

Schlepp, Victoria

Subject: FW: Concerned Neighbor of the Tai Temple

-----Original Message-----

From: Thomas Rough [mailto:thomas.rough@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, February 06, 2009 3:26 PM

To: Powell, Greg

Cc: Celeste Fikiri

Subject: Fwd: Concerned Neighbor of the Tai Temple

Greg,

My neighbor Celeste Fikiri asked that I forward the following.....

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

From: celeste fikiri <kasallah@hotmail.com>

Date: Fri, Feb 6, 2009 at 2:57 PM

Subject: Concerned Neighbor of the Tai Temple

To: powell@ci.berkeley.ca.us

Hello,

I have been living on Oregon street for 26 years and have had little problem with the temple until a few years ago when the temples popularity grew. I saw the temple go from serving maybe 100 people to 300, 400, 500 every Sunday.

I also became very concerned when the temple acquired several properties in the neighborhood with what I am assuming is profit from the Sunday service.

I am opposing the expansion of the Sunday service because I think it negatively impacts our quality of life on Sundays. Sunday is the one day a week that is sacred, the one day a week where most of us enjoy a quiet day at home tending to our houses and our families. It is unfair to our neighborhood to have to accept a social gathering of several hundred people every Sunday of every week except Christmas. I would also like to add that for neighbors who live next to the temple, they have to be disturbed starting on Fridays when the preparation actually begins. So this is an every weekend disturbance for some.

We are hard working families who pay taxes, (and a lot of them) and deserve one quiet day a week to decompress from the hard work week.

We who have opposed the temples expansion have been labeled bigots, intolerant racist and many more derogatory names. The supporters who mainly do not live in this neighborhood have used such language to rally support for their agenda to expand--they have received support using false accusations.

We are a very diverse neighborhood and if we were bigots than we must hate ourselves and I can assure you we do not!

Look, I do not want to shut the temple down, they are a valued member of our community but I do not want to see them expand their Sunday service. I would like to see them only serve food every other Sunday--that is less than what they are currently operating but more than what their permit is set for. I would also like to see some accountability on the fact that they have been in violation of their use permit. Or they should be required to move their fund raising to a location that is made to service 500 hungry customers, because after all this is a business operation

There is no other religious organization in Berkeley that is allowed to operate a fund raiser at this magnitude.

2/6/2009

I believe that the ZAB board is reluctant to oppose the Tai temple because it is not politically correct, and are afraid of the backlash.

Thank you for your time
Celeste Fikiri @ 1919 Oregon

Schlepp, Victoria

Subject: FW: Please forward this to the ZAB

-----Original Message-----

From: Thomas Rough [mailto:thomas.rough@gmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, February 08, 2009 11:42 AM

To: Powell, Greg; Celeste Fikiri

Subject: Fwd: Please forward this to the ZAB

Greg,

My neighbor Kijahre Fikiri asked that I forward this to your to be distributed to members of the ZAB.

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This is Kijahre Fikiri @ 1919 Oregon st. Here's my beef. If I'm not mistaken, the purpose of a Zoning board is to enforce the zoning laws of the community. This hasn't happened in the case of the thai temple. Our issue is their rapid expansion without regard for the people who live in the neighborhood or the zoning laws that govern this neighborhood.

We resent the notion that we are racist or culturally intolerant. Have you looked at our neighborhood? We have representatives from almost any demographic here on Oregon: Latin, Black, White, Middle Eastern, Asian, Gay, Elderly, young,.. whatever, it's here. We are the embodiment of the flag of Berkeley. We love the diversity the Thai temple brings, we are just unwilling to sacrifice our neighborhood for the Temple every Sunday. The thing that irritates most of us is that the Temple knows how diverse we are, yet when any of us goes to the temple or on temple sponsored websites, we are hit with propaganda and false accusations of our intolerance. That hurts, because the people who don't live here are buying that, and for us neighbors, that isn't even close to the real issue here.

It has been made clear by the temple that the revenue collected on Sunday is important to them and I personally do not want to see them disappear. I think most of us would be pleased to have the temple around as a meditation only center. The city should provide the Temple with a more suitable, non-residential, location for the commercial side of their operation like Sacramento, Telegraph or Shattuck ave. Anyway, I hope that the board considers actually enforcing the zoning laws and assisting us with a real and equitable solution.

Schlepp, Victoria

Subject: FW: Tonight's ZAB meeting



Dear Berkeley ZAB
Members.doc

-----Original Message-----

From: Bonnie Borucki [mailto:bcb@bborucki.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 12, 2009 9:32 AM
To: Powell, Greg
Subject: Tonight's ZAB meeting

Dear Mr. Powell,

Please add my attached letter to the ZAB members to the comments sent to you yesterday by Thomas Rough regarding the Thai Temple hearing tonight.

Thank You,

Bonnie Borucki

February 12, 2009

Dear Berkeley ZAB Members,

I live at 1927 Oregon and share my neighbor's concern over the handling of the zoning permit process for the Thai Temple. I appreciate your difficult responsibility in trying to arrive at fair solutions to zoning decisions that balance the needs of individuals, beloved institutions, neighborhoods, and the larger intersecting communities in Berkeley.

In examining the Thai Temple's request for a permit to expand their site and exceed a residential building height limit, the ZAB and Thai Temple neighbors discovered that the Temple had been violating their original permit to sell food to the public on their premises a total of 8 days a year. This discovery opened a door of mutual conflict and distrust, and the ZAB, I believe with good intentions, required mediation before the permit process was allowed to proceed. I also believe that neighbors were hopeful that a compromise position could be reached concerning Temple building expansion plans, and the open food market.

However, during the elapsed time since the last ZAB hearing on the Temple's permit, the Temple's members have made claims that neighbors want to shut the Temple down, and suppress the customs and religion practiced by the Monks & Temple members. This is not the case. I am aware that the food sales are needed to help sustain the Temples activities, and that to fulfill religious requirements members must serve food to the monks. My concerns are that an unreasonable expansion in a residential neighborhood is going to have a negative impact on neighbors living adjacent to the Temple's property, and that the ZAB may be persuaded by the strength of support for the Temple to grant any zoning request put forth by the Temple & ignore zoning violations.

I support my neighbors in the following requests to the ZAB:

- 1) A quiet, odor-free environment
 - a. Enclose the cooking area and maintain proper ventilation to reduce cooking odors.
 - b. Install sound barriers designed to meet the needs of surrounding neighbors.
 - c. Enforce CEQA codes and inspect regularly for compliance
- 2) Accommodate a reasonable food service arrangement suitable for a residential area, which will sustain temple activities but will not cause suffering to neighbors.
 - a. Limit seating to 150 visitors each Sunday
 - b. Limit service to three Sundays a month (every 4th Sunday closed) This far exceeds the original permit for 8 days (4 weekends) a year.
- 3) Reduce the potential for traffic congestion on Oregon Street
 - a. Do not allow public access to the Sunday food service via a gate on Oregon
Without a light at the nearby intersection, the increased traffic could be hazardous.

These measures are a significant compromise on the needs of surrounding neighbors to a peaceful environment on weekends, but allow the Temple to sustain a reasonable and responsible level of activity for a residential Street. Since the mediation efforts were not successful, we rely on the ZAB to take our suggestions and provide an equitable solution with methods of enforcement.

Sincerely,

Schlepp, Victoria

Subject: FW: PLEASE SUPPORT SUNDAY FOOD AT THE BERKELEY THAI TEMPLE

-----Original Message-----

From: Bob Baldwin [mailto:tireddog43@yahoo.com]**Sent:** Thursday, February 12, 2009 9:49 AM**To:** Ross, Steven D.**Subject:** PLEASE SUPPORT SUNDAY FOOD AT THE BERKELEY THAI TEMPLESteven Ross SDRoss@CityofBerkeley.info

Dear Mr. Ross,

I am writing to express my support for the the Sunday food offering at the Berkeley Thai Buddhist Temple. This tradition is part of the diversity that we all prize as one of the great benefits of living here.

Food sharing is an important part of Thai community life, and because monks are not allowed to earn money other than by what is provided to them by the community, it also keeps the temple running.

As far as complaints about parking, I live a block from Monterey Market so traffic and crowded parking is not just a 3-hour a week problem. As far as complaints about litter are concerned, I live a block from Lilly's Hunan restaurant which is popular for after-school snacks with the Jr. High crowd, so food containers on the street are not just a 3-hour a week problem. Perhaps the neighbors of the temple could take a clue from the residents in my neighborhood -- we don't clamor to have our city shut down Monterey Market or Lilly's Hunan, we just try to be good neighbors and good citizens by accepting that traffic is part of living in a thriving community and picking up the litter when we find it.

Please support zoning that will allow Sunday food service to continue at the Berkeley Thai Temple. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert Baldwin
1345 California St.
Berkeley

Schlepp, Victoria

Subject: FW: Wat Mongkolratanaram (Thai Temple)

-----Original Message-----

From: Piper Davis [mailto:birdandstar@gmail.com]**Sent:** Thursday, February 12, 2009 11:03 AM**To:** Powell, Greg**Subject:** Re:Wat Mongkolratanaram (Thai Temple)

Mr. Powell and Members of ZAB-

The recent events regarding Wat Mongkolratanaram (Thai Temple) have run the gamut of reactions from both sides. Most of which are normal and even expect, but I would like to address two reactions that continue over and over again to permeate this discussion. They are the Thai Temple's "survival" and the Oregon Neighbors' "intolerance".

The Thai Temple's Sunday food service and subsequent revenue source for the last 17+ years would be hard to replace. But are the Thai Temple's recent land acquisitions and proposed expanded temple complex characteristic of an organization struggling to keep it's door open? Is this the plan for an organization worried about funding it's dance and language programs? Survival in these times is a very serious claim and wielding it to obscure what actions an organization is truly engaged in- is suspect.

While the Thai Temple's valued income, free from income tax, property tax and labor costs has never been called into question. The value of our properties has not escaped commentary from both the Thai Temple and ZAB. Our drug infested and "blighted" properties as Debra Matthews pointed out have not escaped these survival times. While I watch the value of my property plummet 35%, I also prepare myself for a likelihood that my entire western view maybe obscured by a variance that allows a 48ft high structure to be built. Not to mention several undefined accessory structures. Market values may come and go, but this decision in your hands may change my property value forever.

I'd like to also point out that there are several organizations in Berkeley and around the Bay Area who successfully accomplish food service for thousands of hungry folks. They are the Cheese Board Collective, the Juice Bar Collective and Greens Restaurant run by the San Francisco Zen Center. All are excellent examples of organizations that ensured their survival by following and putting into practice proper functioning within zoning regulations.

The Thai Temple's 17+ year run is an impressive one and if intolerance were truly at play here you probably would of heard from us at year 2 or 5 or 15. So clearly, intolerance is not the issue. Unchecked expansion is the issue and if there are resources to expand, then there are resources for odor mitigation. In closing I'd like to lobby for clear content of what is actually being presented to us from the temple. Insist that they answer the questions that went unanswered in mediation.

Then please zone accordingly.

Piper Davis
1914 Oregon
Berkeley

2/12/2009