

To: Mayor Brennan and Members of the Portland City Council

October 19, 2015

From: Janet Burns, 1904 Congress Street, William S. Linnell, 1905 Congress Street, and  
Joyce Gauthier, 1905 Congress Street

Re: Elks Club Proposed Re-zone from R-2 to OP

We respectfully urge you to vote against this zone change, and refer it to further study. We would underscore the reasoning made in the most recent letter written and submitted to you by David Silk, and in the most recent letter submitted by the Stroudwater Village Association.

The driving force behind this proposal is the million-dollar payday for the Elks Club, if they succeed in changing the zoning from residential to business. But public policy and zoning policy are supposed to be consistent and fair to the people and interests of the city, not provide generous gifts to individual property owners.

We note that the city recently awarded a \$32 million TIF for the \$110 million development at Thompson Point, less than a mile down the road. The Thompson Point project included planning for zoning and traffic mitigation, which resulted in a project that the City deemed worthy of \$32 million of taxpayer money. That would be the logical place for this project to go. The taxpayer can't afford to spend \$32 million on incentives in one area, just to steer development to another location only a mile down the road. That would be a waste of precious resources. The City's left hand needs to know what the right hand is doing, especially when setting policy, and tens of millions of dollars of taxpayer money are involved.

The Stroudwater Village Association has expressed opposition to this proposal. And the Councilor presenting this district, Ed Suslovic, and Councilor Nick Mavadones have recently written the following:

*"A good leader must have a well-thought-out plan and take risks to bring people together to realize that vision. Without direction, our priorities are not defined and our path is not clear. A good leader must listen. When residents feel like they have not been heard, and have been ignored, we end up as a city governed by referendum, as was the case with Congress Square and the Portland Co. development. A good leader must bring people together. Without collaboration, people become frustrated and divided. They concern themselves more with getting their way than they do with making their way toward long-term solutions that work for everybody."*

In sharp contrast, the Elks proposal is all about making a decision to change the zoning before having a well-thought-out plan, before defining new "priorities" and before laying out a new "path". We ask Councilors Suslovic and Mavadones to follow their own advice, and provide the leadership to initiate a vote for a planning process before changing the zoning here.

To anyone who thinks that we are attempting to simply delay any development, we would respond that we have offered an alternative plan for 32 townhouses, with pricing that would include a one

million dollar sale price for the land, and result in an eight million dollar development contributing to Portland's tax base.

The Elks may argue that they have cooperated in the process, but they haven't really: They have gone to a number of meetings, but they have adamantly insisted, on the record, that they will not consider selling for residential purposes. Of course, they have over one million reasons to drag their feet. They have insisted on stonewalling on this point, so they cannot complain if the city takes time to study the bigger picture.

The Elks proposal is problematic in many ways, including taking a conforming use and turning it into a non-conforming use, with ramifications for similar properties city-wide. Other concerns include issues with the gateway to the City and the Historic District, documented traffic problems, inability to meet the standards of the OP zone itself, and the loss of housing as called out in the Comprehensive Plan. There are red flags throughout the Elks proposal, red flags which demand a closer, more thoughtful approach.

We ask that you avoid the pitfalls that these red flags are indicating, by simply creating an effort to study the issue and come up with a "well-thought-out-plan" for this area *before* proceeding.

Thank you for your consideration.