

"GU Boathouse Doesn't Hold Water"

Your June 29 article on the DC Council's Committee on Public Works and the Environment hearing on the Georgetown University Boathouse had a number of errors and inaccuracies that I'd like to correct. To begin the litany, the piece twice referred to an ongoing Environmental Impact Study (EIS) rather than the less rigorous Environmental Assessment, which is actually being conducted. Next, when Alan Brangman, the University's resident architect, stated that GU has considered the possibility of lowering the roof heights to 40' for the center section and 32' for the wings, you reported it as a fait accompli. Far from it; the document of record still calls for a 50'8" center roofline height and 38' height for the wings. Your article also referred to the boathouse extending "about 100 feet beyond the zone delineated by NPS, NCPC & CFA in the 1980s", when in fact the property to be conveyed to GU for its boathouse extends at least 175' beyond that previously established limit. In his response to questioning from Chairwoman Schwartz on the movement of that boundary, the NPS representative, Mr. Parsons, stated that, "We felt it was a general guideline as opposed to a hard line in the woods." If NPS feels the boundaries of the Boathouse Zone are "general guidelines", we would like to know why they couldn't move the downstream end at 34th Street a similar distance in the other direction, especially since that area provides for a much better boathouse site for a collegiate rowing program. Finally, the fiction of GU building a collegiate boathouse on the property they own a mile upstream went unchallenged in your article, despite my rather detailed testimony to the contrary, not to mention GU's own contradictory statements during the hearing. When asked about alternate sites, Mr. Brangman stated that one of the four possible sites in the boathouse zone had been deemed too narrow for a collegiate boathouse. That site is approximately twice as deep as the site GU owns upstream, so wouldn't that make the upstream site "too narrow for a collegiate boathouse" as well? Further, Mr. Brangman, while testifying on potential size reductions being placed on the proposed boathouse, stated that, "at some point in time the question has to be raised whether or not it makes sense to build the boathouse". Whatever they are restricted to on the proposed site will far exceed anything that could be imagined on the ultra-narrow upstream site. If it doesn't make sense to build on the proposed site with some restrictions, saying that they would alternatively build upstream is absurd.

I'd like to challenge the Current to do an accurate, feature article on GU's upstream site, and settle this issue once and for all. I'd be happy to provide copies of deed records, surveyor's maps, and lead a walk to the site. As I stated in my testimony, we do not deny that it would be a good thing for the Park Service to obtain that site, and remove GU's access easement from the Capital Crescent Trail, but not at the price of the outsized boathouse currently proposed.

Sincerely,

Ernie Brooks

Chairman, Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail