

**Catherine McCoy**

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**From:** John Tanasse <tanassechiro@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 25, 2014 12:54 PM  
**Subject:** [BULK] From Tanasse Family Re: Tanasse Mixed Use Building, An Appeal to Drop the Appeal

**Importance:** Low

### An Appeal to Drop the Appeal

Dear Bigelow Neighborhood,

We are writing to reiterate the awkward position in which we find ourselves. From the outset of this project, we have been open with the City of Olympia Community Planning and Development, the governing body for construction and development within the City of Olympia, about our intentions, project scope, and design for this location to accomplish what we set out to create, to remain consistent with the city's mission, and to avoid issues that would cause potential obstacles during the process. Because we are a family and a small business, and not developers, we counted on the city's process, perhaps naively, to help guide the way. Not once during the process were we told we would need to go through a Bigelow building application process, nor a Bigelow Neighborhood design review. We also were not informed that gables would be required for project approval. If that had been the case and we were able to understand the level of neighborhood disapproval we could have and would have chosen NOT to purchase the property nor initiate the process. We would simply have chosen to move on.

Unfortunately, this was not the case, and we find ourselves heaps of resources into this, not wanting to be here, feeling trapped by the city, and held hostage by the neighborhood with no way out but to walk away with missed opportunity for all parties involved. We scratch our heads trying to understand how we got here, and why it is possible that a neighborhood could, and would hijack such a lengthy, painful, and costly process for a family, in the name of sameness on an avenue of divergent architectural character. We find difficulty identifying the relevance of this position at this critical juncture of civic need.

We never expected much of a welcome from an avenue scarce of permanent residents. We also didn't expect to be blasted by the residents to the north. We were disheartened by private and public attacks in neighborhood meetings, editorials, and letters to the city. We were again saddened by the neighborhood's decision to appeal our project despite our efforts to make meaningful design changes. This sadness was further deepened by an invitation to attend a neighborhood block party, with two fresh pies in hand, only to meet a frosty welcome by some and a table of Tanasse Legal Fund envelopes and paraphernalia. Clearly, welcome is not in the cards as we oddly find ourselves begging to move our family to State Avenue.

Mr. Elder stated at the first public meeting, "The Tanasses will do what's best for the Tanasses." I can only respond to him and the entire neighborhood that moving to State Ave. isn't entirely self serving. Ask our children who had no interest in leaving Holliday Hills. Ask our friends who think we're nuts! It has taken thoughtful consideration and a fair amount of courage to consider moving our family to State Avenue given the current condition of downtown. I ask Mr. Elder the same. "Given your action of appealing our project, are you acting in the best interest of this town?" You also mentioned at the first meeting that the Bigelow Neighborhood was a little like Disneyland. You feel transported to a different place. As we recall, Disney's motto is that it is the friendliest place on Earth. With the exception of few kind and supportive souls (thank you), this has eluded us in your neighborhood, as you confirmed this in conversation as

identifying yourself and members of your neighborhood as being “prickly”. Do you feel this is an identity that must be upheld at the cost of good, healthy city development? Who does this serve?

By deciding to build on State, we felt we could accomplish goals individually and collectively. We wanted to create a more appropriate space for our family business not far away. We wanted to participate in a new direction of development for family, multi-generational, and multi-use living that seemed intelligent, efficient, cost effective, and important for municipal vitality, preservation of open spaces, and prevention of sprawl. We wished to use our creative, financial, and human resources to participate in improving Olympia by being a part of downtown in all of the ways that this implies. We have felt an ongoing responsibility to contribute to solutions of problems our community faces. Ironically, we find ourselves the problem of this community. We are sleepless and tired which we assume is a strategic goal shared by the legal team in the absence of substantive legal grounds for this action.

This has brought forth a whole host of additional questions we have for Bigelow Neighborhood residents. We hope you will consider them thoughtfully.

What are you afraid of? Why has this lot been vacant for so long? Why has it been for sale on many occasions for long periods of time? Why, if you covet the character of your neighborhood would you not secure it to protect your interests? Are we not the first family who has been held hostage? Why do you feel all the houses in the area need to look the same? Given there is so much architectural variety and flat roofs within a stones throw, why is it our building you insist have gables? What is so wrong with a town whose vision is to develop along commercial corridors, especially along a road that sees 25,000 cars per day? Do you feel justified in obstructing any development that fails to meet your aesthetic taste and opinion when there are no legal incumbrances that provide provisions for doing so? If so, do you believe this to be good for this city, or, good only for this neighborhood? If our building was two stories with a gable roof, would it not be just as tall with wasted attic space, blocking views from the same sections of sidewalk? Do you feel you are entitled to views of the Capitol building through vacant lots and commercial corridors? Do you not care more about the character of your neighbor than their difference in taste? If you are so adamant about our building looking the same, are you as adamant that we are the same, politically, religiously, and ideologically? Do you believe that someone more foolish than us will want to build a single family residence on 924 State Ave. when permitting, studies, design, engineering, and impact fees cost well over 100K before a single shovel breaks ground? If so, do you believe this person would want to spend the 100K to develop on 924 State Ave. with the constant barrage of graffiti, hypodermic needles, human feces, and vandalism (all of which we have endured at 1303 4th Ave.)? Do you believe they will want you to design it? Why do you have such an ax to grind with the city? Are you really going to use us as a wedge between the city and the 20 year comprehensive plan that intelligently has the health of the entire city in mind and is based on thousands of man hours of study, thoughtful consideration, debate, and success elsewhere? Did you really mean to hire legal counsel to dump enough mud on our project in the hopes of making us go away? Do you really take pride in being “prickly”? Do you understand that there were no permanent residents of State Ave. present at any of the public meetings regarding this project? Do you recall that we are a family, with children, parents, and grandparents, like you? Do you recall, we are already fellow neighbors from three blocks away, choosing to become permanent residents on State Ave, in a time of dire city need for more residents willing to shop, eat, play, and help out? Did you know there is a heroin epidemic in this town? Did you know that violent crime is up manyfold in this town over the last ten years? Are you really going to make us beg to move to State Avenue? Do you realize that we already feel a bit vulnerable?

We have admired and appreciated the Bigelow Neighborhood and all of the care that has gone into it by those who live there. We have wrongly assumed by the eclectic appearance of State Ave. that our activity would have minimal impact on Bigelow Neighborhood residents. We apologize the process, as it is, excludes early public input. We did consult Heritage Commission members regarding the historical significance of properties on either side, and did ask for guidance regarding our modern intentions. The response we received from multiple members was that one honored historical design and character

MORE by building a distinctly modern structure than by constructing a new building that mimics historical design.

We have heard you during the public meetings and we have attempted to make meaningful changes and concessions including color change, additional modulation, privacy railing and screening along the alley side, and additional cedar siding to soften the contrast. Clearly, we have divergent visions for OUR project, and perhaps for city direction. We would like to remind you, we rolled the dice after careful feasibility review and purchased the parcel, which sat for years. Therefore, we will ultimately decide its size, appearance, and spirit, within the code requirements and zoning allowed. We have sincerely considered your input in ways that would maintain minimum project demands.

As such, we are asking you to immediately stop harassing our family. We ask you also to stop bullying our project. And, we kindly request that you withdraw the appeal so that we can all move on and participate in more meaningful ways.

Sincerely,

John and Tiffany Tanasse

**Catherine McCoy**

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**From:** Kris Fransen <kkfransen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 27, 2014 3:59 PM  
**To:** Catherine McCoy  
**Subject:** Fwd: The Tanasse letter

**Categories:** Deal with it!

Hi Catherine:

Below is a letter I sent to John Tanasse in response to his letter to the neighborhood. He asked me to forward it to you for the file, which I gladly do. Thank you for your and other City employees' hard work on this project and others that keep our town moving toward a better future.

Kris Fransen

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Kris Fransen <kkfransen@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Sat, Sep 27, 2014 at 10:14 AM  
**Subject:** The Tanasse letter  
**To:** Jay Elder <jayelder@comcast.net>

Hi Jay:

We are writing to you, but really mean this message for all the people John sent his recent e-mail to.

The recent note from John and Tiffany Tanasse asking the neighborhood to stop harassing his family and stop bullying their project made me both sad and angry.

The Tanasse's are taking a huge risk. They are committing a massive amount of resources and meeting city requirements to build their home and business near our neighborhood. We welcome the Tanasses and their project and strongly believe their presence and their building will have a positive effect on the city and the neighborhood. We are saddened and ashamed that our neighborhood, en masse, has made a potential new, well-intentioned, civic-minded, neighbor feel bullied, harassed, and unwelcome. And yet they persevere.

We have spoken to the City's design review committee and written a letter in favor of the Tanasse project. It's what we need in this city to help move it toward a more vibrant community where people can safely work, play, and explore. This type of project is especially needed on the State Avenue corridor. While the property is not in the historic neighborhood, it will enhance that part of town more than a vacant lot will.

We understand that, perhaps the argument is not against the Tanasses themselves but the style of their building. We maintain that not all buildings must be alike to be viable and attractive. We don't understand the value of buildings all having the same style. Diversity is part of what makes communities thrive. Take a look at thriving neighborhoods in Portland and Seattle and many other vibrant cities. In my opinion and that of many others, the old and new architecture compliment each other. Indeed this is happening in our city now. We embrace it.

However, if indeed the neighborhood welcomes the Tanasses and simply wants a different building design, then why did the family receive a frosty reception at the block party? It was unkind and downright

mean to invite them to the block party and then give them a frosty reception and display anti-Tanasse building materials.

We are disappointed in our neighbors. And we are disappointed in ourselves for not fighting for the Tanasse's and for believing that the process would play out in their favor. We believe in protest. Being involved sometimes means being outspoken, and that's a good thing. But at some point, in our opinion, one must trust the process. And when protest gets to the point of hurting another person or family, that's beyond enough. We trust the city's process and wish you would, too.

Along with the Tanasse's, we ask that you withdraw the appeal so that we can all move on and participate in more meaningful ways.

Kris Fransen  
Paul Plein

**Catherine McCoy**

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**From:** Cristina Charney <ccharney1065@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 28, 2014 10:25 AM  
**To:** Catherine McCoy  
**Subject:** Tanasse Response Letter  
**Attachments:** Cristina Charney.pdf  
  
**Categories:** Deal with it!

Dear Ms. McCoy,

I understand that no written evidence or testimony can be presented at the hearing on October 8. I had written this letter back in July and, because the decisions had already been made, never sent it. Now that there is an appeal in process, I ask that someone read and consider the inequity of allowing the Tanasse plan to proceed as designed, bucking height limits, when, in 2004, we had to tear off a recently-built roof that the city had approved, but then rescinded because it did not meet historical guidelines.

I have less of an issue with the Tanasses building their modern structure than my neighbors, I do appreciate their desire to be close to downtown. I do take issue with the height limit pushed beyond the code and blocking our view of the Capitol. It seems this design could be revised at this point in the planning. I also take issue with the inequity of the decision considered in the this case in contrast to how the city handled our situation 10 years ago.

Thanks for considering my perspective.

Cristina Charney  
1012 Olympia Ave. NE



Cristina Charney  
1012 Olympia Ave. NE  
Olympia, WA 98506  
[ccharney1065@gmail.com](mailto:ccharney1065@gmail.com)

July 22, 2014

Dear Council Members,

I am writing as a member of the Bigelow Historical Neighborhood, in the Olympia Avenue Historic District. I have lived in walking distance to downtown for all of my 28 years of residency in Olympia, the last 15 years as a homeowner. As one of its committed residents, I have been a proponent for growth and efforts to revitalize the downtown area. I would classify my leanings as pro-growth. Nonetheless, I would like to add my dissent to the Tanasse plan as it is and the plans to shift the Urban Corridor which borders our neighborhood.

I have no new argument to add to all of the public commentary already offered regarding the Tanasse building's code-stretching plan, but I do have an anecdote. In 2004, when our street was in the process of becoming an historical district, we were in the midst of a remodel. Our plans and designs were approved by the city and we acquired the proper permits to proceed with the design; which entailed a shed roof on the extension of the original house. We were about one week from completion when a complaint from another resident in the neighborhood sparked a deeper look into the codes that our neighborhood must adhere to. Mind you, the roof was finished and the dry wall and painting had begun on the interior. What followed was a demand by the city that we tear off the completed roof and replace it with a gabled design, to adhere to the city's code for structures adjacent to historic homes. Not having a choice, we complied and, to the city's credit, we were compensated for the materials and labor; but certainly not for the six additional weeks of living under construction. Neither did the compensation account for the shoddy workmanship due to the contractor getting behind another six weeks as a result of this change in plan. That \$10,000 came out of our pockets over the five years following.

I resurrect this story to ask: what is so different about the Tanasse building situation? The Tanasses want to build a structure that was initially approved, like we did, and the neighborhood is pointing out that the design does not follow code. Why can't the city rescind its initial approval, as they did in our case, before any structures have been built? The height limit has been stretched to accommodate this elevator mechanism design and residents have been told it cannot be changed, while we were asked to destroy a perfectly good roof. They have time for redesign, while inconvenient and perhaps costly. It was very inconvenient and costly for us, too. What makes the Tanasse situation different from ours?

The people in this neighborhood live here because we choose to and we support downtown, blighted as it has become (but that is the subject of another letter). The City Council's support of the Tanasse design appeal and a revisiting of the details in the Comprehensive Plan will be seen as gesture of respect for the commitment shown by all of us who already are living your vision of high-density community; who have not fled to the outer suburbs and remain committed to the downtown-living you encourage by the growth you propose.

I urge you to continue your efforts towards growth while following the codes Olympia has put into place to acknowledge the history and the desires of the people who are already here; who have been here for decades.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Cristina Charney