

Vang, Mai (CI-StPaul)

From: Vang, Mai (CI-StPaul)
Sent: Tuesday, June 2, 2020 3:17 PM
To: Carolyn Brandt; #CI-StPaul_Ward4
Cc: Privratsky, Matt (CI-StPaul)
Subject: RE: court date

Hello Ms. Brandt,

Your City Council Public Hearing on June 3, 2020 will be continued to June 10, 2020 at 3:30 remotely. Due to the Covid-19 health pandemic emergency order, in-person testimony is still not feasible. Please let me know if you wish to include your emails as your written testimony. Also, if you wish to add more testimony, you may send to Councilhearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us or call the voicemail at 651-266-6805 so it can be transcribed for the record.

Questions, please let me know. Thanks!



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Making Saint Paul the Most Livable City in America

From: Carolyn Brandt <brandtcarolyn21@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 28, 2020 2:53 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward4 <Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Cc: Privratsky, Matt (CI-StPaul) <Matt.Privratsky@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: court date

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

Hello Mitra

There is a court date the *first week of June* to discuss an excessive inspection on my property. Because of the virus, I am not sure how often you are retrieving messages, so emailing seems better. A voice message was left today and one can comment either through email or calling.

To re-cap previous discussions, Matt and I spoke about my situation without any answers, to the best of my recollection. We did not resolve my issues, which is not a good sign, as I worry how many others have been left in the dark. Therefore, I would like to offer suggestions and address this issue more extensively.

The city has a system, where complaints can be filed without any explanation, which is unfair. Every citizen has a right to know the problem. If bricks are being stored by the garage and the city complained about the height of grass, this is a problem. I was getting complaints, even when I hired someone to mow my lawn, so the whole experience left me scratching my head. It was not until someone came out and identified possible areas to improve, I had a better understanding of what the city expected. This could have been avoided, by providing guidelines to owners. A simple message that *educates*, not intimidates. Doing so offers preventive measures, so lacking in today's government.

This could be done in many ways. A simple letter that outlines a homeowner's responsibility. This guideline could be downloaded and used by residences to highlight problems of concern. If perennials seem too tall by one person's standard, this should be open for discussion. For the city to say that plants cannot cover a homeowner's address numbers is just plain unfair, when 20% of homes do not even have their numbers visible. Picking on a person for this reason shows unfair bias, which is unethical.

A mention of charges....I am willing to pay for your work, the time it took to discuss the matter, though \$157 seems excessive, especially twice. The amount of money is only part of the point. What is extremely disturbing is the government's approach, a way of communication that is destructive and wasteful. Extensive bulling in court is a Trump tactic that is harmful and does not solve problems. Elusive answers is not a form of justice.

As Matt and I discussed, there are other lawns that look worse than mine. I roamed around my friend's neighborhood in the Midway area and many lawns look unkempt. This is not to say that many wrongs make it right. I am not proud of the appearance of my lawn and will have this changed after my balcony is finished. I can only do one major project at a time. One should be given credit for my continual upgrades. Instead, the city continually harasses me with minor problems not bad enough to have a fine.

For example, it is helpful to know a hose cannot be left out on the lawn, though a very strange law. It is helpful to have a information that lists/shows nuisance "weeds", so they are managed. However, we all know certain species is subjective, like Creeping Charlie and dandelions. Since my lawn is organic, the city needs to provide some elasticity in their rules and I would like to know how this can be achieved?

Since the initial inspection, a compost bin was given to me for Christmas, which has helped greatly, though will not stop chipmunks and raccoons from roaming. I have extra dirt in my back yard, which is going to be taken soon, though do not have a timetable. So, I know there are some eyesores that will take time.

What really scared me was an attack on me when addressing me in court, as the woman in charge said I could go to jail. Is this really the way to settle problems? Especially those facts that are incorrect? She stated I do not have an exit in the back, since construction and I do. The lower door is used. There seems to be a problem with my upper door not being used, or blocked. There is another house in Highland Park that has a blocked off door and they are not getting harassed by the city.

While I am willing to learn, to grow as a homeowner, being attacked and threatened by the city is unethical and accomplishes nothing. Not changing the court date during a pandemic is unethical. I am not going to risk my life, because of unfair accusations, which lead to extensive fees.

It would be so easy to put complaints in the lap of those unhappy residents that can be sent anonymously. A form that can be sent to the city and resident. If still no response, then the city can take charge. This would save a great deal of taxpayer money. I do not like taking up time in court, when a small matter can be taken care of on a local level.

When I was in court and heard petting complaints about a walk not being shoveled wide enough or outdoor furniture not be covered, this was enough to make me cry. In all cases, the people were elderly. How difficult would it be to set up a committee to help these people? Strong arm tactics to the vulnerable or elderly is cruel. I am not sure if you ever sat through a couple sessions, I was truly distressed for those who are unfortunate. Enough to write a letter to publish in the newspaper.

What happened to the compassionate democratic party? Embarrassing. Frustrating. Especially after how the trash problem was handled. Mpls has a system more progressive and equitable, which I admire. St. Paul has the ability to be so much more.

Hopefully, my words will lead to something positive. Would appreciate an *update on the court hearing* and if there is anything that could be provided, since I will not be there.

Looking forward to hearing good news

Carolyn