

City Councilmembers

470 White Bear Avenue Rezoning

Were the District Council and neighborhood residents misled?

When SECO's Land Use Committee was asked to support the Beacon proposal, we were told there was outreach and inclusion of neighborhood residents. When asked about specifics the answers were not clear

The developer indicated a needed letter of support without delay. When asked to wait so the District Council could get input from the neighbors the answer was no. Land Use sent a letter of support on behalf of the District Council prior to hearing from neighborhood residents most impacted by any proposal.

I am glad I attended the meeting of neighborhood residents at St. Pascal's.

I spoke with Father and asked if the church reached out to the neighbors about the project. He explained they are selling the land. The developer is responsible for public outreach.

The developer told the public the plan for the meeting is a half hour of developer presentation followed by a half hour of developer presentation in smaller groups. I asked when the public would have a chance to ask questions and raise concerns? The response was they have no plans to take questions and comments from the public. They went on to say, taking public questions does not work well for them. The public was not having any of this. The public insisted and Mai Xiong made a strong pitch to allow questions. The developer gave in to the public outcry.

The developer stated that they do not have resources to contact neighborhood residents. They only do what is required of them.

I asked the developer, to request a City Council delay of action since the City Council hearing is scheduled for a day after the first neighborhood meeting. The neighborhood and developer should have time to try and address neighborhood concerns.

The developer said I had not asked a question so he would not provide a response. I pointed out that the request for a delay is a question. The response was no, they are unwilling to request a delay.

Apparently:

1. The Church did not contact neighborhood residents - contrary to what the public was led to believe
2. The developer did not contact neighborhood residents most impacted - contrary to what the public was led to believe
3. The developer operates a property in Saint Paul that is a major concern of neighborhood residents - The developer asserts they do not have funds to engage with neighborhood residents most impacted and will not have a full-time person to oversee the site
4. The developer will not ask the City Council for a layover to work with neighborhood residents

I have to say that I was concerned about SECO taking action before meeting with neighborhood residents. Now that we have more information, hopefully we can assist the neighbors.

There is what I would consider a nasty and unfair attack on our neighbors calling them NIMBYs. The Eastside and Midway neighborhoods deserve safe neighborhoods as much as Crocus Hill and Saint Anthony Park or Woodbury. We provide a greater percentage of lower priced housing than many neighborhoods. Before Beacon impacts another neighborhood, they should clean up the mess they have in the Midway neighborhood.

Neighborhood residents did a great job articulating their concerns. The City Council should postpone action on rezoning so the District Council can work with neighborhood residents to ensure their concerns are addressed.

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