PRESS RELEASE

Friends of McMillan Park

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McMillan Park Negotiations Exclude Community Leaders

Community leaders from around McMillan Park, including two former Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (ANC) and the head of the Bloomingdale Civic Association, are protesting exclusion from crucial talks over the future of the 25-acre historic park located at North Capitol Street and Michigan Avenue. Representatives expressed frustration and anger in recent testimony before the DC Zoning Commission, where the Mayor is pressing a case to re-zone McMillan Park for massive development that would overwhelm the landmark with high-rise medical office buildings, thousands of cars, private roads, and a small recreation center.

Gwen Southerland, a former ANC who represented McMillan Park and a long-term member of the McMillan Advisory Group (MAG), detailed in her recent testimony how the Mayor’s political cronies and his development consultant, Vision McMillan Partners (VMP), have deliberately shut-out Bloomingdale and Stronghold community groups from critical negotiations. “ANC 5E is not representing us”, Ms. Southerland said. “The ANC has demonstrated outright disregard for the Community Benefits Agreement that MAG worked tirelessly to prepare. The ANC has partnered with VMP to deceive and divide our community.”

Ms. Southerland’s concerns were shared by Teri Janine Quinn, who spoke on behalf of the Bloomingdale Civic Association (BCA). Ms. Quinn stated that “no amount of community outreach [by VMP] would give them permission to NOT get direct input from the Civic Association,” noting BCA exclusion from negotiations. “The people most impacted need a seat at the table.”

Former Bloomingdale ANC Mark Mueller told the Zoning Commission that he recently resigned from 5E because the “representatives of the community [are] not representing the community” and that ANC 5E violated its own bylaws when it approved a letter of support for VMP. He added that the District Government offers no oversight of ANCs and that ANC 5E is plagued by “unchecked corruption.”

Candidate for At-Large DC Council, Eugene Puryear, said in his testimony opposing the plan to re-zone McMillan Park, “VMP’s failure to engage key community leaders fits a demonstrated pattern whereby developers superficially project the appearance of community engagement while ignoring the concerns of literally thousands of residents.”

Opposition to the Mayor’s plan to destroy McMillan Park is widespread and deep. Friends of McMillan Park has gathered more than 6,500 signatures on a petition to stop the destructive plan and open the process to more creative solutions. The crowd of opposition witnesses at the May 13th hearing led the Zoning Commission to schedule a fifth hearing for Tuesday, May 27th at 6:30pm. The record remains open until then.

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