard to do, but you do have some green sort of little

1 | end areas with the rows of parking, and I was wondering if there
2 | opportunities to add some trees, both because, you know, it helps
3 | shade the cars that are parked in the lot, it helps with heat
4 | island effect, all of that good stuff. Is that a possibility?

5 | MR. BOZA: Sure. We can look into that. I know --
6 | you're asking specifically about the parking lot, and we haven't
7 | considered that, but I did want to also point out that we are
8 | doing planting along the Howard Road side. I think that, again,
9 | I forgot to mention that. We also doing planting along the
10 | addition elevation as well in a small strip of --

11 | COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: That's low level shrubs.

12 | MR. BOZA: That's low level, yes.

13 | COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yeah.

14 | MR. BOZA: But I understand you're looking for
15 | something bigger that might provide shade in areas of the parking
16 | lot. We can certainly look into that.

17 | COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right. I mean, it looked you
18 | had -- again, you probably can't do it for every five spaces or
19 | so without losing space.

20 | MR. BOZA: Yeah.

21 | COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: But at the ends you have some
22 | small green areas, and perhaps those could -- those could have
23 | trees in them.

24 | MR. BOZA: Okay.

25 | COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So, you know, again I have no

1 objection to the areas of relief that you're looking at. I think,
2 again, you've come up with a really good Plan B, and I hope
3 that -- assuming we move forward with approval, I'm hoping you
4 can get the project underway.

5 MR. BOZA: Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So my only comments.

7 CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Thank you. Let me go to
8 you next, Vice Chair Miller.

9 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and
10 thank you to the Cedar Tree Academy team. It's good to see you
11 all again 11 months later, after we approved the original Plan
12 A, and I'm sorry that -- as Commissioner Wright pointed out, that
13 you had the financing and funding issues that you are not alone
14 in experiencing with the development projects that have been
15 previously approved, so that's understandable totally. I think
16 you've totally met the burden of proof for the special exception
17 and variance reliefs that you're seeking in this Plan B. I
18 actually prefer Plan B over Plan A, because it addresses the
19 primary concern, even though I supported it, that I had with Plan
20 A, which was the loss of that field and open space, which I think,
21 as Commissioner Stidham and others shared as well, you were going
22 to go down from 20,000 square feet, I think, to 8,000 outdoor
23 open space. Even though you still got the great new gym and the
24 cafeteria and the library, the art space, the STEM space, and all
25 the other new amenities for the students and your community,

1 the -- you've now retained that field that's been there
2 historically, so that's -- I think that's a great amenity for the
3 kids and for the community. So I applaud your effort for your
4 continued engagement with the community, your neighbors, the ANC
5 8A, which you got, again, unanimous support for, you got support
6 from the Councilmember and others, so I'm very pleased to move
7 forward with this, if we do that this evening. So I really don't
8 have any questions for you. I thank you for sticking to it in
9 these difficult times.

10 MR. BOZA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Commissioner Stidham, any
12 questions or comments?

13 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: No questions, but, really, I
14 have to agree with Commissioner Miller. I do very much like Plan
15 B better. Although it's not where you wanted to land, I think
16 you've done a fabulous job of maintaining the program that you
17 are trying to achieve and the outdoor space that I think we both
18 were a little bit concerned about, and I think you're making the
19 proposed design a very attractive design. And I have to agree
20 with Commissioner Imamura; I also gravitated to the stairwell and
21 think that is a great architectural way to handle that and will
22 be a focal part and a really key part of the overall design. So
23 I think you've done a good job of making do with where you ended
24 up in a great way, so appreciate all that you've done. And I
25 have to agree with all of the variances that you're requesting,

1 | that they are reasonable, feasible, and consistent with the
2 | regulations. So thank you for all of your work. Thank you.

3 | CHAIRMAN HOOD: I, too, wanted to add my thank you and
4 | congratulations on this. I think this is very well done. While
5 | I prefer the design of the first one, I think the programmatic
6 | part of the modification is better. As I was evaluating this, I
7 | looked around the house to see where my design credentials were,
8 | and I don't actually have any, so I would have to go with what
9 | you all have here, and I think it was a great job. And I didn't
10 | hear Commissioner Imamura mention that, so -- and he's the design
11 | man for me, so with the programmatic -- what we have here in this
12 | modification works, as my colleagues have said, so we are -- and
13 | as Mayor Williams would say, we are where we are.

14 | Let me ask Dr. Henderson -- she's been here smiling and
15 | ready to say something. I want to give you an opportunity to
16 | say something at this time, if you would like. We've heard from
17 | Ms. White. Ms. White is perfectly fine, but I wanted to give
18 | you an opportunity as well, if you wanted to say something.

19 | MS. HENDERSON: Yeah. I just want to thank you all for
20 | allowing us to come before you again and thank you for the great
21 | questions and the kind words. Really appreciate it.

22 | CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Thank you all. I think
23 | this is -- as far as I'm concerned, I don't see anything stopping
24 | us, right? And I -- as the Vice Chair said, we had plenty of
25 | support; Councilmember White, the ANC, and a number of letters

1 in support. I didn't see any opposition, any unreadiness, or
2 anything. Let me -- let me just ask my colleagues, you have
3 any -- colleagues, you have any other second rounds?

4 (No response.)

5 CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right.

6 VICE CHAIR MILLER: I'd only say, on the design, I'm
7 not a design expert either, given that we have design experts
8 among our colleagues much more qualified than I am, but I actually
9 do like the colors better, actually. I think that
10 orange/brown/terracotta, whatever you want to call it, with the
11 green -- those are some of my favorite colors, and I think it's
12 a warmth that adds to the whole experience there. So, I mean,
13 the other was fine and playful, but I think it's a very
14 attractive -- again, an attractive design.

15 CHAIRMAN HOOD: But, you know -- now we're getting
16 ready to really get off key -- but Vice Chair Miller, as you
17 know, we've learned that colors and buildings of schools do
18 something, and I think Dr. Henderson mentioned something to that
19 magnitude last time. I learned that with Saint Coletta's, and
20 we did Saint Coletta's years ago, because I was wondering why it
21 had all these different colors and what it was for the students.
22 So, anyway, I think we better stick with zoning, so I'll leave
23 it at that. All right. Let me -- Ms. Ackerman, do we have anyone
24 here from ANC 8A? I do know they have a letter of support, but
25 we'll get to -- Vice Chair, I'm going to ask you to get ready

1 | for that, just in case they're not here. Ms. Ackerman, is anyone
2 | here from 8A?

3 | MS. ACKERMAN: No, no one is here. I did notify them
4 | today, and I didn't hear anything back.

5 | CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. What about -- do we have anyone
6 | here from Office of Attorney General? I usually know that
7 | question.

8 | MS. ACKERMAN: I have not heard from their office, and
9 | I don't see anyone, but we do -- the only people we have is DDOT
10 | and OP.

11 | CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Well, I'm going to ask you that.
12 | I usually know the answer, but I'm going to ask that for the
13 | record. Do we have any -- what you just said -- do we have anyone
14 | from DDOT? If we do, let's bring Mr. Hagen up. Okay.

15 | MS. ACKERMAN: We have Mr. Hagen, yes.

16 | CHAIRMAN HOOD: Mr. Hagen, you may begin when you're
17 | ready.

18 | MR. HAGEN: Great. Yeah. Good evening, Chairman Hood
19 | and members of the Commission. For the record, I'm Noah Hagen
20 | with the District Department of Transportation. DDOT is
21 | supportive of the applicant's -- the applicant's application to
22 | modify the previously approved design review at 701 Howard Road
23 | Southeast. In our January 23rd, 2026 report, which is in the
24 | record as Exhibit Number 15, we recommended approval with one
25 | condition, which is implementation of the applicant's

1 Transportation Demand Management Plan. And as you heard in the
2 applicant's presentation, they've agreed to this condition, and,
3 with those included in the Zoning Order, DDOT has no objection
4 to the approval of this application. We look forward to working
5 with the applicant on the site's streetscape design and proposed
6 pick-up and drop-off operations, as they go through public space
7 permitting. And thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

8 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Very well
9 report -- done report. Let's see if my colleagues -- I'm looking
10 at you all. Any questions anybody?

11 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: No questions.

12 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Any comments?

13 (No response from other Commissioners.)

14 CHAIRMAN HOOD: No comments. All right. Thank you,
15 Mr. Hagen. We appreciate the -- oh, Mr. DeBear, you have any
16 questions of DDOT?

17 MR. DEBEAR: No, sir.

18 CHAIRMAN HOOD: And, again, I don't believe we have
19 anyone here from ANC 8A as of yet. Thank you, Mr. Hagen. We
20 appreciate it. Thank you for your report.

21 MR. HAGEN: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Ms. Ackerman, do we have --
23 Vice Chair Miller, could you give us the ANC report please?

24 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't --
25 our printer is down, so I don't have it right in front of me like

1 I usually do, but, as I recall, it's Exhibit 17, a letter to you,
2 Mr. Chairman, from Jamila -- is it White?

3 CHAIRMAN HOOD: White, White, yes.

4 VICE CHAIR MILLER: A lot of Whites around -- Jamila
5 White, ANC 8A Chairperson in December of this past year, unanimous
6 support for this modification and appreciation for the continued
7 engagement with the community and the attractive design and
8 amenities that are being added for the community.

9 CHAIRMAN HOOD: That was very well done off the top of
10 your head. We're going to do that more often. Thank you for
11 bringing --

12 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Sometimes it works.

13 CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Thank you, Vice Chair
14 Miller, for bringing that report. Again, as the Vice Chair has
15 mentioned, it's from Chairperson Jamila White, and it's in
16 support. All right. And we have a number of other letters which
17 has already been mentioned; again, Councilmember White, the ANC,
18 and a number of others that are in here, Lindsay Morton -- I
19 shouldn't have started calling names, but anyway, it's in the
20 record -- Kevin Vaughn, Stephanie Campbell, Robin McKinney --
21 Commissioner Robin McKinney, and others, so we have plenty of
22 letters of support. All right. Ms. Ackerman, do we have anyone
23 here -- organizations or persons here testifying in support,
24 opposition, or undeclared?

25 MS. ACKERMAN: Someone signed up in support named

1 Fernando Luiz (phonetic), but he is not here currently. I've
2 been watching. I haven't seen him come on at all. If he does,
3 I'll let you know.

4 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. And he was in support?

5 MS. ACKERMAN: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. We called for Mr. Fernandez
7 (sic).

8 MS. ACKERMAN: Luiz.

9 CHAIRMAN HOOD: I'm sorry?

10 MS. ACKERMAN: Fernandez Luiz.

11 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Mr. Luiz; we called for him, and he was
12 not here. Do we have anyone in opposition?

13 MS. ACKERMAN: No.

14 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Do we have anyone undeclared?

15 MS. ACKERMAN: No.

16 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Let the record
17 reflect that we have called all three categories, and we will
18 continue to move forward. I'm going to ask Mr. DeBear, do you
19 have any rebuttal or -- probably not any rebuttal, but any -- you
20 may, so you have any rebuttal or closing?

21 MR. DEBEAR: No rebuttal. I was wondering, Chair, did
22 we hear from OP?

23 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Did we? Did I miss OP?

24 MS. ACKERMAN: Yeah, I was just going to ask you.
25 I can bring them up.

1 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Oh, you got to stop me, because I'll
2 be ready to finish. Let's go back to the Office of Planning.
3 Who's with -- oh, Mr. Jesick. Man, you know, I'm sorry. I don't
4 know. I got so excited about Vice Chair Miller being able to go
5 off the top of his head with the ANC report, I forgot about you,
6 so forgive me, Mr. Jesick. Go right ahead.

7 MR. JESICK: That's quite all right, Mr. Chairman.
8 Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission. The Office
9 of Planning recommends approval of this application. We reviewed
10 it against the relevant criteria of Subtitle K and Subtitle X and
11 found that it met those design review criteria. We also
12 recommended approval of the requested zoning relief and found
13 that granting the relief would not impair the intent of the
14 regulations or have undue impacts on nearby property. That
15 concludes my testimony, but I'm happy to take any questions.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Mr. Jesick. Again, I
18 apologize. See, I can't go off the top of my head like Vice
19 Chair Miller. Let see, I'm looking at my colleagues to see if
20 we have any questions or comments. Commissioner Imamura.

21 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr.
22 Jesick, the only question I have is, please tell me that sweater
23 is dark blue and not black.

24 MR. JESICK: You're in luck, Commissioner Imamura. It
25 is very dark blue.

1 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: All right. Well, very good.
2 All right. That's all that I had. Thank you, Mr. Jesick, for
3 your report.

4 MR. JESICK: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Any other questions,
6 colleagues; any other questions of Mr. Jesick?

7 (No response.)

8 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Mr. DeBear, you have any
9 questions of Mr. Jesick?

10 MR. DEBEAR: I do not.

11 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Again, we thank you, Mr. Jesick.
12 We appreciate your report. All right. Now, I think I can come
13 to you, unless I see Mr. Ritting turn the camera on again, Mr.
14 DeBear.

15 MR. DEBEAR: I thank the Commission for your time
16 tonight. Again, I don't think Cedar Tree wanted to be here, but
17 they are making ends meet, so to speak, and, obviously, the team
18 has done a wonderful job of doing that. We appreciate your
19 consideration and look forward to your deliberation.

20 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. So, with that, I'm
21 going to close the record. I think this is pretty
22 straightforward, this modification request. I think that --
23 unless I hear from other colleagues, I think the record reflects
24 and speaks for itself, but I'll open it up, and if someone wants
25 to comment, other than what's in the record, and, if not, we can

1 take -- accept a motion to do whichever way you make the motion
2 for, and I'll leave it at that.

3 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Mr. Chairman, I'm willing to
4 move to approve and make the motion.

5 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Sure.

6 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: So I'm going to jump right in
7 there and say, I move that the Zoning Commission approve Case
8 Number 24-23A, Cedar Tree Academy Public Charter School,
9 modification of hearing of design review in the NHR Zone at 701
10 Howard Road Southeast, Square 5861, Lot 89, and ask for a second.

11 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Second.

12 CHAIRMAN HOOD: It's been moved and properly seconded.
13 Any further discussion? I'll just say that I think that they
14 have made their case, as far as I'm concerned, twice to us, Cedar
15 Tree, so I'll leave it at that. Any further discussion?

16 (No response.)

17 CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Ms. Ackerman, could you do
18 a roll call vote please?

19 MS. ACKERMAN: Yes. Before I do, to our legal counsel,
20 would there -- would you guys like a draft order for this case?

21 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Well, why don't you call the vote first,
22 because we haven't -- we haven't approved it yet, so --

23 MS. ACKERMAN: Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN HOOD: -- I don't even know what -- you never
25 know what's going to happen down here.

1 MS. ACKERMAN: All right. Yeah, you never know.
2 Commissioner Imamura.

3 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Yes.

4 MS. ACKERMAN: Commissioner Wright.

5 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yes.

6 MS. ACKERMAN: Commissioner Hood.

7 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yes.

8 MS. ACKERMAN: Commissioner Miller.

9 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Yes.

10 MS. ACKERMAN: Commissioner Stidham.

11 COMMISSIONER STIDHAM: Yes.

12 MS. ACKERMAN: Zoning Commissioner Case Number 24-23A
13 has been approved, five to zero to zero, for final action. And
14 now you can let me know if you want a draft order.

15 CHAIRMAN HOOD: So we will leave that up to our legal
16 counsel, and I'll let him speak. I see his light is on, but we
17 usually leave that up to them, but if it's okay from a legal
18 sufficiency standpoint, the draft order will be quicker, if it's
19 able -- if it's doable. If not, then they'll take care of it.
20 Mr. Ritting.

21 MR. RITTING: I would appreciate a draft order from the
22 applicant.

23 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. So we request a draft order.
24 All right. Anything else? Ms. Ackerman, do you have anything
25 else for us this evening?

1 MS. ACKERMAN: No, I do not.

2 CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. The Zoning Commission -- on one
3 second, because I want to announce this for the public. I will
4 not -- we have a meeting coming up -- well, that's fluid.
5 Everything for this week, for some reason, seems to be very fluid.
6 We have to go in front of the Council on the 12th, and we're
7 still working things out, so we won't have a closed meeting, and
8 it's a possible chance -- I'll probably get in trouble for saying
9 this, but it won't be nothing new -- we might not even have our
10 meeting on the 12th. So I'm saying this to my colleagues, because
11 I know we have a few people out and we'll be down in front of
12 the Council, so everything's still fluid. So, for Commissioner
13 Stidham and Commissioner Imamura, I will make sure that the --
14 we will make sure the notice gets out far in advance, as soon as
15 we find out what's going on, and make sure everybody knows, so I
16 won't announce what we're supposed to do on -- supposedly have a
17 meeting on the 12th, but that probably will get moved to the
18 26th. All right. So just stay tuned. I will make -- we will
19 make sure everybody gets adequate notice in time. So, with that,
20 I want to thank everyone for their participation tonight, and,
21 with that, this hearing is adjourned. Everyone have a great
22 evening.

23 (Whereupon, the above-entitled public hearing was
24 adjourned at 5:00 p.m.)

25

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Public Hearing - Case No. 24-23A

Before: DC Zoning Commission

Date: 02-05-26

Place: Webex Videoconference

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.



Deborah B. Gauthier