

January 10, 2005

The Editor, The Northwest Current and The Georgetown Current

Re: Georgetown University Boathouse Proposal

Dear Mr. Editor:

With respect to the Georgetown University (GU) boathouse proposal, the National Park Service (NPS) has failed to address the fundamental question in this matter: How is the public interest served by NPS entering into an agreement with GU for an exchange of land in order to allow the University to construct a private boathouse on NPS land within the C&O Canal National Historical Park?

NPS proposes to exchange about an acre of land in the vicinity of Key Bridge owned by NPS (Tract 102-114) with about a one acre parcel of land approximately one mile upriver, which is owned by GU (Tract 102-109). The stated purpose of the land exchange is to allow NPS to acquire and protect GU's upriver parcel (Tract 102-109), and to allow GU to gain a location (Tract 102-114) to build a boathouse.

Tract 102-114, owned by NPS, is located within the C&O Canal National Historical Park just west of Key Bridge and near the entrance to the Capital Crescent Trail, a popular recreational and bicycle commuter trail heavily used throughout all seasons of the year. Tract 102-114 is also in the Georgetown Historic District.

Tract 102-109, owned by GU, is a parcel of land located within the C&O Canal National Historical Park approximately a mile upriver from Tract 102-114. There is no public road access to Tract 102-109.

This proposed exchange is not a swap, but a governmental give-away to a private entity at the expense of the public. It is beyond peradventure that the values of Tract 102-109 and 102-114 are not even remotely, let alone "approximately" equal. While Tract 102-114 would allow for construction, Tract 102-109, because of its topography and marginal access, is unbuildable. Moreover, the values of the two Tracts cannot be equalized by the payment of cash for the following reasons. Although GU owns Tract 102-109, because of its location approximately a mile upriver, Tract 102-109 is effectively now part of the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Hence, there is no public need for NPS to acquire Tract 102-109 and the protection of this parcel is assured by its location within the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Also, since Tract 102-109 is unbuildable, it is, as a site for a boathouse, worthless to GU. In these circumstances, the public gets nothing from this so-called land exchange. Thus, a cash payment would in effect be a "sale" rather than an equalization of values. For these reasons, I am convinced that this proposed land "exchange" is legally untenable.

In conclusion, I am, frankly, at a loss to understand how NPS, the guardian of our parklands, could even entertain this proposed "exchange" in which the public interest in

this matter is so totally ignored. In these circumstances, NPS should admit error and terminate any further proceedings in this matter.

Sincerely,

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