

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 13584 of the Army and Navy Club, pursuant to Paragraph 8207.11 of the Zoning Regulations, for variances from the rear yard requirements (Sub-section 5303.1) and the open court width requirements (Sub-section 5305.2) for a proposed addition to the subject property for club purposes and for general office use in a C-4 District at the premises 1627 Eye Street, N.W., (Square 185, Lot 803).

HEARING DATE: October 28, 1981

DECISION DATE: October 28, 1981 (Bench Decision)

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject property is located on Farragut Square at the northeast corner of the intersection of 17th and I Streets, N.W. It is known as 1627 "I" Street, N.W., and is in a C-4 District.

2. Farragut Square is surrounded on four sides by office buildings of modern designs with the exception of the Barr Building and the Army and Navy Club. The street floors of the office buildings are occupied by retail stores or banks. Two subway stations are within one block of the subject property. The area is within the central business district.

3. The applicant, the Army and Navy Club, is a private club that was incorporated in 1885. It is a non-profit organization whose members are active and retired commissioned officers in one of the uniformed services of the United States.

4. The original building, completed in 1911, was seven stories high. Various alterations or additions have been made over the years. The most recent of these were a two-bay addition on the 17th Street side built in 1956 and a modernistic penthouse added at the eighth floor level in 1958. The building interior layout and use presently consists chiefly of lounges, conference rooms, library, club-offices, sleeping rooms for members, dining rooms and related service rooms. The subject site is 15,705 square feet in area.

5. By decision dated June 27, 1974, the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital designated the clubhouse as an Historic Landmark, and placed the

building in Category III of the Inventory of Historic Sites. The Joint Committee noted in its decision that the building's design is oriented toward Farragut Square and that the Club had been a part of the continuing history of the Farragut Square area since 1891. The Joint Committee did not recommend the building for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places because of the penthouse and 17th Street additions mentioned above.

6. Over the years the building has suffered serious deterioration, both physically and operationally. The maintenance of the building in proper condition is becoming more and more costly for the applicant and will be beyond the fiscal capabilities of the applicant under present circumstances.

7. In June of 1977, the applicant's membership voted to retain the present structure, with its ambiance and historic significance, but only if such preservatin could be accomplished on an economically feasible basis. The only alternative was and remains demolition of the building and replacement with a modern structure developed to the land's highest and best use.

7. In order to make preservation feasible, a higher utilization of the underlying ground must be accomplished by expanding the building into the existing courtyard and the private alley on the I Street side, and by extending the new construction to the full height permitted by the Zoning Regulations. The applicant proposes that the existing modernistic penthouse at the eighth floor level be removed, and that an architecturally harmonious addition of four floors be constructed. The new construction will result in a gross building area of 157,005.29 square feet, equivalent to 10 F.A.R. Upon completion of construction, the applicant will consolidate its present club activities into approximately 57,200 square feet of space, leaving approximately 98,300 square feet available for rent as office space.

9. The proposed construction in the private alley on the I Street side of the building has been recessed in order to preserve the architectural integrity of the existing I Street facade. Such a treatment is for design purposes only. Even though it was not the applicant's objective to create a court, the resulting space falls within the definition of a court as set forth in the Zoning Regulations.

10. On September 10, 1981, the Zoning Commission amended the Zoning Regulations as to the definition of and requirements for courts in commercial districts. The Regulations now require a court to have a minimum width of three inches per foot of height. The subject court would be

required to have a minimum width of approximately 32.5 feet. The width of the private alley is only 14.75 feet. A variance of 17.75 feet is required.

11. As to the requested rear yard variance, the existing building is built to the north line which abuts the ground on which the office building known as 1666 K Street, N.W. is constructed. The proposed design is to continue the eighth and ninth floors to the rear lot line. A sloped setback would commence at the tenth floor level. The setback established for the I Street and 17th Street facades would simply continue on the north side of the building resulting in the sloped setback. Such a design is essential to preserving the architectural integrity and proportions of the building. Moreover, practical difficulties would otherwise be encountered since the existing vertical cores and facilities must serve the new floors. The applicant requires a rear yard variance of 27.09 feet to accomplish its purposes.

12. The Board notes that the subject property abuts to the north the ground on which the office building known as 1666 K Street, N.W., is located, and that this office building has a sloping facade. The distance between the rear facade of 1666 K Street, N.W., and the rear facade of the applicant's existing building extends from eighteen feet to approximately twenty-two feet. The open space between the two buildings upon completion of the proposed construction will extend from eighteen feet to 40.25 feet.

13. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2C made no recommendation on the application.

14. There was no opposition to the application.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

Based on the record, the Board concludes that the requested variances from the open court width and rear yard requirements are area variances, the granting of which requires a showing of a practical difficulty stemming from the property itself. The Board notes that the preservation of the building by the applicant under present circumstances is not economically feasible, and that the fact that the building is a historic landmark dictates the design, size and placement of the proposed building addition, thereby creating an exceptional situation or condition of the property.

The Board concludes that the practical difficulty stems from the existence of a historic structure on the site and the added cost and complexity of development imposed in attempting to preserve a structure and integrate into it a building addition. The Board further notes that the

applicant is required to seek the requested variance relief as an alternative to demolition of the historic structure.

The area surrounding the subject site is intensely developed C-4 and will not be adversely affected by the proposed building addition. Moreover, the Board concludes that the purpose of the open court width requirements of the Zoning Regulations are not impaired because there is no court function or purpose to be served and the requested variance results only from an architectural treatment designed to preserve the historic facade. Further, as to the rear yard requirements of the Zoning Regulations, the Board concludes that the light and air objectives are satisfied by the existing and proposed open spaces between the subject building and the building to the north.

The applicant's proposal furthers the public interest in that it provides for the preservation of a historic structure prominently situated on Farragut Square. The Board further concludes that the variances can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose and integrity of the zone plan. Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the application is granted subject to the condition that construction shall be in compliance with the plans marked as Exhibit No. 9 of the record.

VOTE: 4-0 (Walter B. Lewis, William F. McINTosh, Connie Fortune and Douglas J. Patton to grant, Charles R. Norris not present, not voting).

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

ATTESTED BY: Steven E. Sher
STEVEN E. SHER
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: JAN 10 1982

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS, "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES, INVESTIGATIONS AND INSPECTIONS.