

Spaight St., June 11, 2012

ALRC Members:

My partner, Gregory, and I ask that the ALRC vote to support the Separated License Renewal for Plan B at 924 Williamson, and any proposed conditions that might be necessary. Just so that we are clear, let me begin by stating that neither we, nor any of the other concerned neighbors, want to see Plan B lose its licenses to operate a successful business, yet. Nor is it our intent to see the business closed, yet. What we are insisting on however is that the ALRC review process be the process by which this city obligates Plan B to do what everyone knows is right. At the end of this process, there is no reason to have any losers. All stakeholders can come out ahead. With your leadership and that of Alder Rummel in this matter, a just and fair resolution can be implemented. But, it will take your leadership.

Gregory and I do not live directly adjacent to the Plan B nightclub and so can only speak tangentially to the larger noise issue which has bedeviled the neighborhood since the founding of the establishment. I can say though that I teach nights and often to relax before going to bed, Gregory and I go for long walks around the neighborhood. The Plan B neighbors such as Steve and Tracy Gallo, Lyn Lee and Steve Skaggs, and the Guyots are not exaggerating when they say that the bass noise, a low rumbling noise which just shakes airwaves in that whole area, is a 'nuisance'. They aren't just being 'overly sensitive', as some have suggested. Any one walking in that area can sense that bass reverberating throughout that whole region, even just as a casual passerby. Additionally, on one occasion as we enjoyed a glass of wine in the Gallo's front room (facing Jenifer St.), you could feel this persistent thudding in your gut coming from the nightclub. It was almost nauseating in its relentless droning. It isn't like a loud noise which one might be able to get past with an ear plug or two. This is a constant pounding of the airwaves and it frankly feels abusive on the body as a whole. We left more sympathetic to the Gallos' plight, and quite grateful not to be under constant assault as well.

Since we live a block further up on Spaight St., Gregory and I do not feel the direct effects of the bass noise emanating from the music. We do get to 'enjoy' the noise that comes from having a very large nightclub with very limited off-street parking available only two blocks away. (The owner of the building at 924 Williamson did redo the parking lot, increasing its capacity by four vehicles—of course, unless the patrons are coming in by clown car, this was not exactly an ideal solution. We also understand that they have worked on agreements with other area businesses to allow patrons to park in their lots, but that still does not address the over flow parking on every street in the area.) More importantly, now that it is good weather and the lake is so beautiful, we are treated to the excessively loud Plan B patrons not only as they regain their vehicles in their inebriated state, but also the two-AM revelers as they head to the beach for a swim!

Plan B patrons have also been kind enough to leave behind their tell-tale identification bracelets which were issued as they went to the club earlier in the evening when they have broken my garden gnomes, when garden decorations have come up missing, when patrons have vomited on our sidewalks, urinated on our lawn and in our flower beds.

We, like the immediate neighbors to Plan B, have been very patient and have made those changes necessary so that we can live in peace with the larger business in our neighborhood. I have not replaced the gnomes or ornaments so that I don't feel the financial pain of losing them again. I have diligently hosed down the vomit when it occurs, and watered the urine soaked areas. None of these

issues existed before the opening of Plan B, mind you. None of these issues were of our creation, but we the ones who get to deal with them.

What we would like to see is that Plan B act in a way that demonstrates that they are going to be “good neighbors” as well.

The residents directly adjacent to the nightclub approached Plan B in good faith almost two years ago with concerns of noise from the bass portion of the music that is played at the nightclub. The neighbors alerted Plan B that sleeping was made difficult/impossible, and necessitated the revamping of homes and rooms to try and find some way to reduce the effect of the noise. Good business neighbors would have worked to resolve the issue. Instead of taking the step of putting the solution that all recognize into operation, there has been only a continual series of stalling tactics, as if by wearing down the neighbors this large entertainment venue would not need to make any changes.

The making of a strong and vibrant community is the concern of all who reside in the Marquette Neighborhood. We value the many small businesses that line Williamson Street, and enjoy the diversity and charm they add to the community. We are also aware of the many hard-working taxpayers who live here. Just as the owners of Plan B feel strongly that they need to protect their business investment, these neighbors all bought homes on these streets, invested in making the historical structures once again single-family dwellings, thereby adding stability to the area while increasing the property tax base. These neighbors have been creating a win-win situation, not the only for the local area, for the whole city. These neighbors also have an interest in protecting their investments.

Moreover, they have been exceedingly patient with their newest neighbor, Plan B. Their patience should not be construed as without limits.

In the current debate it is apparent that Plan B does not understand nor appreciate the symbiotic relationship that must exist in neighborhoods such as ours. In short, it is necessary for all to be good neighbors. It is in that spirit then that we, the members of the community, have asked that Plan B be separated out for special review in the ALRC process. If we can't get Plan B to be good neighbors by our patience, then perhaps the city needs to step in and help them. That is why the process exists.

As gay men who were bullied lots of times on the playgrounds of our youth, we can attest to what bullying looks like. So to see bullying, in a different context, be used on those in the neighborhood who only want to live in the homes they own, and sleep at night in their bedrooms makes us angry. It would be a pity if we let the aggressors turn the table on those whose only request has been that this large business also be good neighbors.

Bullying? It is very troubling for us to hear talk from people who are thinking of moving, feeling it is the only option to remedy a problem, that no other solution exists. Neighborhoods need to have residents with strong roots and a strong sense of community; neighborhoods need to invest their hopes, dreams, and dollars into the place they wish to spend the rest of their days. It is very unsettling to think that in order to find a home without continual nighttime noise people would feel the need to sell their homes and leave. It is actually maddening to know that these homeowners who have many years of history in the neighborhood, and are being put through this dilemma from a business that is only a couple years old.

We beseech you, and Alder Rummel, then to take a real stand and make a difference for the neighborhood by merely making sure that Plan B is required to address in a forthcoming way the loud bass noise that has plagued the area since they opened their doors two years ago. I repeat: it should be noted that we the neighbors have been patient and understanding throughout this process, but have seen no tangible sign of resolution to the issues created by having a very large nightclub next door. Instead we the neighbors are being maligned.

Let me conclude by stating that neither we, nor any of the other concerned neighbors, want to see Plan B lose its licenses to operate a successful business, yet. Nor is it our intent to see the business closed, yet. What we are insisting on however is that the ALRC review process be the process by which this city obligates Plan B to do what everyone knows is right. At the end of this process, there is no reason to have any losers. All stakeholders can come out ahead. With your leadership and that of Alder Rummel in this matter, a just and fair resolution can be implemented. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James R. Wilson and Gregory A. Humphrey