

From: Scott Humphrey
Sent: Wednesday, April 08, 2015 9:21 AM
To: Planning; Kerin Humphrey
Subject: Fwd: South Pond Decision

Dear Planning Commission:

I was in attendance for the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting last night at Larcom Hall where the South Pond subdivision issue was discussed.

Let me begin by saying that I do think that the Planning Commission has the best intentions of the City in mind when making your decisions. This was evident when you allowed an enterprising business to proceed with their cross-fit studio in a “residential” area. However, when it came to the South Pond development decision, I was flabbergasted by the outcome. I watched in awe as citizen after citizen came up to the podium to present their concerns over the traffic situation in the existing area. I think it is safe to say that 90% of the citizen concerns centered on mitigating the traffic issue. I was surprised that many of these citizens indicated that they were not against development, just that there needs to be more consideration of the traffic issue.

I particularly take issue with the way that you came to your decision. Let’s look at the decision you made earlier in the night. You ultimately decided to allow the cross-fit studio to operate in a once-zoned light industrial area through some sort of special assessment. How did you come to this decision? The owner of the studio performed a “sound engineering” study that showed even at max volume, their studio would produce the sound of no more than a passing car. The petitioner EMPIRICALLY proved that his studio would not be any more of a nuisance than normal every day traffic.

Next, I’d like to turn my attention toward one of the citizen participants last night. One of the most avid detractors from the South Pond initiative over the last 10 years has been James Bardwell. He has made petitions, held meetings and for the better part of a decade fought against development in this area. When he approached the podium and, through EMPIRICAL analysis noted that the developers had mitigated his concerns about disturbing the flora and fauna of the South Pond area and had no more objections to the project, I was surprised to say the least. Notwithstanding my surprise, this Ph.D. professor of molecular, cellular and developmental biology had reversed course on a 10 year fight due to the concessions made by the petitioner. I asked him after the meeting why he changed his decision, and he noted that from a scientific perspective he got about 80% of what he wanted from the developers and was convinced that they had the best interests of the surrounding nature in mind. He also noted that he, too, lives in the area and that the traffic concerns of the citizens amounts to mere rabble rousing.

Finally, I’d like to note that BOTH your own city traffic engineer as well as the petitioner’s engineer EMPIRICALLY proved that the addition of the South Pond neighborhood would NOT make the current traffic condition in the area any worse than it currently is. Even in the face of study after study noting that the development would not negatively impact the Washtenaw commute, why would you summarily dismiss your own planning commission and the

petitioner's EMPIRICAL evidence to the contrary? Why, upon hearing from your experts, would you laugh at their conclusions? Why would you hire and pay your engineering experts if you are just going to ignore them? This seems like a waste of tax dollars to me. At least South Pond would be ADDING to the tax base.

You might recognize a pattern in my letter. Why wouldn't you use EMPIRICAL evidence like you did in your cross-fit decision to come to a yes-vote for South Pond? Why is it that a Ph.D. professor who has a vested interest in the area use EMPIRICAL evidence to reverse a 10 year fight and speak in support of the project? Yet, when presented with EMPIRICAL evidence regarding the traffic issue, you turned your back. This makes no sense to me, none at all.

Let me tell you what I DO agree with. I agree with commissioner Sarah Mills' concerns about the financial burden to the residents currently residing in the area of repaving a portion of Chalmers. I also agree that the developer could have made a good-faith effort to push alternate routes of ingress or egress through MDOT or whatever organization they need to get their go-ahead from. However, you chose to put the burden of decades of bad planning and development of the city on one developer's project. This is just not fair. The 100 or so cars that would come out of the South Pond development would be NO WORSE than the 100 or so that are coming out of Woodcreek. The study mentioned that 46,000 cars travel Washtenaw every day. The Woodcreek subdivision cars amount to about .2% of the total traffic burden and the same would be true for South Pond. While the residents think that South Pond may be the straw that breaks the camel's back, they are then just as guilty of contributing to the problem.

I don't know what the next steps are for this project and I am hoping that one of the commissioners can reach out to me to give me this information. I don't purport to know everything about local government, and I'm sure I've noted some things in this letter that you may snark at (much like you did to your own experts), but I do hope that you take my thoughts into consideration with whatever future decisions you make regarding this project. I hope you use EMPIRICAL evidence rather than emotion and perceived hindrances to make your decision.

Finally, I'd like to thank Ken Klein and Bonnie Bona for their thoughtful input. I especially agreed with Bonnie's forward thinking regarding the Arbor Land area, it was truly enlightening for me.

I do not have individual E-mail addresses for all of the commissioners, so if you could forward this to their group mailing list it would be appreciated.

Respectfully,

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