

FAQ about Ponderosa's Efforts re: Sequoia Detox

When and how did we learn about this facility?

1st of September 2019. A few neighbors received notice of the application and that a public comment period would end on September 30, 2019. Wanda Reynolds posted what she knew on Nextdoor.

How did Al Merkel become involved?

Folks on Nextdoor recognized the ramifications of this application, and suggested contacting Al as he had helped other neighborhoods with development issues in the past. Al was contacted on September 3rd to help with the situation, and agreed to help.

Is Al Merkel being compensated in anyway by anyone?

No, his only compensation is that the neighborhood is protected, despite hours (almost full time for 2 months) devoted to this issue.

What were the actions taken?

1. A draft public comment was written and posted on Nextdoor taking into account the legal approval criteria for conditional use permits. This allowed residents to easily and effectively submit public comments prior to the deadline.
2. An executive council was organized whose members included the neighbors living on Mercy Ct cul de sac, as well as other interested neighbors.
3. The executive council distributed flyers to every home in the ponderosa via doorbelling
4. Al Merkel contacted the company to attempt to negotiate solutions for the neighborhood given the legal constraints.
5. On September 14th a public meeting was hosted in Al Merkel's Backyard during which 3 options were discussed:
 - a. Legal battle
 - b. Buy out solution (whereby the neighborhood would cover some of the business' invested cost and in return, the business would not locate in the Ponderosa)
 - c. A negotiated agreement to ameliorate the neighborhood concerns over Sequoias operation.
6. The neighborhood chose to pursue option C.

7. A public meeting was held at Ponderosa Elementary on September 24th during which neighborhood concerns were addressed with Sequoia CEO Jon Schelnske and he proposed solutions to concerns which were agreed to by neighbors.
8. The solutions were drafted into an MOU which was reviewed by the executive council (October 17)
9. The media was contacted via press release on October 18 (also reviewed by exec council)
10. (UPCOMING) Meeting October 23, 2019 to present MOU and discuss final steps including joint comment.

Was the Media Contacted?

Yes as described above.

Does this go before city council?

Not unless the hearing examiner decision is appealed. Even if appealed, there is disagreement on whether it would go for consideration before council or go directly to court.

What could the city have done better?

They could have informed us about this when they knew (before Sequoia bought the house). They could have participated in this neighborhood negotiation and been at meetings.

Does Sequoia own the house?

Yes it is a house that is owned by Sequoia, not an empty property.

Is it true that the CEO has had police involved issues in the past? Does this help us?

Yes it is true. No it does not help us. It is not a consideration here for the CUP. Trying to make a big deal over these issues would only result in the company replacing the CEO, who has been nothing but accommodating and willing to listen to the neighborhood. Anyway, our neighborhood is filled with smart family driven people, who do not succumb to salacious rumors and fear.

How is the neighborhood organized here?

The organization is very loose at this point. There is an 'exec council' comprised of mostly the people who live on Mercy (the most affected). Al Merkel is a lead or facilitator of sorts, lending his skills in technical writing, contract negotiation, and politics to the movement.

Is there truly nothing else we can do other than negotiate?

The law is fairly ironclad and direct here. We could fight, but ultimately we would probably lose and also lose the ability to negotiate for any compromise. We should be learning this lesson, that there are laws passed by our elected officials that compromise what we want for our city. We need to elect officials who will represent what we want rather than those who will compromise our homes, neighborhoods, and ultimately our safety.