

Davis-Kelow, Gloria

From: Gloria Davis
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 1:25 PM
To: Davis-Kelow, Gloria
Subject: Fwd: [External Email] An Open letter to Mayor John Cranley and City Manager Paula Boggs-Muething
Attachments: Elm&Liberty_Source3 Donation #4 to Cranley 2017.jpg; Elm&Liberty_Source3 Donation #2 Donation to Cranley 2017.jpg; Elm&Liberty_Elevar Design Group donations to Cranley 2017.jpg; Elm&Liberty_KEANE Donations to Cranley & Sittenfeld PACs 2019.jpg; Elm&Liberty_Source3 Donation to Cranley 2017.jpg; Elm&Liberty_Elevar Design Group Donation #2 to Cranley PAC 2019.jpg; Elm&Liberty_Source3 Donation #3 to Cranley 2017.jpg; Elm&Liberty_Elevar Design Group donation to Cranley PAC 2019.jpg

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Gloria Davis
Date: January 20, 2021 at 6:25:02 PM EST
Subject: Fwd: [External Email] An Open letter to Mayor John Cranley and City Manager Paula Boggs-Muething

----- Forwarded message -----
From: Young, Wendell <Wendell.Young@cincinnati-oh.gov>
Date: Wed, Jan 20, 2021, 6:23 PM

Subject: Fwd: [External Email] An Open letter to Mayor John Cranley and City Manager Paula Boggs-Muething

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From: Danny Klingler
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 4:26:58 PM
To: Cranley, Mayor <mayor.cranley@cincinnati-oh.gov>; CityManagerEmail <CityManager@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Paula Boggs Muething <paulaboggs@gmail.com>
Cc: Keough-Jurs, Katherine <Katherine.Keough-Jurs@cincinnati-oh.gov>; #COUNCIL <#COUNCIL@cincinnati-oh.gov>; ClerkOfCouncilEmail <ClerkOfCouncil@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Seelbach, Chris <Chris.Seelbach@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Landsman, Greg <Greg.Landsman@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Mann, David <david.mann@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Young, Wendell <Wendell.Young@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Smitherman, Christopher <Christopher.Smitherman@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Kearney, Jan-Michele <Jan-Michele.Kearney@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Sundermann, Betsy <Betsy.Sundermann@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Priority Budget <PriorityBudget@cincinnati-oh.gov>; sharedCitizensComplaintAuthority <cca@cincinnati-oh.gov>; law@cincinnati-oh.gov <law@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Kellam, Caroline <Caroline.Kellam@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Hoffman, Stacey <Stacey.Hoffman@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Oliver Kroner <olliekroner@gmail.com>; Johnson, Beth <beth.johnson@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Cunningham, Edward <Edward.Cunningham@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Dahlberg, Art <art.dahlberg@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Haynes, Marion <Marion.Haynes@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Sturkey, David <David.Sturkey@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Keating, Liz <liz.keating@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Goodin, Steven <steven.goodin@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Rocco, Giovanni <Giovanni.Rocco@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Florea, Lindsey <Lindsey.Florea@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Carter, Markiea <Markiea.Carter@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Community Development <communitydevelopment@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Cincinnati City Planning <planning@cincinnati-oh.gov>; DEI <DEI@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Coolidge, Sherry ; Christopher Wetterich

John <John.Reiser@cincinnati-oh.gov>; Stephen Dronen

Stephen Dronen

Chris Mulloy

Tom Fernandez

Derek Baumar

Subject: [External Email] An Open letter to Mayor John Cranley and City Manager Paula Boggs-Muething

External Email Communication

Dear John and Paula,

I have known both of you for years now, and consider both of you to be, in a sense, friends.

John, I first met you as a server at Palomino in 2004, when I waited on you and you told me to make sure to read "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" by Jane Jacobs so that I would not be laughed out of Planning School when I went to MIT that fall. I took your advice.

Paula, I met you when you were at the Port, and have appreciated your support and friendship, and known you as a good-hearted leader.

I am writing to you now as fellow human beings, because what I have observed in the Mayoral, Managerial, and City Council leadership over the past few years has been shocking. Specifically, the corruption endemic to the administration vis-a-vis real estate development has been beyond the pale. It has crossed a line for me where I am unable to remain silent anymore.

We now know that council members have been taking bribes from developers. But I also know -- even if the public does not yet know -- that this corruption extends to the Mayor and, by association, to the City Manager as well. It has reached a point where I need to say something.

Let me use just one example. You have been shepherding a large development deal at the corner of Elm and Liberty through the administration and through Council. It is a deal to bring hundreds of units of luxury housing to the middle of Over-the-Rhine, with rents ranging from \$1,400 to \$2,800 in a working class neighborhood where residents struggle to pay a third of that and over half of children live in poverty. The Community Council stands firmly opposed to the project, as it offers not one single affordable apartment, violates the historic preservation ethic that has made Over-the-Rhine so successful, gives millions of taxpayer dollars away to out of town developers, and stands to be the largest gentrification project in the history of the neighborhood.

The developers are KEAN Ventures and Buckingham Group, and they are seeking \$25+ million in tax subsidies from the City of Cincinnati for the project.

The developers donated at least \$5,000 to your PAC in 2019, John, shortly after they had purchased the property* (See attached. They also gave \$5,000 to PG Sittenfeld's Progress and Growth PAC, the same PAC implicated in the FBI investigation of Councilmember Sittenfeld). They had never donated to either of your Mayoral campaigns before, nor, to my knowledge had they ever donated to anyone in Cincinnati politics. But suddenly they took a keen interest in donating you. The PAC donation will presumably be used to fund your Gubernatorial campaign.

The Elm & Liberty project architect, Tom Fernandez of Elevar, donated another \$7,500 to your PAC in the fall of 2019* (See attached), as Elevar was finalizing conceptual designs for the project. Tom and SFA/Elevar were also a top 3 overall donor to your reelection campaign in 2017, with over \$17,000 invested in your campaign through at least 10 separate LLCs** (See attached. Elevar is also a key architect for the FC Cincinnati stadium project).

Going back 4 years to the first iteration of the Elm and Liberty project, the original developers -- Source3 -- caught up in a fierce battle with the community, donated the max amount across several LLCs to your Mayoral primary campaign in March of 2017** (See attachments), right before a key vote in council. Following the donations, in April/May 2017 their multi million dollar tax abatement was approved by the City. They were Republicans who, as far as I am aware, had never donated to any City of Cincinnati politicians before. But suddenly, they were very interested in donating to you.

The Planning Department's "Review" of the current Elm and Liberty project has been a sham. The approval by the Planning Department and subsequently by the Planning Commission has been predestined by you John, and you Paula, and it was never in doubt. There was never any consideration about how the community felt about the project, how the project aligned with the Over-the-Rhine Comprehensive Plan (it doesn't), or how it met the legal standard for the zoning changes they are requesting (it doesn't). In fact, a FOIA public records request has revealed that the Department of Community and Economic Development was texting the developers cell phone, strategizing on getting turnout to the Community Council to influence the vote. In short, once they gave you the money, John, it was all a foregone conclusion.

The Elm and Liberty project is just one example of the rampant corruption at the top of the city when it comes to real estate development. This type of pay for play dealing is how business is done here. What's worse, employees are unable to do their jobs because they are afraid of losing them. They are unable to conduct honest project reviews that hold developers accountable on behalf of the citizens of Cincinnati, because they cannot afford to lose their health insurance. They are unwilling to speak out, for fear of retribution by you, John. I'm sure you know you have a reputation for being vindictive.

If you, members of council, doubt that any of this is true, then open an investigation into how this project was managed. Invite city staff for coffee and talk to them off the record. Look into the other PAC donation records (some of which are attached). You can turn a blind eye to the truth, or you can acknowledge it.

Whatever you do, do not respond with gaslighting.

Cincinnati's are losing out because you, John, are taking money from developers and then helping them get their deals through the city. It's corruption, it's wrong, and it's unacceptable, and we cannot wait another 9 months or another single day for things to change. Our city cannot be bought and sold, just as developers, architects, and construction companies cannot be permitted to buy their way into multi-million dollar tax breaks and zoning changes.

There must be accountability. What has been going on must change, and it will change.

There is a vote tomorrow at City Hall to approve valuable zoning changes and the aforementioned \$25+ million dollar tax incentive package for the Elm and Liberty project developers. The same developers who paid \$5,000 to your PAC after purchasing the property. The same architect that has contributed \$25,000 to your PAC and Mayoral Campaigns since 2017. The same project (Source3) that bribed you with contributions to your primary re-election campaign in 2017 right before a key project vote in Council.

Every council member and every member of the administration who goes along with this vote is culpable, and should be held accountable.

I urge you, John and Paula, to pull this project from Thursday's agenda and to send the project back to the Planning Department for a proper review with no political interference. And above all, I urge all of you not to take any more money from developers.