

From: Bill Lindeke [mailto:blindeke@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, June 18, 2018 10:55 AM

To: Tolbert, Chris (CI-StPaul); #CI-StPaul_Ward4; #CI-StPaul_Ward5; #CI-StPaul_Ward2; #CI-StPaul_Ward7; #CI-StPaul_Ward1; #CI-StPaul_Ward6

Cc: Dadlez, Kady (CI-StPaul)

Subject: re: Scott Kramer's CUP revocation case on the 6/20 Council agenda

Dear Council Members:

I'm writing today in support of Scott Kramer's appeal of the revocation of the CUP for his BnB on George Street.

As a member of the Zoning Committee, I have been following this issue very closely during our multiple meetings discussing Mr. Kramer's property. During the recent decision to revoke the Mr. Kramer's CUP, I voted against my colleagues' decision. In short, I feel that there were significant mitigating factors with this case and believe the revocation was an unnecessary over-reaction on the part of the city.

There are three main reasons why I think this is the case:

#1 The initial finding against Mr. Kramer occurred during a time when regulation was unclear. Some of my colleagues based their renovation decision on the fact that Mr. Kramer had previously been found in violation of city ordinance. Yet at the time the initial "violation" (too many rooms), Saint Paul had a yet not been regulating short term rentals. The policy was still being drawn up. Without rules in place, I do not see how any property owner can be clearly in violation.

#2 To my mind, the "event" rules remain unclear. What is or is not an "event" is a difficult question and at the Zoning committee meetings we spent a half-hour talking with the City Attorney about how to define this. What is an "event" versus what is a private party? Treating this issue as if it is a black-and-white case is, to me, stretching regulatory zeal too far outside the bounds of common sense.

#3 I live three blocks down the street from Mr. Kramer's building, and this revocation concerns me. The West Side is struggling to attract and maintain businesses. I have lived a few blocks away from this spot for five years and have watched my neighborhood struggle to find businesses. A century-old bakery down the street went out of business a few years ago, and was replaced by a shoddy half-open cell phone case store. Elsewhere on George Street, a café has been trying to open for nine months with little to show for it, a brewery recently gave up opening on Wabasha Street, and the only businesses on Stryker Avenue that have opened recently are two small cigarette shops. Mr. Kramer's business is welcome change of pace for the area, and the strong support of his neighbors (with one exception) reflect this fact.

In short, I urge you to use common sense in this case and keep a healthy business in place on George Street.

Best,

Bill Lindeke, St. Paul Planning Commissioner

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urban geographer

tcsidewalks.blogspot.com

148 West George Street, #7

Saint Paul, Minnesota 55107

From: Tom Probst [<mailto:thomas777cl@gmail.com>]

Sent: Friday, June 22, 2018 10:31 AM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward2

Subject: Deaing House permit

Dear Councilmember Noecker,

I am a West Side homeowner writing to support the appeal of the Dearing House bed-and-breakfast license revocation.

I have known Scott Kramer for many years. I have watched him pour his heart and soul into that house. It was derelict and on the verge of being lost forever when he bought it. Today, it is in the best shape it's ever been in, and it adds immensely to the character and desirability of the neighborhood.

There are three things I feel you would find helpful to know about this whole mess:

1. Much of it is the result of miscommunication and misunderstandings, compounded somewhat by ineptitude on Scott's part.

Scott has always tried to do the right thing. For example, when the city had no clear policy at all for Air BnB rentals, he proactively applied for a bed-and-breakfast license, and did the necessary work on the house to meet the stricter code requirements.

The "first strike" -- the whole "is he advertising a 6-bedroom rental when the bed-and-breakfast limit is 4 bedrooms?" issue -- was the result of him seeking to rent the entire house on VRBO -- Vacation Rental By Owner. He was not trying to circumvent his bed-and-breakfast permit; to him, these were two different things. If he rented it by the room, it was under the terms of the bed-and-breakfast permit. If he rented the whole house, it was not. And his house *does* have 6 bedrooms after all.

That misunderstanding became his "first strike." In retrospect, I think he should have retained legal counsel and fought that at the time, but hindsight is 20-20. Similarly, his most recent annual New Year's Eve party was the result of him delegating invitation duties to his co-hosts, as he was working night and day to meet deadlines on client projects in time for the holidays. Scott has always had a New Year's Eve party in that house. The idea that this was suddenly a commercial venture is ludicrous, as is the idea that he was not the host at his own party.

By the way, he has always been extremely considerate about noise, etc. at these. In 12 years, there have been exactly zero neighbor complaints, and exactly zero police calls about the party. The sole complaint, which came this year from

one bitter man who lives down the hill and across the street, was that it was a "commercial" event that violated the conditions of his permit. And even that complainant stated that the party itself was not a problem.

2. Scott is an asset to the neighborhood and the city. His neighbors, with the single exception of that same unhappy man, adore him. Over the past 35 years, he has probably done as much work on historic properties around the city as anyone in the trade. He is well-known for his passion, his craftsmanship, and his integrity. The Dearing House is his magnum opus, and no one who has seen the house has not delighted in the absolutely exquisite work he has done.

3. Because he needs the income from the bed-and-breakfast to pay his bills, revoking his license will essentially evict Scott from his home. That's a pretty heavy price to pay for a small handful of mistakes and misunderstandings. The real tragedy here would be that Scott has to leave the house and leave the West Side.

Scott Kramer is exactly the kind of citizen St. Paul wants and needs -- skilled, considerate, helpful to his neighbors, someone who invests in and improves not only his property, but those around him.

Should this revocation -- arguably over the letter, but certainly not the spirit of the law -- stand, the real loss would be St. Paul's, and our own.

I hope you can find a way to not allow that to happen.

Thank you.

Thomas Probst