

September 23, 2020

Administrative Review of AR-20-05

Respectfully Submitted by Heather Balzomo, LCSW

Request for Postponement:

Good Evening Mayor Aziz and City Council Members. My name is Heather Balzomo. My husband and I own the property adjacent to the proposed development site for this project. I first want to say that we appreciate all of you taking the time to review the Planning Commission's decision on AR-20-05. I am not appealing this decision alone but on behalf of nearly 30 residents of the White Oaks Neighborhood. White Oaks is a neighborhood of single-family homes with residents who have lived here since the early 70's. We have met outdoors, when necessary to discuss our concerns about this proposed development. In recent weeks, we were unable to meet indoors due to Covid restrictions, nor were we able to meet outdoors due to hazardous smoke/air quality. We would request a 2-week postponement of this review, to allow time to meet as a group and to properly prepare our points of appeal for the Council. Furthermore, we received the response from FHDC on 2/22/20 which contains new information. We would like to accurately represent the response from our neighbors, who are challenged to use the current means of testimony and are unable to give in-person testimony due to ongoing Covid restrictions.

Introduction:

I was born and raised in Lebanon. We don't have an attorney and we aren't experts on building codes/regulations, but we do love and care about our neighborhood and the greater good of the Lebanon Community. We understand and support the growth of Lebanon but want it to be done in a thoughtful and responsible manner with consideration for the the needs of current residents as well as prospective residents. We would like Council to know that we have actively pursued communication with the Farmers Housing Development Corporation to discuss possible compromises that could have addressed both the needs of this high-density housing and those of our existing neighborhood. After multiple attempts to communicate with FHDC, the only response received was that they would communicate with us through Planning Commission proceedings and after the development was approved. Relationships were further damaged when FHDC solicited support from the Lebanon community teachers and community groups by falsely labeling our neighborhood as a "very vocal anti-immigrant group." This was highly offensive and could not be further from the truth as my family is bi-racial and my husband is an immigrant from the Philippines. I only say this to remind you that FHDC is a housing development corporation that used a dishonest tactic to gain support from our community for this project. The City Council is the only body with discretion to consider the best interests of our community in both growth and protections for existing residents. We feel that it is important that you accurately consider the environmental impact of this development on school capacities, traffic, community resources, and surrounding neighborhoods.

At this point, I would like to hand the microphone to one of my White Oaks neighbors, Ron Passmore, who is a former mayor of Lebanon. He better understands the constraints of your decision process and will go over the basis for our appeal.