

Nov. 11, 2010

Dear City Council,

I am writing to ask you to appeal the decision to approve the Singpoli Pacifica project that will likely be approved on Nov. 17th at the Board of Zoning Appeals. Quoting from Peter Dreier, professor of Public Policy at Occidental, from the Article, Poverty living at luxury prices (Pasadena Weekly, 11/4/10) here are the reasons:

1. ... "it is absurd for the local government to bail out Singpoli Pacifica because it paid too much for the property and now can't make the project "pencil out." If a private developer can't make money creating a 156-room luxury hotel, why should the city pour taxpayer funds into the project?"
2. ... "the stimulus program was enacted to create good jobs, but the hotel will pay its employees poverty-level wages. Should this hotel project get the green light, few of its employees will be able to afford to live in Pasadena on such meager salaries due to the city's desperate shortage of low-rent housing. Why should taxpayers subsidize a business that creates poverty-level jobs?"
3. ... "until Singpoli purchased the building, it was called Pasadena Manor, home to 160 elderly and disabled people who were involuntarily and illegally evicted from their homes. Pasadena needs affordable housing more than it needs another luxury hotel. Putting \$11.1 million in federal financing into this deal compounds the city's failure to protect the vulnerable seniors whose rights were violated when they were evicted.

When I read in the STARNEWS about the Manor being sold years ago, I called to see if the residents were all being well taken care of, they assured me that this was the case. But I decided to see for myself. I visited the facility and spoke to the residents themselves. I was appalled at that I heard. The evicted residents, who did not have cars, were told they would be given tours of other comparable facilities and help in the process of moving, which did not happen. Instead of the legal 60 day notice, it was only 40 days, not enough time for a hard-to-house frail population to find another place to live. None were given the required \$5,000 relocation costs. One woman was put into a van and taken to a facility in San Dimas against her will. That night she died. When only a few residents were left, they no longer paid for security, and one man was attacked and cut with a knife behind the Manor.

After the Manor closed, my church continued to help. They financially helped Kathryn Bergen, a historian, who had moved to a very cheap hotel. When I visited her there I could not stand the smell and conditions. She became homeless and has since died. I also helped Joyce Dever whose frail condition also rapidly worsened since the move and who is again in the hospital. Much of these costs to society could have been avoided if we allowed for sufficient decent affordable dwellings, more accountability around the required relocation costs for our vulnerable residents. In a great city like Pasadena, this story is unacceptable. We can and must do better!

The city of Portland Oregon has made approximately 50% of their downtown housing stock affordable, much of it to residents like those at the Manor. I toured some of these beautify and well planned facilities this summer. Due to good planning, they have lowered traffic and their carbon footprint, since many residents can now live close enough to walk to work.

What was one of their tools to do this? They increase their required Redevelopment Tax Increment set aside for affordable housing from the 20% to 30%. What did Pasadena do? As you know, we instead passed a law that applied only to Pasadena, which exempted our city from paying any of the redevelopment set aside toward affordable housing. At the time that Old Pasadena was redeveloped, many residents like those at the Manor were displaced. Our city greatly values preserving our beautiful older buildings, but do not value preserving our older frail residents. This is morally wrong. We now have a chance to change this. How?

What steps should the city take?

11/15/2010

Item 4

* Allow the office project to continue, but kill the hotel component and insist that the old Pasadena Manor remain as housing, utilizing different federal funds to guarantee that some units are affordable to working families, seniors and low-income renters.

* Or, as a quid pro quo for the \$11.1 million in government financing, require the hotel to pay its employees at least \$11.88 an hour, considered a "living wage" under the city's own ordinance.

* Either way, require the developer to pay \$3 million into Pasadena's housing trust fund to mitigate the worsening housing crisis that its low-wage jobs will cause, a policy other cities have adopted.

I urge you to read the several excellent articles also by Peter Dreier, a Pasadena resident, before you make any decision. First the full article in the Pasadena Weekly last week from which I quoted from above http://www.pasadenaweekly.com/cms/story/detail/poverty_living_at_luxury_prices/9405/ and secondly, an article that explains how major cities across the US are addressing a more just use of monies of government funded projects: http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=good_jobs_healthy_city

Please read, reflect and be courageous to do the right thing, setting our city as an example not only of preserving great beauty but also known as a leader in how we act with love and justice for our elderly and frail residents.

Thank you!
Jill Shook.

Jill Shook, Missions Door, Catalyst

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LORRAINE E. CUMMINGS, LCSW

November 12, 2010 (via email)

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing as a local Licensed Clinical Social Worker to ask you to appeal the decision to approve the Singpoli Pacifica project that is being considered for approval on Nov. 17th at the Board of Zoning Appeals. Quoting from Peter Dreier, professor of Public Policy at Occidental College, from the article, "Poverty Living at Luxury Prices" (Pasadena Weekly, 11/4/10), these are some of the reasons:

1. ... "it is absurd for the local government to bail out Singpoli Pacifica because it paid too much for the property and now can't make the project 'pencil out.' If a private developer can't make money creating a 156-room luxury hotel, why should the city pour taxpayer funds into the project?"
2. ... "the [Federal] Stimulus program was enacted to create good jobs, but the hotel will pay its employees poverty-level wages, according to economist Ross Selvidge, who conducted the CBRE analysis. Should this hotel project get the green light, few of its employees will be able to afford to live in Pasadena on such meager salaries (approx. \$22K/yr.) due to the city's desperate shortage of low-rent housing. Why should taxpayers subsidize a business that creates poverty-level jobs?"
3. ... "until Singpoli purchased the building, it was called Pasadena Manor, home to 160 elderly and disabled people who were involuntarily and illegally evicted from their homes. Pasadena needs affordable housing more than it needs another luxury hotel. Putting \$11.1 million in federal financing into this deal compounds the city's failure to protect the vulnerable seniors whose rights were violated when they were evicted.

When I read in the STARNEWS about the Manor being sold years ago, I braced myself for the potential calls I would get from families/neighbors concerned about the seniors that were housed there. I am a resource person for my local church pastors and there were a lot of situations where what was 'promised' by this new owner, NEVER came to pass! Instead of the **legal 60 day notice**, they were given only 40 days, not enough time for a hard-to-house frail population to find another place to live, and a community partner, Jill Shook, has told me of those who died due to this **illegal transition of residents**, including one woman who died the night she was relocated to San Dimas! None were given the required \$5,000 relocation costs. The evicted residents, who did not have cars, were told they would be given tours of other comparable facilities and help in the process of moving, which never happened either.

(Continued)

After the Manor closed, my church continued to help. As a licensed professional, I was appalled at what was allowed in this fine city! There were many unnecessary costs that were instigated plainly due to a lack of ethical planning and follow-through on behalf of these vulnerable residents. Where was the promise of affordable housing in their community? Why were they promised so much, and the City allowing the new owner to 'walk away from his legal obligations'? Why are Developers allowed to avoid the requirement for affordable housing in new construction when they created 'mixed use' retail/housing buildings? Much of the costs to society when each resident had a crisis could have been avoided if we allowed for sufficient decent affordable dwellings, more accountability around the required relocation costs for our vulnerable residents. In a great city like Pasadena, this story is unacceptable. We can and must do better!

Jill Shook shares that the city of Portland in Oregon has made approximately 50% of their downtown housing stock affordable, much of it to residents like those at the Manor. She toured some of these beautiful and well-planned facilities this past summer, and due to thoughtful planning, they have lowered traffic and their carbon footprint, as many residents can now live close enough to walk to work.

What was one of their tools to do this? They increase their required Redevelopment Tax Increment set aside for affordable housing from the 20% to 30%. What did Pasadena do? As you know, we instead passed a law that applied only to Pasadena, which exempted our city from paying any of the redevelopment set aside toward affordable housing. At the time that Old Pasadena was redeveloped, many residents like those at the Manor were displaced. Our city greatly values preserving our beautiful older buildings, but **does not appear to value preserving our older frail residents**. This is morally wrong. We now have a chance to change this. How?

What steps should the City Council take?

*** Allow the office project to continue, but kill the hotel component and insist that the old Pasadena Manor remain as housing, utilizing different federal funds to guarantee that some units are affordable to working families, seniors and low-income renters.**

*** Or, as a quid pro quo for the \$11.1 million in government financing, require the hotel to pay its employees at least \$11.88 an hour, considered a "living wage" under the city's own ordinance.**

*** Either way, require the developer to pay \$3 million into Pasadena's housing trust fund to mitigate the worsening housing crisis that its low-wage jobs will cause, a policy other cities have adopted.**

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http://www.pasadenaweekly.com/cms/story/detail/poverty_living_at_luxury_prices/9405/ and secondly, an article that explains how major cities across the US are addressing a more just use of monies of government funded projects:

http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=good_jobs_healthy_city (Continued)

Please read, reflect and be courageous to do the right thing, setting our City as an example not only of preserving great beauty but also known as a leader in how we act with love and justice for our elderly and frail residents.

I will be working on Monday night when this is reviewed, and Wednesday, so I am sending this letter in hope that you will consider it thoughtfully and carefully, with my 'voice' in front of you.

Sincerely,

Lorraine E. Cummings, LCSW
President
Cummings Care Management, Inc.

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