

Barbara,

The letter the ANC sent last year did not specify the number of parking spaces. A few weeks ago the ANC received the letter from the applicant's attorney clarifying the number of spaces from 14 to 21. At that time neither the applicant, BZA nor any other party requested the ANC or CDC review the matter. Therefore, it was not placed on any agenda. On Sunday, we received a letter from the opposing party requesting the ANC rescind the letter, ask the BZA to postpone the decision hearing and take up the matter again. As I pointed out yesterday, I feel that the ANC would need to publicly vote on these requests and the ANC is not meeting again until after the hearing is scheduled. I am unclear as to why, if the opposing party wished for the ANC to take this matter up again, it waited so long to make that request, especially since there has been a herculean effort to built a consensus for this project.

You'll recall that on Feb 11 Douglas Dev called a meeting to discuss the project with you and the others opposing it. (You'll also recall that they rescheduled the meeting when they realized that everyone had not received enough notice.) They made it clear that they rarely, if ever, see formal opposition to a project and very much wanted to work with you by way of making concessions so the formal opposition could be dropped. Informally, ideas including restricting alley deliveries, lighting, providing parking off site and valet parking on 9th Street were discussed. Paul Millstein implored you to speak to the other members of the opposing party and let him know what he could do to win your support. You agreed to get back to him and, after the meeting, I asked that you copy me on any correspondence. On Feb 18 Douglas staff followed up with me asking if I had heard anything from the opposing party as they had yet to. I indicated I had not.

Back in December you and I met and you stated you felt that you had not been given a fair opportunity to be heard by the previous commissioner. I promised you that, once I was in office, I'd call a meeting to discuss all issues regarding Blagden Alley. On the evening of Feb 18 I fulfilled my promise to you and hosted the meeting. I invited Douglas Dev and SB-Urban in to spend time updating us on their respective projects and answering questions (and complaints) and then I sat for an hour and listened to community concerns about the alley. Before the Douglas staff left, their attorney again implored the community to let them know how they could mitigate concerns and restated that they very much wanted support for the project. Sometime after they left I asked you that, if Douglas Dev could mitigate your concerns, would the opposing party consider dropping the opposition. You indicated that you did not "want to do a deal."

Later that night I followed up with Paul Millstein and asked if I could approach you about Douglas limiting the hours of alcohol sales in the building. This was out of the box thinking on my part but I did it thinking that the alcohol establishments could be a greater detriment to the community than seven additional parking spaces being eliminated. Millstein said he was open to any idea to get the community on board. Later I sent you an email saying I thought this opportunity to restrict hours could be a good win for the community. On Feb 20 you indicated to me that you did not intend to drop the opposition.

Since I have taken office I have really made an effort to bring everyone together to solve problems. In some cases, I have been successful and, in others, I have not been. In the case of Gang of 3 I could have gotten the developer to agree to seven off site parking spaces and a number of other concessions. Your group remained opposed and, while I respect your convictions, I personally believe that, in most things in life, negotiation is a better strategy. I hope we can agree to disagree on this issue and maintain a working relationship for the future.

I am sorry that the opposing party waited too long to request the ANC review this case again but I feel very strongly that I have listened to all parties and attempted to come to a consensus that would be palatable to all. At this point there is nothing else I can do.

Charlie Bengel
Commissioner, Single Member District 06
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2F