

Emily Gordon

From: rsamlarson@gmail.com
Sent: Saturday, September 5, 2020 9:49 AM
To: City Council
Cc: Aaron Stephens; Jessy Gregg; Lisa Babcock; Ron Bacon; Dana Watson
Subject: Newman Lofts - Resident Request to Retain the 55+ Age Restriction

Dear City Council Members,

Between Sunday, August 30 and Monday, August 31, 2020, seventeen (17) tenants of Newman Lofts met to discuss the emailed letter addressed to Newman Lofts Residents (dated August 27, 2020; 5:01 PM) from Harbor Bay Real Estate whereby Harbor Bay informed us of their request for a "permanent removal of the City's age-based housing restriction for Newman Lofts."

We like this building and its location. Some of us sold homes to move here and most of us were seeking to be close to the university and within walking distance of restaurants and shops. We embrace the city's vision and see downtown East Lansing as a destination for residents other than only young students. As one of our residents stated, "We want to make this place work." Harbor Bay Real Estate states that they have spent months "searching for creative viable options" to improve occupancy, none of which included conversations with any tenants. Several tenants at these meetings shared that they have reached out to Harbor Bay Real Estate with suggestions about how to improve rapport with current and prospective renters, and how tenants could help Harbor Bay with market research such as focus groups since some of us have decades of professional experience in advertising research, marketing science and social science. There has been no response by Harbor Bay to these overtures.

We recognize that COVID has created challenges for East Lansing businesses. We are glad to see so many students return to East Lansing and to see them frequenting local businesses, as we also do and as many of us have done for decades. We also recognize that the occupancy rate challenge for Newman Lofts is exacerbated by COVID-19. Yet, it is not logical or reasonable to seek a "permanent" remedy to a temporary condition (COVID) or to suggest that COVID is the sole reason for lagging occupancy.

We remain steadfast in our determination to keep Newman Lofts focused on 55+ residents of the City of East Lansing. Harbor Bay Real Estate agreed to a deal with the city for the entire mixed-use development. They need to abide by the terms of this agreement.

The City Council and city leadership took a large and important step to begin the reinvention of downtown East Lansing to diversify the resident base, attract new types of year-round residents to support the local economy and enrich the downtown living environment. Time and persistence are now needed to see Council's decision through this early stage of implementation. We remain convinced—and have invested in—this effort so that all of us can realize the benefits from this decision.

We reaffirm our offer to work with Harbor Bay Real Estate and the City of East Lansing to make Newman Lofts a success.

In closing, we are seeking your continued support of the age restriction that is in place at Newman Lofts. Residents of Newman Lofts would be pleased to meet with City Council to answer questions and discuss this matter.

Sincerely,

R. Sam Larson
James W. Dearing
Mark Ditsworth
Judith S. Labovitz
Roger D. Smitter

Phillip Babcock
Jacqueline Babcock
Eleanor Marazita
Elizabeth Marazita
Mary Fielding
Ken Bialek
Gerald Wills
Carla Wills
Cheryl Scott Dube
Paul Dube
Jim Anhut

Anonymous Support (6)

Emily Gordon

From: Jessy Gregg
Sent: Saturday, September 5, 2020 10:55 AM
To: City Council; rsamlarson@gmail.com
Cc: Aaron Stephens; Lisa Babcock; Ron Bacon; Dana Watson
Subject: Re: Newman Lofts - Resident Request to Retain the 55+ Age Restriction

Thank you for this thoughtful analysis. In the only conversation that I have had with the Harbor Bay representatives about their request I suggested to them that they convene a focus group of their residents and get your feedback on their request. I was told by their representative that "there might have been time for that in April" when they first reached out to former Mayor Beier but that now there is "no time" to have that conversation.

I appreciate your confirmation that thus far their "creative solutions" have not included getting feedback from their current residents.

Feel free to pass my contact information along to any Newman Lofts resident who would like to talk further about this situation.

You can reach me at 517-643-3963.

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: rsamlarson@gmail.com <rsamlarson@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 5, 2020 9:48:57 AM
To: City Council <council@cityofeastlansing.com>
Cc: Aaron Stephens <astephens@cityofeastlansing.com>; Jessy Gregg <jgregg@cityofeastlansing.com>; Lisa Babcock <lbabcock@cityofeastlansing.com>; Ron Bacon <rbacon@cityofeastlansing.com>; Dana Watson <dwatson@cityofeastlansing.com>
Subject: Newman Lofts - Resident Request to Retain the 55+ Age Restriction

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Emily Gordon

From: Polzin, Michael <polzinm@msu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 12:14 PM
To: City Council
Subject: A comment concerning Harbor Bay's request

Hello:

First I would like to thank you for your efforts to keep us safer and healthy during this pandemic. It is not an easy time and the influx of students creates new challenges. My family and I certainly appreciate your efforts.

The primary issue to which I would like to lend my voice is that concerning the request of Harbor Bay developers to ease or remove restrictions, that they agreed to, that would then allow them to rent to students. I vehemently oppose agreeing to what seems to be a "bait and switch" request for three reasons.

The first is that the taxpayers and residents of this city should not have to bail them out for flaws in their business model. They should have either done a better job of conducting a viable market study and/or planned for unanticipated situations that might affect the speed at which their development would achieve desired occupancy levels. While the pandemic could not be anticipated, the possibilities of other situations could. Moreover, it is possible that the pandemic provides a convenient excuse for the shortcomings in their hastily developed business plan and agreement with the city.

The second is that Harbor Bay already is receiving significant financial relief from the City of East Lansing on this project. I, for one, do not at all understand or agree with this decision on the part of the City, but that is neither here nor there at this point. What is relevant is that in addition to financial relief they already receive, they are coming to the City to ask for even more . In my view that places much more of the burden on the City to ensure that the project is successful and reduces the motivation and investment of Harbor Bay to work harder to achieve the goals finally agreed to by both parties on this project.

The third pertains to a "slippery slope factor". That is, in even granting a temporary change to Harbor Bay to increase student rentals in this building, reverting to the original plan becomes even less likely over time -- thereby making it likely that Harbor Bay will continue to plead for relief to allow more student rentals on an ongoing basis. In my mind, Harbor Bay has shown that their ability to hold true to agreements they make is highly questionable. Moreover, Harbor Bay seems to expect the City of East Lansing to cover their exposure to risk. I think the City of East Lansing has already risked enough.

Therefore, I urge you to reject Harbor Bay's request to allow increased student rentals in the building at the center of their claim.

I suspect that deliberations concerning this matter will not be easy, so I wish you all the very best on this matter.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Polzin
1886 Melrose Avenue

Emily Gordon

From: Bernard Schupbach <bernie.schupbach@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 6, 2020 3:37 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Harbor Bay

Dear Council members,

I wanted to share my thoughts about Harbor Bay's attempt to change the agreement they had with the city of East Lansing. I am disgusted by their attempt to demonize ELi and plead poor regarding their Newman Lofts. Harbor Bay, by trying to suppress the most reliable source of information for citizens in this city, has demonstrated its baseness and lack of respect for the First Amendment. I urge the City Council to turn down any effort by Harbor Bay to alter the original agreement. If they didn't believe they could rent enough apartments to 55+ individuals, they never should have entered into an agreement with the City and taken the concessions that benefited them. Now that their judgment has been proven wrong, it is not our problem to change our wishes as a city. You might have placed the 55+ units facing the beautiful campus instead of the loud student hangouts. You could have made them owner occupied condos for sale instead of apartments. Your research was either wrong or false. Either way, it is your job to fix it.....cheaper rates, change to condos, etc. I am tired of the taxpayers of East Lansing being forced or cajoled into more concessions for developers. I also applaud your decision to change our City Attorney. It is absolutely the right thing to do.

Thank you for your service and listening,

Bernie Schupbach
630-254-3398

Emily Gordon

From: Donna Rose <wild-rose@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Sunday, September 6, 2020 2:02 AM
To: City Council
Subject: Newman Lofts - Senior Housing

Dear Council Members,

I recently read that the owner of the Newman Lofts, a housing complex for seniors, would like you to change your agreement as to whom this housing would be rented. I am a senior and believe moderately priced senior housing is much needed in East Lansing. Now he would like to open the rentals to anyone, including students.

The reason he is having difficulty renting the senior units is because the rent is too high compared with other senior and non-senior rentals in our area. My mom has been living a short distance away at The Marquette, a senior independent living center which includes three great meals a day, weekly room cleaning, activities and a transport bus, all utilities included and cable TV for \$2150 per month and they have empty units. The same is true for Grand Haven Manor which are even less expensive, and others.

His units have high rents in a noisy and busy part of town, no extras like the Marquette or others and I have heard the views aren't all that great! I feel he should have done his homework in the first place and would not let him out of his contract. He needs to lower his rent so seniors who might like the amenities of the downtown area can actually afford to live there. He should have realized his senior apartments would be overpriced compared with these other housing options which include so many extras for almost the same price. Seniors who might consider renting from him probably have less money or they would choose the other more expensive models with all the amenities. Our area needs apartments for seniors who aren't poor, but who aren't rich either who don't want to live right next door to students. And there is a whole block of seniors who may have incomes from work and Social Security, but cannot afford his current rates, but who might like to live there nearby businesses and CATA. Many of us need housing nearby transit and in walkable neighborhoods, which can be difficult to find at moderate prices. Selling the location as a reason to hike up the rent can only go so far in the current market and during a pandemic. Most senior citizens don't have rich parents helping them out!

I hope you will consider my views when making decisions regarding these senior rentals.

Go bravely,
Donna Rose, LMSW
6207 Cobblers Dr.
East Lansing, MI 48823

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”
--James Baldwin

Emily Gordon

From: Marcus Fields <marcusfields52@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2020 9:32 PM
To: City Council; Aaron Stephens; Jessy Gregg; Lisa Babcock; Ron Bacon; Dana Watson
Subject: We Cannot Support the Request from Harbor Bay Development

Dear City of East Lansing Councilmembers,

I'm an East Lansing homeowner who also works in the city, and I'm reaching out to say that I strongly oppose the bait and switch that Harbor Bay and Ballein Management are attempting to pull over on this city. I also find their tactics of attacking our community members and community organizations on Facebook deplorable.

We need to stand as a community and show these developers that we will not be bullied into their demands. The ordinance requiring either age-restricted housing, low-to-moderate income housing or owner-occupied condominiums under which the Newman Lofts were approved are an important reason why I supported the project.

I agree with Mayor Stephens' comment published in the LSJ that they are seeking a permanent fix to a temporary problem. I also agree with Councilmember Babcock's comments published in East Lansing Info that the struggles they are facing to rent are due to their own choices.

As reasonable people, we can recognize that the pandemic has made many industries suffer, and we all feel for the developers on this front because we are all feeling those same effects. We can also recognize that if in four years time struggles continue, then a public discussion of this issue should take place. **But as of right now, Harbor Bay and Ballein Management have not put in a good faith effort to meet the requirements under which the project was born.**

I urge you to defend the community against their threats and demands.

PS- I want to thank all five of you and especially Mayor Stephens for your efforts to slow the advancement of the virus in our community. I appreciate your educational approach towards the issue. As a year-round resident of the city, I very much appreciate these efforts.

Respectfully,

Marcus Fields
Beech St. East Lansing, MI 48823