

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 12832, of the National Association of Life Underwriters, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for special exceptions under Paragraph 4101.44 to allow an addition to an office building housing a non-profit organization and under Sub-section 4305.3 to waive the closed court requirements provided for in Sub-section 4305.1 in the SP-2 District at the premises 1922 "F" Street, N.W. (Square 122, Lot 24).

HEARING DATE: December 20, 1978
DECISION DATE: January 10, 1979

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The applicant at the time of public hearing amended the application to request a variance from the minimum width requirements of a court. At the time of filing the application, the applicant had requested a waiver of the closed court requirements provided for in Sub-section 4305.1.
2. The requested amendment to the application was necessitated by the emergency action of the Zoning Commission in Order No. 253, which suspended the court requirements of Sub-section 4305.1 which were in effect when the application was filed.
3. The subject property is located at the southeast corner of 20th and F Streets, N.W., in an SP-2 zone District, at premises known as 1922 "F" Street, N.W.
4. The property is presently improved with a four story structure which houses the National Headquarters of the National Association of Life Underwriters, a non-profit organization. The National Association of Life Underwriters has been at the location since 1958.
5. The applicant proposes the construction of a three story addition at the rear of the existing building. The addition will be used for expansion space for present employees and for support facilities. The applicant contemplates no increase in the number of employees, as a result of this addition.

6. The subject lot is approximately 26,854 square feet in area. The existing building is 38,366 square feet in gross floor area. The proposed addition will contain 23,030 square feet.

7. The maximum allowable gross floor area for the subject site under the current SP-2 zoning requirements would be approximately 94,000 square feet or 3.5 floor area ratio. With the construction of the proposed addition, the total gross floor area will be 61,396 which is much less than the maximum allowed.

8. The applicant also proposes the construction of an underground parking garage as a part of this project. This garage will accommodate fifty-six cars. The Regulations require a minimum of thirty-four spaces for both the existing building and the proposed addition. The existing building presently has parking for thirty-eight cars. There will thus be a net increase of eighteen parking spaces.

9. At the hearing the applicant presented testimony through a traffic consultant as to the impact that the building addition would have on traffic conditions in the area. Upon motion of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A, as party to the case, the Chairman ruled to strike that testimony on the grounds that the witness did not have sufficient knowledge of the particular area in question to give the Board the kind of expert testimony it needed to evaluate the application.

10. As to the issues of traffic impacts, the Board finds that the increased size of the building will not result in additional employees and is not likely to result in significantly large increases of visitors. The additional parking spaces will serve employees who already drive to work in the building, and are presently parking elsewhere in the neighborhood. This will result in the potential addition of eighteen spaces to the net number of spaces in the area. Based on testimony still in the record, the Board finds that even if all eighteen spaces were to generate trips in the peak hours, there would be no significant affect on traffic conditions in the area.

11. Adjacent to the existing building on the east is the Chancery of Uruguay and a private residence. Both are three story structures. Along 19th Street in this square are two ninety foot dormitories of the George Washington University. A six story parking garage adjoins this site to the rear. Across F Street to the north is a building occupied by the 1925 F Street Club and the site of a proposed large office building for the World Bank. There are other office uses in and around the area, including the Red Cross and the Organization of American States.

12. The proposed addition will be constructed so as to architecturally match the color, design and scale of the existing building on the site. A roof structure of approximately fifteen feet by 8.5 feet will be constructed to match the height of the existing roof structure.

13. The subject property is irregular in shape, having a width at the front of 155.83 feet and at the rear of 96.83 feet.

14. A closed court is created with the construction of the addition principally as a result of the narrowness of the configuration at the rear of lot 22. The applicant proposes a nine foot by forty-eight foot area on lot 22 adjacent to the Uruguay Chancery property, which will not be built upon. This opening creates the closed court. The court allows for more open area adjacent to the Uruguay Chancery than would occur if the building were built to the lot line, which is permissible.

15. The Municipal Planning Office by report, dated December 15, 1978, recommended approval of the application on the grounds that the proposed addition will be in architectural harmony with the existing structure, that the use, height, bulk and design of the addition will be in harmony with existing uses and structures on neighboring property, and that the need for the requested variance results from the shape of lot 22 itself. The Board so finds.

16. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A, by report dated December 21, 1978, and by oral testimony at the time of public hearing, did not oppose the applicant's request for the proposed addition to the building, or the variance from the closed court requirements. The ANC however, opposed the applicant's proposal to increase parking to fifty-six cars. The Board has previously addressed itself to the number of parking spaces provided and the lack of adverse effect on traffic conditions. The Board further notes that the applicant proposes the additional spaces to accommodate employees who now rent spaces in other nearby parking facilities. Some of the additional spaces will be used for parking of visitors to the National Association of Life Underwriters, taking some of those cars off public streets. Lastly, the Board notes that the offices hours of the NALU are from 8:00 A.M. to 4 P.M., which hours are earlier than both the heaviest morning and evening peak hours.

17. Mrs. Harriett B. Hubbard at the time of public hearing, represented the views of the Dupont Circle Citizens Association generally with regard to offices located in the SP-2 District. She did not testify specifically as a party in opposition to this application.

18. There was no other opposition to the granting of this application.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

Based on the above Findings of Fact and the evidence of record, the Board is of the opinion that the requested variance is an area variance, the granting of which requires the showing of a practical difficulty. The Board concludes that the configuration of lot 22 creates such a difficulty. The Board is of the opinion that the applicant's addition, although resulting in a closed court, allows for more open area adjacent to the Chancery of Uruguay than if the applicant built to the property line, eliminating the closed court. The Board further concludes that the use, height, bulk and design of the building will be in harmony with the existing uses and structures on neighboring property.

The Board concludes that the use will not create dangerous or objectionable traffic conditions. The Board concludes that it has accorded to the ANC the "great weight" to which it is entitled, but for the reasons stated, reaches a different conclusion on the number of parking spaces from that urged by the ANC. It is therefore ORDERED that this application is hereby GRANTED.

VOTE: 3-0 (Chloethiel Woodard Smith, William F. McIntosh to GRANT; John G. Parsons to GRANT by PROXY; Leonard L. McCants not voting,; Charles R. Norris not voting, not having heard the case).

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:



STEVEN E. SHER
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER:

26 FEB 1979

THAT THE ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS ONLY UNLESS APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING AND/OR OCCUPANCY PERMIT IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER.