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January 6, 2009

RE: ezStorage in Sandy Spring (Case no. 120080410)

Royce Hanson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
Maryland National Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chairman Hanson:

The purpose of the Sandy Spring-Ashton Master Plan and Rural Overlay Zone is to insure that Sandy Spring and Ashton remain rural. The rural atmosphere is why many people have purchased homes in the area. Self-storage units (such as ezStorage) belong in industrial or dense commercial areas, and are incompatible with historic, rural areas, such as Sandy Spring. Approval of the Preliminary Plan for ezStorage would be in conflict with the Master Plan and the Rural Overlay Zone.

On page 23 the Master Plan, referring to the Lansdale Property, states “ensure continuation of commercial uses in the middle of the property”. This is the proposed ezStorage location. However, there are numerous references throughout the Master Plan and elsewhere to the types of commercial uses that are anticipated:

- pedestrian oriented (page 32)
- no increase in auto oriented services (page 81)
- “providing for community-serving businesses” (page 8)
- “encourage stores and other uses that provide services to local residents and are at a compatible scale,” (page 32)
- “development should have a strong relationship to the community aspects of the high school” (page 24)
- “provide for the maximum safety, convenience, and amenity of the residents of the development and would be compatible with adjacent development,” (§59-D-1.61.b)

Clearly, the people who developed the Master Plan had in mind small stores that residents, including the high school students, would find inviting and also possibly provide for some employment (as with the stores in the Sandy Spring Village area), not a self-storage facility that would be used mainly by people who live outside the area and would not encourage any interactions with the community. Although the storage facility is allowed by the underlying C-2 zoning for the area, it does nothing to enhance the area for the community and does not conform to the Master Plan.

Section 59-D-2.42 (under Article 59-D. Zoning Districts – Approval Procedures) is interesting: “Although an application may comply with all of the specific requirements and intent of the applicable zone, it does not create a presumption that the application must be approved.” Thus the intense opposition in the community might be enough reason to deny the application under this provision.

We respectfully request that the Planning Board deny the ezStorage Preliminary Plan application and set the stage for development that enhances the community and conforms to the Master Plan and Rural Overlay Zone.

The Master Plan calls for “develop[ing] a more detailed concept plan” that addresses issues that are “beyond the scope of this Plan” (page 34). This reference is to the Sandy Spring Village, but we believe it should be done for all of the historic, rural Sandy Spring area and also paying attention to the Ashton. We encourage the Planning Board to start this process as soon as possible. If this had been done, presumably we would not have proposals such as ezStorage.

If you need any more information from us, we can be reached by phone at 301-570-9065 or email at jennifer@fajman.org or roger@fajman.org.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Fajman

Roger Fajman

cc: Neil Braunstein, Staff, Preliminary Plan
Josh Sloan, Staff, Site Plan