

December 22, 2011

City of St. Paul  
St. Paul City Clerk  
310 City Hall  
15 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul MN 55102

RE: Summary Abatement Order: 11-308876

Dated Dec. 19, 2011

1504 N. St. Albans St.

This is an appeal for the Summary Abatement Order 11-308876 dated Dec. 19, 2011, and received Dec. 20, 2011, ordering: Disengage trailer from tree and dispose of trailer (by April 16, 2012) in violation of Chapter 45 of St. Paul Legislative Code. This order was issued by Joel Essling.

**Environmental sculpture:** In this appeal, I am requesting that the order be rescinded. What Mr. Essling calls a "trailer" is a long-established, site-specific environmental sculpture that is bound to its surroundings. The site-specificity of the piece is extremely important: There is no way to remove it without destroying it.

It was permanently established on the property in 1953 and has stood there for all these years and years and years without any complaint or controversy – officially or in neighborly conversations. I was shocked to receive the Summary Abatement Order.

**Reconfiguration in process:** At this time, the sculpture is currently in the first phase of a reconfiguration process.

The original work incorporated a growth of ash trees, a tree that symbolizes sacrifice and higher awareness. The metaphor that guided the artist's vision was that over the passage of time, the young saplings would grow into mature trees and in doing so, their living greenery would become enmeshed with the army-green, rigid metal, turning an object used in wartime destruction into an environmental art work expressing life, hope, transformation, and regeneration. The aging process and weathered forms would gradually underscore the organic composition. It was designed to involve and encompass the spectator. It was never designed to be moved.

Sadly, the artist never anticipated the Emerald Ash Borer. The trees that were an essential part of the artist's vision were professionally removed and the wood disposed of on Nov. 10, 2011. Anticipating removal of the trees, the plans for reconfiguration will incorporate the sculpture into a meditation garden setting, including the re-installation of greenery in the spring and the addition of seating and a mandala meditation mosaic. Until new growth saplings replaced the fallen, flag poles would symbolically take their place, adding the uplifting dimensional quality. Even though the trees are gone, the sculpture will remain be a spiritual and meaningful place, a tribute.

**Artistic Interpretation:** Beyond cultural and artistic achievement, environmental sculpture represents imaginative outlook, emotions, and collective identity, even the telling of a historic story. However, an

art experience is personal in nature, depending upon what the individual has experienced and personal values of beauty and appeal. Like many contemporary, non-representational sculptures, this piece offers many levels of interpretation and meaning, yet it may challenge a viewer who more comfortable with representation or more conventional art forms or may be judgmental on what art is acceptable and what is not. As you may be aware, even in the City Hall/Courthouse, tour guides often have to provide information to viewer who misinterpret the art on the elevator panels or explain historic concept behind the décor of Council Chambers. Thus, while I find the complexity of bleakness and isolation that resulted with the removal of the trees to be inspiring and symbolic on so many levels, perhaps Mr. Essling just sees it as a "trailer in the rear driveway area" that is bound by government rules and regulations, rather than an artistic freedom of expression located at one's residence.

The forced destruction of this environmental sculpture would break my heart. The City has a legacy of artistic tolerance ranging from controversial public art installations to private artistic expression such as the Frogtown shoe house. I would like to work cooperatively with the City to somehow keep this work that means so much to me and would be most willing to hear any alternative suggestions they may have to allow it to remain in place - such as the addition of privacy fencing or screening, time to complete the reconfiguration plan, etc. I am certain that the City and I can find a way to accomplish this.

*If art is to nourish the roots of our culture,  
society must set the artist free to follow  
his vision wherever it takes him.*

- John F. Kennedy

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Henderson" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathleen Henderson