

Kaliah L Lewis

From: Deborah Seymour <seymour.debbie@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 6:27 PM
To: Kaliah L Lewis; Mary Christesen; Margaret O. Cooper
Cc: Jake McNerney; Ben Capuco; Carrie Capuco
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Support for Petition for Variance at 108 Gibbon Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Hello Kaliah, Mary and Margaret -

We own the home at 106 Gibbon Street and are neighbors of Ben and Carrie Capuco who live at 108 Gibbon Street.

Ben and Carrie let us know that they are seeking a variance to add a set of dormers on their 4th floor and to finish their 4th floor attic.

We have seen the design and find it to be attractive and non-obtrusive. The design of the addition is in line with the character of the neighborhood. We believe this addition and improvement will add value to our property, just as the beautiful native garden has which Ben and Carrie installed in the front area of our homes.

We are writing in support of Ben and Carrie's project.

Respectfully,

Debbie Seymour and Jake McNerney

--

Debbie Seymour
cell: 703.786.8669

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Kaliah L Lewis

From: Catherine Glocker Poulin <catygee@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 5, 2021 1:17 PM
To: Kaliah L Lewis; Mary Christesen; Margaret O. Cooper
Cc: Robert Poulin; bcapuco@comcast.net; ccpuco@comcast.net
Subject: [EXTERNAL]108 Gibbon Street BZA Hearing on 1/11/21

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear BZA Members and Staff,

We are writing to support Ben and Carrie Capuco's request to update their home at 108 Gibbon Street. Their plans to finish their fourth floor as livable space will add value, function, and a river view to their home.

108 Gibbon is one of the only homes on our block that lacks a river view. The setback of 108 Gibbon leaves the East side of the house presenting to the river in a way that would provide the only river view available at the property - which nearly if not all comparable properties on the block have. Overlooking the shared alley of the Gibbon Street/Pomander Walk homes, their dormer and balcony addition would face seven existing balconies: it will be a value-added improvement that many of us have also added on to our properties.

Several similar home improvements are visible from Windmill Hill Park and Union Street, including a 2-story deck addition on South Lee Street, the dormer/balcony added at 101 Franklin Street, and several homes on the 100 block of Wolfe Street with rear dormers and decks that enhance the properties' park and river views.

The Capucos recently led a renovation of their shared front courtyard, which is an example of their commitment to improving their property in a way that is respectful and beneficial to their neighbors. The courtyard aligns with the City's vision to transform an impermeable brick surface with a communal, planted area. We feel our neighbors' renovations would likewise add value and an improved aesthetic to the block, and we fully support the renovation plan for 108 Gibbon Street.

We appreciate our neighbors' thorough and direct communication about their application, and we wish them well with their home renovation.

Kind Regards,

Catherine and Robert Poulin

102 Gibbon Street

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Paul Peou and Hua Wang
110 Gibbon Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
917-721-3644
huacwang@gmail.com
1/5/2021

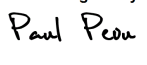

Dear City of Alexandria,

We are relatively new neighbors in Old Town Alexandria and we are writing to express our support for the efforts of Carrie and Ben Capuco in renovating their fourth-floor. Carrie and Ben have been wonderful neighbors, and we trust their judgement and work in the design and planning along with the wisdom of the board and community in the review and approval.

We believe Carrie and Ben have thoughtfully and diligently worked with their architect to limit the impact of the renovation. And we have seen similar designs elsewhere so believe this design appears to be well adapted.

We look forward to seeing the completed work.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:	DocuSigned by:
	
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Paul Peou and Hua Wang	

Kaliah L Lewis

From: Marianne Talbot, Esq. <mariannetalbot@mac.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 9, 2021 4:51 PM
To: Mary Christesen; Margaret O. Cooper; Kaliah L Lewis
Cc: Cc Comcast; Ben Capuco; Daniel Talbot
Subject: [EXTERNAL]108 Gibbon Street BZA Application/ Hearing, January 11, 2021

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear BZA Members and Staff:

We are the owners of 104 Gibbon Street and are writing related to the application of Ben and Carrie Capuco for a zoning ordinance that would permit the construction of dormers and a 14-foot-long open balcony at 108 Gibbon Street. 104 Gibbon is likely the most affected property related to this proposal, and we therefore greatly appreciate your consideration of this response.

We have been neighbors with the Capucos for over 4 years, and we have enjoyed a very friendly relationship with them. In fact, this stretch of Gibbon Street is very special: we are a community that have become good friends, and we watch out for each other's children, pets, properties, vehicles, gardens, mail – even our garbage. We all see each other numerous times each week as we enter and exit our homes and when we take our dogs on walks. We check in with each other on holidays, and during storms, and power outages. That is what our wonderful block is like, and that is why writing this letter is very difficult.

We do, however, oppose this application for the important and numerous reasons set forth below.

Background

Ben and Carrie Capuco purchased 108 Gibbon in 2016 within days of us purchasing 104 Gibbon. Our homes went on the market the same weekend, and we closed within days of each other. Upon information and belief, the Capucos looked at our home during an open house, and we viewed 108 Gibbon as well. We are knowledgeable about each other's interiors (including the knowledge that 104's master bedroom is at the rear side of the townhouse facing the open backyard spaces and the side of 108 Gibbon), and both families purchased with full knowledge of what we were buying, and the kind of neighborhood and townhouse cluster our properties are part of.

The Capucos have been lovely neighbors and we support them making interior renovations to their fourth floor to make it lovely and usable space. We do take exception, however, at the manner in which this matter has come before the BZA, particularly related to what appears to be a substantive and major false representation regarding a purported verbal

“agreement” related to the proposed changes before you. Moreover, we are very much concerned that this false representation about our purported “agreement” may have impacted the BZA Staff, who have recommended the passage of this variance. We describe this further below.

In addition, we oppose the design of their proposed renovations as they would greatly impact the privacy and livability of our home, and we believe would negatively impact its value. We understand these design issues may not be in your official purview, but we set them out briefly below so you can understand them in the greater context of the entire situation and our objections.

BZA Application Misrepresentation

The November 30, 2020 Application to this Board of Zoning Appeals filed by Stephen Kulinski that is before you at Monday's hearing contains the following question and answer:

Question: Has the applicant shown the proposed plans to the most affected property owners? Have these property owners written statements of support or opposition of the proposed variance? If so, please attach the statements or submit at the time of the hearing.

Answer: Property owners at 103 Pommander Walk Street, 104, 106 & 110 Gibbon Street have given their verbal support and are expected to provide written statements by the time of the hearing. Remaining property owners that are adjacent to our property will be contacted by us prior to the hearing. (Emphasis added).

Please be clear: as the owners of 104 Gibbon, we have **never** given verbal support for this plan, nor were we even provided these plans - or had them described to us in any communication at all - until we received them on December 20, 2020, when they were finalized and already in front of the BZA. This is, therefore, a false representation to the BZA. The only verbal communication we had with the Capucos about their plans for their attic was in a neighborly passing on the sidewalk in October 2020 where they casually commented that they were going to finish their attic, and we casually responded we thought it was a nice idea. In no way could this brief conversation be reasonably extrapolated into an official statement to the BZA that we, the owners of 104 Gibbon, gave “verbal support” to the construction of dormers and a 14-foot balcony that greatly impacts our privacy. The fact this misrepresentation was made to you is extremely upsetting to us - in fact when we read it we were shocked- particularly as this was submitted in an official application that requires responses to be true and accurate as a predicate for their consideration by this body.

Related to this casual conversation in October, on November 12, 2020, we received an email from the Capucos stating: “[h]ey neighbors. We’re going to modify our design based on a request from the city. Will share the new ones soon.” However, we never received any plans “soon,” nor at all until we received them in an email on December 20, 2020. By that point they had already been submitted to you per the November 30th application and this matter docketed for January 11, 2021. If the plans were submitted to the BZA on Nov. 30, then we think it would have been

reasonable for the Capucos to have sent them to us at or around the same time, if not before. The plans containing these major modifications to their roof we believe must have been in existence for several weeks by that point. We see the Capucos regularly – why these plans were never mentioned to us in any of our numerous passing communications (or simply sent to us in an email) is surprising and dismaying to us, particularly as in November they had represented they were going to send them to us "soon" and we were waiting in good faith to see them.

The Application question noted above, which asks if the proposed plans were shown to the most affected property owners, clearly demonstrates the reasonable desire of the BZA to have neighbors working together as much as possible on items related to changes to our properties as we live in close proximity; this is appropriate and neighborly. This, however, was not done here.

Indeed, we are extremely interested in understanding what representations were made to BZA staff about what we, as one of the admittedly most affected properties, agreed to, and if that lent any influence to the staff's recommendation to agree to this application. Perhaps BZA staff presumed all the impacted neighbors were in agreement, reasonably relying on the Application submitted and the attestation by Mr. Kulinski. Page 9 of the application notes that there have been "multiple conversations with Zoning staff" so our inquiry is well-founded and reasonable. We ask the same for any representations made to any staff at the Board of Architectural Review, for apparently this proposed major construction was set for a hearing in November 2020 which we also knew nothing about.

Design Objections

We also currently object to the proposed design because it would invade our privacy, as: (1) the 14-foot balcony will have direct lines of sight into our master bedroom and bath; (2) we are concerned that the light cast from the top floor in the current design will be invasive to our master bedroom; and (3) the sound from a large open-air balcony will be disturbing.

We notice on page 9 of the application that the petitioners have represented they have considered the "privacy considerations of 106 Gibbon and 107 & 109 Pommander Walk Street." However, the privacy considerations of 104 Gibbon Street were clearly **not** considered, although we were recognized to be one of the "**most affected**" property owners impacted by the proposal as set forth above. Why were our privacy interests not considered? This also shocked us.

Indeed, the roof line of 108 Gibbon is at a close diagonal to 104 Gibbon's master bedroom window, particularly the left-hand one (if you are facing the back of our home) which is immediately adjacent to the Talbots' bed. Upon immediately exiting the bed, and simply glancing out the window, the roof of 108 Gibbon is very apparent and very close. Diagonal from that window past the bed is the master bathroom, and between the two closets and the area where the Talbots dress. At the current time, there are no direct lines of vision into these rooms except through windows at much larger distances or odd angles.

We are very concerned that any open-air balcony will seriously invade the privacy of our master bedroom at any point that someone is sitting on the balcony. A simple turn of the head – or someone sitting facing 104 Gibbon in a conversational setting – will permit anyone to directly gaze into our most private rooms. If we had been provided with any design drafts before they were submitted to the BZA or the Board of Architectural Review, we would have communicated this to the Capucos. However, we did not receive that courtesy.

In addition, the ambient light thrown from this large and invasive expansion of the current design is of concern as it will shine right into our bedroom. And certainly, the sound that can be thrown off a top-level balcony, higher than anything in our entire townhouse cluster, with nothing to muffle it (like trees or fences), can also be particularly disturbing, which we know from our personal experience having previously lived in NYC.

The Capucos are absolutely lovely people, but they may not live at 108 Gibbon in perpetuity. Having a large open balcony on the roof level with river views certainly is something that we can imagine many people would want to have on their homes here in Old Town and would be desirable for the property's next purchasers. But we would like to point out that the Capucos do in fact have river views: they have river views from windows on the side of their home, so they can see the river from *inside* their home - just like the rest of us on this block do. None of us have balconies overlooking the river.

We respectively purchased our properties knowing full well what each of our homes looked like, the views from our various rooms, and what the character of our block and Old Town in general is. We are not remotely comfortable with a huge extension of their home with an open-air balcony that would invade our personal bedroom privacy and would cause additional disturbances. These are not issues that would affect our neighbors at 102, 106, and 110 Gibbon in the same way (as we are aware they have sent communications not opposing the application); it is something particularly unique to 104 Gibbon.

We wish, as neighbors on a special block here in Old Town, that we had been consulted on these plans before they were submitted to you for consideration. It pains us greatly to be at odds with the Capucos, who we care about.

Marianne Talbot will be at the BZA hearing on Monday and is happy to answer any questions you may have about the above there, or at any time.

Very truly yours,

Daniel and Marianne Talbot

Daniel Talbot: 917-748-8605
Marianne Talbot: 917-494-1957

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Kaliah L Lewis

From: Lindley Megan Hallett <lindleyhallett@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 3:20 PM
To: Kaliah L Lewis
Cc: Christopher Hallett
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Addition/alteration to 108 Gibbon, 11 January BZA meeting

Dear BZA Members and Staff,

We are the owners of 112 Gibbon St. We are the western most house on the courtyard shared with Ben and Carrie Capuco and our neighbors at 106 and 110 Gibbon. Our house belonged to the architect who designed the Pomander development. Since we have owned 112 Gibbon, the three other houses on the courtyard have all been sold, 110 has been sold twice. My parents and I have lived, owned property, or both in Old Town since the 1960s, so I am very familiar with the benefits and challenges of life in this wonderful and unique area. As a contractor, my father worked on many of Old Town's historic homes. He instilled in me a deep love of, and respect for, Old Town's amazing architecture. We love Old Town dearly and intend to own our home on Gibbon for many decades to come.

We are writing this letter with the intent of being neutral. We wish neither to support or oppose the application, merely to offer what we see as some pros and cons.

For those aspects we see as cons:

1. Potential detriment to our neighbors by the proximity of a large balcony on the fourth floor. They can surely speak better to this than we can. We wish the voices of those most affected to be heard the loudest, and therefore considered not even writing. Our apologies, therefore, for the late submission. We remember too well the tremendous battle that broke out over an upper level addition at 110 when we were in the process of buying our house. I don't believe there is another such structure at that high level in the surrounding area. We understand that there was a requirement for open space and air when the development was designed and that any addition inevitably infringes on that to some extent.
2. Loss of symmetry to the property that comprises 108 and 110. We do not see this a major problem, but we will regret the change in appearance this addition brings to the courtyard from the street, as 108 and 110 will no longer appear as one symmetrical structure.

For those we see as pros:

1. The design is very pleasant. We do believe care was taken in the design. I'm sure they would very much enjoy a balcony overlooking the river. We certainly see that benefit to them as a pro.
2. Having lived in Europe we have a deep appreciation for moderate, tasteful balconies. Permitting this addition would make it easier for us, and of course others, to apply for similar additions, which has not seemed possible in the past. Balconies truly enhance our lives and bring much joy. Though we do have a dormer on our house, it is a window sized dormer on the back. Like 108 and 110, we have a finished fourth floor, though none are very large or include a balcony or door sized dormers and it would surely be a nice addition. We do not have a balcony at all, or even doors other than for entry, as some of the others do, and would certainly like to consider the possibility of a tasteful and restrained balcony, with the lovely views one at that height would enjoy.

We have enjoyed having Ben and Carrie as neighbors and wish them the best with this project.

Thank you very much for your time.

Megan and Chris Hallett

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