

From: Frederica Schuster [<mailto:fschus@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, August 31, 2011 3:15 PM
To: Briski, Kevin; Maniaci, Bridget; Mayor
Cc: andrewmschuster@yahoo.com; Frederica Schuster
Subject: property dispute hearing 1252 Sherman Avenue, 9/14/2011

Dear Mayor Soglin, Chief Noble Wray, Mr. Briski and Alderwoman Maniaci:

This letter is in support of Mr. and Mrs. Druhan regarding their dispute with Mr. Kevin Briske and the City of Madison Parks Department over the location of their driveway at 1252 Sherman Avenue and the ridiculous proposal that they move their entire driveway two feet, at a cost of \$10,000. Anyone taking the time to research the history of the property at 1252 Sherman Avenue, the number of police responses to crime at the adjacent Tenney Beach parking lot over many years and the failing attempts by the city to remove invasive species and weeds from the park land between the parking lot and the Druhan property would come to the conclusion that the Druhan's personal efforts and financial investment in their property have benefited the neighborhood and the City of Madison. My husband and I have lived in the neighborhood since 1994, sent our children to Madison schools and are well acquainted with Tenney Park and Tenney Beach, its natural beauty, maintenance and safety issues and the property at 1252 Sherman Avenue.

I feel confident that the Druhans and other neighbors will provide you with specific information about the renovation of 1252 Sherman Avenue, to both the structure and landscaping. It has demonstrably improved the environment, protected the lake shore, helped to prevent runoff into the lake and improved the appearance of the neighborhood.

From a personal perspective, I can tell you that my husband and I purchased 470 Marston Avenue, located within view of 1252 Sherman Avenue, in 1994 and soon realized that there were major issues with water accumulation across the street at Tenney Park and a lack of proper storm sewer drainage that caused our basement and neighbors' basements to flood with as much as 6" of water whenever there was heavy, prolonged rain that saturated the park land. We had black mold, cracked basement flooring and deteriorating support posts. We spent \$70,000 gutting out our basement, remediation of mold, installing drain tile and a sump pump, replacing support posts, walls, pipes and ceilings to make our house livable. (It wasn't until around 2008 that the drainage issues were remedied and the road and sewer system was replaced on Marston Avenue.) We lived at 470 Marston until 2007 and routinely used Tenney Beach Park adjacent to 1252 Sherman Avenue. During that time, we observed the deterioration of the driveway and house at 1252 Sherman and the weeds, trash and mud between the parking lot and 1252. We also would have to call the police when we heard loud disturbances at both Tenney Park and Tenney Beach late at night when our windows were open. (The police were always prompt and courteous in their response.)

In 2004 we made an offer on the property at 1252 Sherman Avenue. It was obvious that we would have to do some extensive renovation. The basement had been divided up into boarding house rooms and there was thick black mold growing on the walls. It resembled cell blocks. The kitchen was filthy and outdated and the main floor was noticeably soft and springy to walk on due to failing support posts in the basement. There was a rotted balcony in the back of the house. Never-the-less, we love the neighborhood and the Park's natural beauty and we wanted to live on the lake with our family. However, the Druhan's offer to purchase was accepted and we, and they, soon learned that there was much more renovation that needed to be done to make the house livable and safe. In fact, we looked at the outside of the house one more time before renovations started and observed through the windows that the entire basement was flooded with water as winter snow melted. Mrs. Druhan informed me that the cost of renovating and restoring the house was close to \$1,000,000 and the renovations took one year before they could live in the house.

We purchased our current home at 1220 Sherman Avenue in 2007 and enjoy living in one of Madison's most beautiful areas. We take our responsibility for maintaining the lake shore very seriously. We went through a major renovation at our home, 8 months after moving when a hitherto unknown exposed water pipe froze and burst in January, 2008 causing \$68,000 worth of damage from top to bottom. We replaced plaster ceilings, plumbing, flooring and parts of walls and bathrooms most of which was covered by insurance. However, we installed additional high quality foam insulation at our own expense. We were careful that all our renovations were in keeping with the historical nature of our home and looked at them as an investment and a way of keeping energy costs down.

Other properties have sold on Sherman Avenue in the past 10-15 years. New owners have made major improvements at costs of hundreds of thousands of dollars, in addition to paying some of the highest property taxes in Madison. Our lovely street is part of an historic district and thousands of people drive on it for pleasure and business throughout the year. It is a major thoroughfare for Badger football games in the fall. The Druhans specifically have opened their home to charities such as Attic Angels and The Goodman Community Center to raise money to help benefit their fellow Madisonians. Additionally, many neighbors have donated time and money to the new shelter at Tenney Park which benefits the entire city.

It is my understanding that the current dispute regarding the Druhan's driveway was settled with the City and the Parks Department in 2006 to every one's satisfaction except one person who lives in our neighborhood. It has certainly been settled to my satisfaction and I actually resent the fact that any more time and money is being spent on this matter. The Tenney Beach Park is more accessible, safer, less muddy and smelly and more beautiful than before the Druhans removed the old fence, cleaned up the garbage and installed a rain garden to filter run off into the park and lake. The Parks department does not remove the invasive Buckthorn and Ragweed and other weeds that grow in the land adjacent to the Druhan property and I have observed Mr. Druhan clearing the sidewalk along the park land because the city does not do it, even when it has turned to ice and would be impossible for a handicapped person to use the sidewalk. It is my understanding that the current City budget proposals include cuts to maintaining the beaches, the skating rinks, snow plowing and salting and also increasing our property taxes by 3%, all of which directly and negatively affect our neighborhood. And while I understand why this has been proposed, the last thing we need is to discourage property owners and taxpayers from taking a personal stake in improving our city.

It is to the City's benefit to resolve this issue with the Druhans amicably and at no additional cost to them or other taxpayers. We all want families to continue to move into Madison, purchase older homes, maintain the vitality of inner city neighborhoods, improve their property, and send their children to our schools. We also want residents to be able to sell their homes when the time comes. The neighbor whose complaints have caused a new hearing to be set is misguided and misinformed at best, and if this action is taken against the Druhans, it will have long term negative consequences for all city residents and set a very poor precedent for the Parks Department and the City of Madison.

Sincerely,
Frederica Schuster, 1220 Sherman Avenue, Madison, WI 53703