

LARA WEISIGER

From: Janet Kern
Sent: Friday, May 13, 2016 7:33 AM
To: LARA WEISIGER
Subject: Fwd: Problematic Letter to the Mayor from the Chamber regarding Project at 1435 Webster (Attached to Item 9-D on Your Agenda May 17)

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Trish Spencer <TSpencer@alamedaca.gov>
Date: May 12, 2016 at 10:54:48 PM PDT
To: Janet Kern <JKern@alamedacityattorney.org>
Subject: Fwd: Problematic Letter to the Mayor from the Chamber regarding Project at 1435 Webster (Attached to Item 9-D on Your Agenda May 17)

FYI

Sent from my Verizon Wireless 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: Rob Siltanen <robsiltanen@gmail.com>
Date: 05/12/2016 10:05 PM (GMT-08:00)
To: Trish Spencer <TSpencer@alamedaca.gov>, Frank Matarrese <FMatarrese@alamedaca.gov>, Tony Daysog <TDaysog@alamedaca.gov>, Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft <MEzzyAshcraft@alamedaca.gov>, Jim Oddie <JOddie@alamedaca.gov>
Cc: ANDREW THOMAS <ATHOMAS@alamedaca.gov>, City Manager <MANAGER@alamedaca.gov>, Jill Keimach <JKeimach@alamedaca.gov>
Subject: Problematic Letter to the Mayor from the Chamber regarding Project at 1435 Webster (Attached to Item 9-D on Your Agenda May 17)

Mayor Spencer, City Council Members, City Manager Keimach, and City Planner Thomas,

Thank you for considering the concerns raised by several of us in the neighborhood about the parking waiver (that staff recommended and that the Planning Board and a majority of the Council ultimately approved) for the project at 1435 Webster. Although those neighborhood concerns remain and your decision is disappointing, of course I accept the Council's decision and will hope for the best regarding how the spillover effects of this project will play out.

In my email to you about this (attached immediately below), I asked: "*Please do not make this project a pawn or a proxy in the broader political/ideological fights happening in Alameda about the appropriate pace and nature of development.*"

Rec 9-D
5-17-16

Unfortunately, it looks like some people may have done exactly. The letter from the Chamber of Commerce to the Mayor (an attachment to your Agenda Item 9-D for next week's meeting and also running in this week's Alameda Sun) mischaracterizes the genuine grass roots neighborhood concerns here about the 1435 Webster project's parking waiver's impact on the daily lives of the people who live near that section of Webster Street (especially in the 600 block of Taylor), misrepresents the timing and extent of the (minimal) outreach to the neighborhood about this project, and inappropriately suggests that the democratic process some of my neighbors used in this case presents some sort of clear and present danger to Alameda, since the Chamber letter links neighborhood concerns regarding 1435 Webster project to actions that "*call[s] the future of the City into question.*"

I don't know enough about how the Council referral process has worked recently to advocate for you to take any particular action on agenda item 9-D at your meeting next week and as I said above I accept your decision on the parking waiver for 1435 Webster, so I had no intention of emailing you again about these issues until I read the letter from the Chamber. But the Chamber's letter is so wrong, anti-democratic, and condescending in what it prescribes that I decided it was important to write you to register my objections to the letter and request that you dismiss or discount it in your considerations of agenda item 9-D.

Contrary to the implication of the letter's statement that the property owner spent "two years with the West Alameda community," the actual outreach to the neighborhood was late and very limited.

Contrary to the letter's assertion that the project at 1435 Webster "meets everybody's needs," whether it does so is exactly the question the neighbors were asking.

Contrary to the letter's suggestion that there was "absolutely no reason for the hearing," the fact that the project sought a profit-enhancing waiver for the developer and did not fully explore all feasible options for mitigating the parking issues (none of which would have meant stopping the project but each of which might have trimmed the developer's profit slightly) are absolutely sound reasons for the hearing to have occurred.

The letter suggests that a call for review can "undercut and devalue the hard work of many" (e.g., volunteer work of Planning Board members), but ignores the fact not permitting a review in the case of 1435 Webster would also have undercut and devalued the hard work and voices of many, including many in the neighborhood who may not have understood what was being proposed until late in the process, especially because of the late and very limited community engagement that happened in this case.

The letter makes more than one reference to the importance of doing things that rise to the high standards the Chamber calls "top of the line." But it fails to point out that the way boards and commission appointments work here differs significantly from the "top of the line" processes used in state and federal government, where appointments follow immediately upon election outcomes, so tend to be aligned and shift generally as public opinion shifts. In contrast, in Alameda, appointed Board members seem to have terms of appointment that lag considerably behind election results (whichever way they may shift in any election) so seem much less

democratic and much less "top of the line" than they could be.

The generally condescending tone of the Chamber letter makes it sounds like the best approach for those with concerns 1435 Webster (or any other project involving "risk capital") is really for us pesky citizens and taxpayers who might want to say something about a major development in our community to just shut up get with the program. The ideas seems to be that if WABA or the Chamber was in favor of a project there must be "absolutely no reason" for regular citizens to try to speak up.

The Chamber letter makes inaccurate statements and its tone and subtext promote dangerous and offensive ideas.

- Rob Siltanen

On Thu, Apr 28, 2016 at 6:56 AM, Rob Siltanen <robsiltanen@gmail.com> wrote:
Mayor Spencer, City Council Members, City Manager Keimach, and City Planner Thomas,

The proposed project for 1435 Webster presents real, specific challenges and concerns for our neighborhood. I believe you will be having a public hearing on this project at your meeting on May 3, but since I am unable to attend the meeting I hope you will give this email the same consideration you would give any public comment made at the public hearing next week. I don't know how many other areas residents will contact you, but I can assure you that the concerns I'm sharing here are shared by our neighbors here where we have lived for more than 20 years.

As you are aware, the current proposal is for fewer parking spaces than are required under the city's own guidelines based on the number of residential units in the project. If the plan for this project is not changed and you approve it despite its failure to meet the city's own parking guidelines for residential development, your approval would mean this project will maximize profit for the developer while dumping the parking overflow that the project will cause onto a neighborhood where parking is already a significant and growing problem.

In addition to not complying with the City's own guidelines for the residential element of the project, it isn't clear (at least to me) whether the plan allocates ANY parking for the ground level retail in the new "mixed use" plan. Instead, it seems as though the number of parking spots included for this new building may be based solely on the number of residential units, with no parking provided for the new commercial uses. Not everyone patronizing those new retail establishments will walk, ride or use public transit to get there. Where are they going to park?

Until there is a realistic, non-utopian solution to the area's parking problems (i.e., more than "well, everyone will just walk, bike and take the bus"), it is reasonable for Webster area residents already dealing with parking issues to insist that new developments here in this densely populated, already-built-up area include adequate parking (a) as happened around Park Street with the construction of the large parking garage or (b) within each project itself, by requiring that sufficient parking be included. In other words, this building plan could and should be modified so there is adequate parking associated with it, either (a) nearby by the creation of additional parking or, since that seem highly unlikely to occur in the near term, (b) by requiring that the project be redesigned to include more parking (which is do-able and would just mean

cutting the developer's profit margins a bit).

Lastly, I would like to request that whatever your respective views may be of the general effects of the various large development projects proposed and underway elsewhere involving hundreds of housing units on the northern waterfront, at former North Housing/Coast Guard housing, at Alameda Point, or elsewhere, please keep in mind that the impact of this particular nine unit Webster Street project on rental rates or housing availability city wide will be zero, whereas the negative impact on this specific neighborhood of a project with insufficient parking will be very significant. Accordingly, please evaluate this project on its own merits in the specific context here where it is happening and please give serious consideration to the real, specific negative aspects of the current plan.

Please do not make this project a pawn or a proxy in the broader political/ideological fights happening in Alameda about the appropriate pace and nature of development. Your decision in this case is just about 1435 Webster. The facts here are that parking is currently a big problem in this neighborhood and this project as proposed would make it much worse. With some changes to the project and a slight reduction in the developer's profit, it seems likely a revised version of this project could be made to work, but please do not approve this project as currently proposed.

Thank you for your consideration.

- Rob Siltanen
636 Santa Clara Avenue

LARA WEISIGER

From: Janet Kern
Sent: Friday, May 13, 2016 7:31 AM
To: Trish Spencer; LARA WEISIGER
Subject: Re: Call for Review Process

Mayor, yes your correspondence is public information. I am copying Lara Weisiger on this email so she can add it to the agenda item if that is your request.

Sent from my iPad

On May 12, 2016, at 11:01 PM, Trish Spencer <TSpencer@alamedaca.gov> wrote:

Hi Janet,

As you know, Kari's letter of May 2 was published in the Sun and in Councilmember Oddie's referral. I'd like to confirm that my response and then Kari's to mine are both public information, which I may share publicly.

Thank you.

Trish

Sent from my Verizon Wireless 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: Kari Thompson <KThompson@FCBConnect.com>
Date: 05/03/2016 12:42 PM (GMT-07:00)
To: Trish Spencer <TSpencer@alamedaca.gov>
Cc: Mark Sorensen <mark@alamedachamber.com>
Subject: RE: Call for Review Process

Dear Mayor Spencer,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to our letter. The GREDC has been directed by the Chamber to discuss what the possibilities are regarding this process. We will be keeping an open dialogue with the City since this involves all of us. Thank you again.

Kari Thompson
Vice President
Branch Manager
Alameda Office
2531 Blanding Ave
Alameda, Ca. 94501
P: (707) 636-9041
F: (707) 636-9115

kthompson@FCBconnect.com

<image002.jpg>

From: Trish Spencer [<mailto:TSpencer@alamedaca.gov>]

Sent: Tuesday, May 03, 2016 6:35 AM

To: Kari Thompson

Subject: RE: Call for Review Process

Dear Ms. Thompson,

Thank you for forwarding email. As you're aware, I called the item for review. While I appreciate your comments and the service and input of the Planning Board, I disagree that it was not necessary or that Council should be limited in its ability to call items for review. I'm confident that Councilmembers take seriously calling items for review.

The people elect Council, not the Planning Board. Council is accountable to the people. As such, it is appropriate, and I submit imperative, that Council weigh in on important decisions, such as this, at the discretion of a Councilmember.

I'm happy to meet with the Chamber and/or yourself to discuss this or any other issue. In fact, I'm not sure what the prior practice has been in regards to the Mayor meeting with Chambers, but I'm happy to meet with the Chamber regularly.

Sincerely,

Trish Spencer
Mayor, City of Alameda

Sent from my Verizon Wireless 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: Kari Thompson <KThompson@FCBConnect.com>

Date: 05/02/2016 5:15 PM (GMT-07:00)

To: Trish Spencer <TSpencer@alamedaca.gov>

Cc: Mark Sorensen <mark@alamedachamber.com>

Subject: Call for Review Process

Hello Mayor Spencer,

I have attached a letter from the chamber of commerce regarding the current call for review process. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kari Thompson
Vice President
Branch Manager
Alameda Office
2531 Blanding Ave

Alameda, Ca. 94501
P: (707) 636-9041
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