

**From:** [Skinaway, Shawna \(MDOR\)](#)  
**To:** [Joanna Zimny](#)  
**Cc:** [\\*CI-StPaul\\_LegislativeHearings; shgiese@hotmail.com](#)  
**Subject:** RE: 1826 SHERWOOD AVENUE. (File No. J2307E, Assessment No. 238306)  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 5, 2023 8:22:44 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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**Think Before You Click:** This email originated **outside** our organization.

Joanna – and to others this may concern:

I've received notification of a proposed assessment for "Excessive Use of Inspection or Abatement Service", which I'd like reconsidered and removed altogether.

The events leading up to this assessment were frustrating to say the least. To then receive a formal notice to appear at a Legislative Hearing and/or a City Council Public Hearing in order to formally appeal something that I was verbally told was resolved over 4 months ago is shocking to me, and needs to be addressed formally.

Thank you for providing me with an unwanted avenue to pursue change within the city I've resided in for 45 years....

Facts:

- A. Letter 22-114549, dated **11/8/2022**, was sent to *Shawna Skinaway, Shawna Skinaway, Shawna Giese, Occupant, Kimberly Skinaway and Kimberly Skinaway*. **(Yes, we received that many letters.** They all included at least 3 printed pages and were the exact same – no changes or differences observed except the name within the address block.)

This seems like an excessive use of city resources for mail.

As someone who works with mail and written correspondence professionally, I would estimate the cost of each letter (including postage, envelopes and paper) to be at least \$.80.

$$.80 \times 6 = \$4.80$

**$121,887 \times \$4.80 = \$585,057.60$**  per mailing (if each 2-adult household, like mine, received 6 copies instead of just 2...)

Note: There are approx **121,887** housing units in St Paul (per Google search), which equals the potential for a very hefty mail/postage expense, which could be significantly decreased by sending 1 letter to the owner/occupant of the property only.

- B. Waste Management (WM) (the **city-imposed** trash hauler for my neighborhood) is scheduled to pick up regular trash on **Wednesday**. Large items left next to the container will NOT be picked up, unless specific contact has been made with WM directly prior.
- C. Shawna initiated contact with the **inspector, Nhia Thao**, by phone on **11/10/22, 1:04pm**, which I'd assume would have been the date the letter was received by me.
- D. Shawna initiated contact with **Waste Management** to schedule a special pick up of the offending items, with the pickup (scheduled **BY WASTE MANAGEMENT**) for **11/23/22**.

- E. A second letter, dated **11/15/22**, was sent to Shawna K Skinaway/Kimberly Skinaway, Shawna K Skinaway and Shawna Giese

This letter was different than the 1<sup>st</sup>, in that it was addressed to all those listed above, but it was ALSO mailed 3 times.

\*\*This likely has something to do with the Due process requirements, which I can appreciate, but shouldn't be the default answer/explanation.

- F. Shawna initiated contact with the **city inspector Nhia Thao** and the **inspector's direct supervisor, Steve Magner** (I'm unsure of the spelling – the name was only provided to me verbally) by phone on **11/18/22 at 8:31 am, 8:32 am and 9:26 am**.
- This contact was to inform the **Inspector, Nhia Thao**, that the items were scheduled to be removed on **11/23/22**, one day AFTER the date the final inspection was scheduled for (per the letter).
  - No contact was ever made between Shawna and the supervisor, Steve.
- G. **Inspector Nhia Thao** advised Shawna that a final inspection would occur on **11/25/22** (which is the day after Thanksgiving, by the way).
- H. **Inspector Nhia Thao** initiated contact with Shawna after that final inspection (at some point – I don't have the exact date available), and when asked if written proof of resolution could be provided to Shawna for supporting documentation going forward, REFUSED TO PROVIDE A WRITTEN STATEMENT and suggested I contact his **supervisor Steve Magner**.
- I. Shawna left at least 3 messages for a return call from the **supervisor Steve Magner**. Shawna received ZERO call backs from Steve during this entire process.

In my conversations with Nhia Thao, I asked who decides how much time residents have to resolve the defect. I was advised that it's a system-set deadline, with no room for alternative dates or additional time. I think this should be reconsidered because 7 days for resolution isn't a realistic timeframe, since the homeowner also has to wait for the letter to be delivered by the post office, which essentially reduces the time to act from 7 days to 5 days or less.

As I have no control over which trash company I use, because of the contracts the City of St Paul has established, I am at the mercy of said trash haulers in regards to removing offending items.

- The first letter I received, dated **11/8/22**, appears to have been received by me on **11/10/22**, based on the call logs I was able to locate by contacting my phone provider. (See below)
- **November 10, 2022** was a **Thursday**, with the next POTENTIAL trash day for my neighborhood being **November 16** – 1 day **AFTER** the 7 day deadline given to me.
- Waste Management was not able to accommodate a special pickup until **November 23** – 1 day **AFTER** the final inspection date detailed in a 2<sup>nd</sup> letter received.  
NOTE: Trash delays frequently occur during weeks in which there is a holiday, with notices posted right on Waste Management's website.
- **November, 2022** has 2 holidays that could have impacted timing as well: **Veteran's Day (11/11)** and **Thanksgiving (11/24)**.

My frustration with the situation continued, because when I used my Waste Management app to locate a phone number to schedule a pickup, there were system issues and I was given the prompt "Alert: Oops, something went wrong. Please close and re-open the app or try again later." This error was received daily for 3 business days before I was able to locate an alternate phone number using Google and finally get the special pick up scheduled.

PLEASE NOTE:

- In my attempts to get the facts prepared for this request, I tried using the same "Contact Us" feature on my Waste Management app and received the **SAME ERROR** message I received before, to "try again later".

- I googled Waste Management, called no less than 3 phone numbers and was UNABLE TO REACH A LIVE PERSON. (The phone numbers I attempted were: 866-909-4458, 763-784-8349 and 952-388-0750).
- I started calling at 3:45 pm on Monday, 4/3/23, and was hung up on every time.
- I was hoping to be able to provide the exact date and time that my request for pickup was received by Waste Management, and spent over 2 hours trying to locate this information (which I still don't have...).
- It's now Wednesday, 4/5/23, and I'm still getting the same message on the app – no phone number is listed on the app and I still have no contact phone number for Waste Management.
- If you have a good contact phone number available for Waste Management, could you provide that to me for future reference please?

So here we are in the timeline - items have been picked up and the inspector indicates he'd be doing a "quick drive by" on Friday, 11/25/22.

I questioned the inspector completing that inspection on Black Friday, because I assumed it was a holiday for city staff (***is that why this assessment is being made? Because he did the final inspection on a holiday? That would almost make more sense to me actually....***) and I also asked for photo proof that the issue was resolved, in addition to having a written statement prepared in case it wasn't actually resolved. I was denied both a photo and a written statement.

- If the City of St Paul can provide proof of offensive items multiple times in writing to property owners/occupants, why can't you also provide a picture proving the issue was resolved?
- This would only need to be provided to the property owner by request, as I'd guess most taxpayers wouldn't dispute completion, and could be kept in the file with all other photo evidence, making THIS PROCESS EASIER FOR ALL OF US.

I clearly had a bad feeling about this whole process since I asked for proof and look what happened!!! Over 4 months after "RESOLUTION", I'm needing to defend myself WITHOUT ANY ACTUAL PROOF.

- I've spent over 2 hours on the phone with my cell phone provider, Verizon, because call logs are only available online for 3 months prior to the current date.
- I've spent almost 2 hours attempting to contact Waste Management, to confirm the date of the previous special pickup and when it was scheduled. This information is not detailed on my invoice and I have not yet been successful in speaking with a live person. I won't try again.
- I've spent over 2 hours preparing this email, to ensure the details are accurate (to the best of my memory and available documentation).
- The delay in the assessment of these fines (over 4 months from the final inspection itself) essentially causes more work for us honest taxpaying property owners.

The worst part about this process is that no one cares to understand why those items were in the alley to begin with!!! But I'll share – because I feel it's important for you to hear the human aspect of the situation:

- Our house was damaged internally and externally by a severe storm that occurred on August 27, 2022. You know the one – it was a confirmed tornado that skipped its way through the East Side...
- My roof flipped like a page in a book, and there was water damage to my daughter's upstairs bedroom, our living room and our dining room. Additionally, the roof also needed to be replaced.
- The repairs to the house were finally completed in February, 2023.

- This happened while my husband and I were out of town, with the brunt of the immediate clean up falling on our 17-year-old and a few family members.
- We had nowhere to put the damaged mattress (and wood bedframe) until it was picked up by the trash company and only AFTER we called to arrange the pickup.
  - I'd left the same mattress next to my trash containers before I was sent notices to clean up, but it was always left behind...
  - There were serious troubles with the first contractor hired to complete the work, and a new contractor was hired to complete all repairs/replacements. (The 1<sup>st</sup> contractor ended up handling only the restoration piece – assessing internal damage and drying/removing impacted areas. Complaints were filed with the Better Business Bureau in relation to my interaction with that company, only adding yet another layer of frustration.)
  - My husband had a stroke in May, 2021, and retired from the City of St Paul in 2022 due to his disability.
  - I work 2 jobs to ensure my family's survival while we wait impatiently for the Social Security Disability determination, which has no chance of being determined before the end of June, at the earliest
  - and I'm the only person in the house that handles our finances, bills and other miscellaneous issues (like this), so the responsibility to dispute or appeal truly falls on me alone.

I don't have money readily available for this assessment; I don't have vacation time at work that I'm willing to use to represent myself in front of a Legislative or City Council meeting; I have already spent too much time trying to document all my actions and your system feels to be set up intentionally to be difficult for a person to appeal or defend themselves.

**I ask that you please remove the proposed assessment from my property and consider making changes to the process to allow property owners more time to resolve identified concerns in a manner that is efficient for both the City and the property owners.**

I'd also have you consider making changes to the "*St Paul City Council Public Hearing Notice Ratification of Assessment*" letter, as there appears to be misinformation detailed there as well.

- I'm told to contact by email or call "within 5 days of the Legislative Hearing to be put on the schedule".
- When I did call, mid-afternoon 1 day before, I was told it was too late for me to be added for the next day and I was required to reschedule.
- If the day prior is truly too late for the property owner to be added to an agenda, your letter incorrectly suggests that I can call the day before and the language should be changed to be more specific.

Thank you for your time, and for seriously considering my request as presented. I look forward to seeing a formal determination, in writing.

Sincerely,  
Shawna Skinaway  
Cell: 651-274-4544  
Email: [Shawna.skinaway@state.mn.us](mailto:Shawna.skinaway@state.mn.us) or [shgiese@hotmail.com](mailto:shgiese@hotmail.com)

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**From:** Joanna Zimny <[joanna.zimny@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:joanna.zimny@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Sent:** Monday, April 3, 2023 3:12 PM

**To:** Skinaway, Shawna (MDOR) <Shawna.Skinaway@state.mn.us>

**Cc:** \*CI-StPaul\_LegislativeHearings <LegislativeHearings@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

**Subject:** 1826 SHERWOOD AVENUE. (File No. J2307E, Assessment No. 238306)

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Good afternoon,

This email is to confirm that your appealed tax assessment for your Appealed Special Tax Assessment for property at 1826 SHERWOOD AVENUE. (File No. J2307E, Assessment No. 238306) has been scheduled for **Tuesday, April 18, 2023 via phone between 10 am and 12 pm.**

Attached are documents related to that appeal.

If you wish to submit a written statement to be considered and discussed on April 18 you can reply to me with that statement and any other related documents you wish to be considered. If you wish to be phoned into the hearing instead, please let me know the best number to reach you that morning. Otherwise, I will follow up with the recommendation after April 18<sup>th</sup>.

Please let me know if you have questions,  
Joanna



**SAINT PAUL**  
MINNESOTA

**Joanna Zimny**

Legislative Hearing Executive Assistant

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Pronouns: she/her/hers

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