

August 22, 2021

Greetings Village of Elm Grove Board of Trustees,

I am writing, of course, with regard to the School Sisters of Notre Dame Campus redevelopment plans. First, let me say that I sincerely sympathize with you regarding the dilemma that the sale of this property creates for you and the village. Obviously, *something* must be done with this property, and arriving at the optimal solution is a challenge that will change the fundamental nature of our community for generations to come. This places a heavy burden on your shoulders, but as “trustees” I believe we can “trust” you to do the best thing for the residents of our community. I presume that the cancellation of the August 23 public hearing at the Board of Trustees meeting reflects your desire to take the time and effort needed to get this right.

Now to the issue of what to do with the property. I think it’s safe to say that a significant number of residents of the village want above all to maintain the look and feel of the community that they moved in to. Some would say the majority, or even the vast majority, of residents feel this way, though others might disagree with this assessment. In any case, Elm Grove residents tend to be conservative in nature regardless of what political party they support, and don’t get too excited about major changes to their community. This is pretty much an “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” community. Given this, I suspect that there are few residents that would be in favor of any plan that requires expanding our police force, fire department, public works, or even our school system. Further, I suspect that there is unanimous opposition among residents to any plans that increase traffic through the village.

The traffic issue is a particular hot spot, so let me dwell on that for a moment. The latest traffic study done for the Mandel proposal found that increased traffic would be “within acceptable limits”, but “acceptable” to who? Has anyone asked the village residents what they consider to be “acceptable limits”? By the way, if you want to come up with a plan that garners universal acceptance among residents, then come up with a plan that diverts traffic *around* the village. I bet pretty much every resident would support that!

I am focusing here primarily on Elm Grove *residents*, so what about the issue of commerce? To be perfectly objective about this, residents don’t need any more stores *in* Elm Grove. You just don’t see many people walking to the village Court to shop, and there isn’t a single thing that a resident of Elm Grove can’t buy by taking a five-minute drive over to Bluemound or North Avenue. The same observation holds for office space in Elm Grove. For this reason, I believe that any Village development proposals that include commercial expansion only detract from the look and feel of the community that residents desire.

There is the issue of how any particular development plan impacts our property taxes. The argument has been made that the Mandel project and commercial development will reduce my taxes. Speaking personally, I really don’t have a big problem with my property taxes. I think the

Village does an exemplary job of managing the budget, and I feel I get excellent services from the Village for the taxes I pay (congratulations to you-all for making sure this happens). That being said, I wouldn't be opposed to having my taxes reduced! But the question is: by how much? Again personally, I'd be willing to forego a \$100/year tax reduction to not have the current development proposals move ahead. \$1,000/year reduction? Sure! But I haven't heard an actual number yet, so it would really help to hear an actual value, but even then I'd be somewhat reserved in my enthusiasm - see my following comments about putting the "trust" in "trustee".

There is a personal issue that I would now want to address. Apparently, city water for Elm Grove is somehow bundled in the current proposal, if not then you can ignore this paragraph. The last time this came up, I was informed that it would cost me, personally, \$10,000 to have a water line run down the street in front of my house. \$10,000 for water that I don't want and would never hook up to unless forced! At last fall's outdoor meeting with Trustees on development plans, I brought this up with a Trustee who told me that this wouldn't happen this time around. I asked if they were sure about this, and the reply was that they were "almost certain" that this wouldn't happen. My resistance to any proposal that includes city water for Elm Grove would be reduced significantly if I was given a pledge *in writing* that I would not be personally assessed for any costs associated with city water (see next paragraph for why I would need this in writing).

I'm afraid that I must now make reference to the "ol' switcheroo" that the Board pulled regarding the \$1M to \$5M trigger point for referenda on Village projects. All politics starts at the local level, and all trust in government starts with trust in local government representatives. Today we are seeing across-the-board suspicion of government in general and regardless of political affiliation. Making this swap did nothing to bolster trust in Elm Grove government, nor did it enhance your image of "trustworthiness" as a "trustee". Try to place yourself in my shoes for a minute and ask yourself this question: "After pulling the \$5M to \$1M switch, can I trust *anything* that my Board tells me?" When things get tense, we all end up saying to ourselves "I can do better than this". Now is the time to do that.

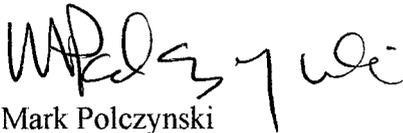
With regard to this and other trust-related issues, it may be that you are of the opinion that you know what's best for the residents, so we should all stop being obstructionists and just get with the program. But if you are not of the my-way-or-the-highway mindset, then how might you diffuse resistance to any plan that you come up with? After all, no plan is going to be unanimously acceptable and you still need to do *something* with the property.

In my opinion, the thing to do is to give residents more than a single plan to consider, where each plan clearly documents with actual numbers the pros and cons of the plan. (Again, ignore this paragraph if this has already been done). Yes, this probably means pro-actively pursuing proposals from potential developers other than Mandel, but better to spend time and taxpayer money on this vs. lawsuits regarding petitions. Then you could say "We've carefully considered the pros and cons of each of these proposals, and for such-and-such reasons we believe that

proposal X is the best solution for the Village". And even if it still ends up being three proposals only from Mandel, then let's see the three well-documented and quantified alternatives with projected tax reductions, traffic flow values, water main locations and costs to property owners, etc. I think you'd find that simply presenting people with some options would significantly reduce resistance to any plans. This is, after all, due diligence, which is what we expect from our trustees.

As a 37-year resident of Elm Grove (yes, that was my mom that was head librarian at Elm Grove), I have seen all sorts of village projects come-and-go, with the expansion of the library (that was my mom!) and re-do of the village grounds for flood abatement being spectacular examples of projects that residents have and will enjoy and benefit from for generations, and so provide powerful evidence that with careful planning and consideration we can do great things. I have no doubt that with adequate information and time to reflect, you will do the best thing for the residents of Elm Grove.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Polczynski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being the most prominent part.

Mark Polczynski  
1180 Legion Drive,  
Elm Grove, Wisconsin