

Thanh Dang

From: Schwartz, Katherine A - schwarka <schwarka@jmu.edu>
Sent: Monday, July 11, 2022 11:59 AM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: Alley behind 457 Ott Street

WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.

Members of the Planning Commission and City Council,

Thank you for accepting public comment regarding the request to close a portion of the alley perpendicular to S. Mason Street and Ott Street.

Please do not approve this request, because an alleyway is needed to provide access to my property located at 457 Ott Street. I have lived at this location for 20 years; with the understanding that the alleyway would be maintained by the City.

This is very important, because there is no other public back yard access to my home. The home was purchased with the understanding that the alleyways behind the home could provide access to the property as needed for routine maintenance.

The City has not maintained the alleyways, but they are now needed for access to plumbing and yard work. For example, last spring, heavy equipment was driven over two of my neighbor's properties to trim the trees in my backyard. This is unacceptable; but the trees must be trimmed to avoid storm damage.

Please do not close any portion of the alley; instead, I am requesting that the City maintain the alley to allow access to my back yard.

Kathy Schwartz
457 Ott Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Cell: 540-435-7944

Thanh Dang

From: cndschwern@aol.com
Sent: Friday, July 15, 2022 2:42 PM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: Proposed Alley Closing- Hottle Campbell Street

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Hello Thanh,

My husband and I recently purchased the property located at 445 Ott Street and are aware of the proposed alley closure(s).

We purchased this property in January 2022 and hope to make improvements not only to the house, but to the structures located behind the house.

These structures include an indoor tennis court and inground pool. As it is with these structures, they periodically require maintenance which can call for heavier equipment.

Removing access to the back of these structures (with closure of the alley further from Campbell Street) would cause significant issues with access and make any improvements, such as repair/modification or return to green space, very difficult.

Should this request be granted, it would leave the only access to a number of these back yards, to a small alley that exits onto Campbell Street (between 281 and 285 Campbell Street). This is very short stretch, and turns would be tight for any equipment entering or exiting.

Additionally, I believe that this particular alley has gas and sewer lines within the alley.

We cannot stress how closing both of these alleys would significantly restrict access to a number of the Ott Street backyards.

Old Town has a certain charm, a little oasis in the city, but having accessibility to the backyards is crucial and enables homeowners to make improvements and maintain values to our historic area.

Sincerely,
Chuck and Donna Schwern

Thanh Dang

From: Kimberly Rutherford <k2hcdl@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2022 5:15 AM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: Re: Alley Closing Requests behind 267 Campbell Street
Attachments: PXL_20220726_113220724.jpg

WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.

Dear Members of the Planning Commission and City Council,

We are writing to let you know of our objection to the proposed closing of the two alleys as requested by Mr. Steven Hottle of 267 Campbell Street.

We live at 451 Ott Street. Right next door to us at 445 Ott Street is a significant structure. I have attached a picture of what that structure looks like from the view of our back deck.

There appears to be a significant amount of work that needs to be done to that structure and closing the alley that terminates at the back of this structure at 445 Ott Street, would severely limit access to the backyard of 445 as well as any potential access to our back yard at 451 Ott Street and to our adjacent neighbors at 457 Ott Street.

It is our understanding that the new owners of 445 Ott Street intend to remove part of this structure or at least make improvements, as it has been neglected for many years, and return some, if not all of the area to green space. Closing the alley that terminates at the back lot line of 445, would complicate that.

For those of us that live in this section of Ott Street (especially 457 Ott and our home at 451 Ott), we have at times, relied on our adjacent neighbors to gain access to our backyards.

We have a pool in our back yard and had to have heavy equipment gain access to our backyard at 451 via our neighbors at 469 Ott. There is NO WAY (for certain equipment) to gain access to our backyards from Ott Street because of the very steep grade from Ott Street to the back yards.

Additionally, there are tremendous size trees in the backyard of 457 that were they to fall, there is a very good chance they could hit our home, or the home at 457. Accessing the backyards of these homes to maintain these trees or remove debris should one fall, is already extremely difficult. We need access.

Please consider the long-term access issue that would be further complicated by the closure of these alleys.

Sincerely,
Kim and Ken Rutherford
451 Ott Street

On Fri, Jul 8, 2022 at 4:20 PM Thanh Dang <Thanh.Dang@harrisonburgva.gov> wrote:

Email sent to: Community members who have inquired with the Department of Community Development about the subject alley closing requests.



Thanh Dang

From: Sheree Boland <bolandsheree2@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2022 10:54 AM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: Campbell Street alley closing request

WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.

My name is Sheree Boland and I have resided at 469 Ott Street for 18 years. Over the years we have allowed several of our neighbors to use our yard to access their back yards. We have informed them that we would like to put in a driveway and hard landscaping. Once that is done they will not be able to use our yard for access to their backyard. It is important to keep the alley open for them to be able to remove yard debris and perform house repairs in the future. I ask that you deny the request to close the alley behind Campbell Street in order for the houses on Ott Street to have access to their yards for necessary maintenance. Thank you for considering the needs of all of the neighbors on the block.

Sheree Boland

Sent from my iPad

Thanh Dang

From: Kaussler, Bernd - kausslbx <kausslbx@jmu.edu>
Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 4:23 PM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: Re: Alley Closing Request information

WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.

Dear Ms Dang

After looking over the request and documents, I would like to communicate to the Planning Commission that I am strongly opposed to this request. These alleys are a fundamental part of Old Town and ought to be enjoyed and remain accessible to the community. My kids play with and walk with their friends in all of the neighborhood alleys, including this one behind Campbell Street. They are public land and ought to remain that. In the long run, I would like to see the city develop them further and connect them to the existing "bike/ walking path grid".

many thanks for your efforts
kind regards
Bernie

Dr Bernd Kaussler
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On Jul 29, 2022, at 9:20 AM, Thanh Dang <Thanh.Dang@harrisonburgva.gov> wrote:

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of JMU. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

You're welcome. I forgot to mention that after you review the documents, feel free to call me or e-mail me with any questions. Thank you.

Thanh Dang, AICP | Assistant Director of Community Development

From: Kaussler, Bernd - kausslbx <kausslbx@jmu.edu>
Sent: Friday, July 29, 2022 9:16 AM
To: Thanh Dang <Thanh.Dang@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Re: Alley Closing Request information

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Many thanks for this information, Ms Dang

August 4, 2022

I feel very strongly that the piece of alley that Mr. Hottle is applying to close be left open. My boys love walking through that alley and whenever their grandparents come to town, they are excited to take them "the secret way" through our neighborhood. The alleys in Old Town are a defining feature of the neighborhood and since we lack reliable sidewalks, they serve as safe routes for our kids.

When Mr. Hottle says in his application that he would like to add the alley to his backyard "for the quiet enjoyment" of his family, I believe him. My young boys and I were walking back there once and he yelled at us. He shouted "You know that's my property!" at us, referring to the beautiful grove of trees on the other side of the alley from his backyard. (It is because of this incident that I wish to remain anonymous.) We had no intention of doing anything other than walk past after admiring the landscape. Mr. Hottle was aggressive and unfriendly. One person's desire to keep people away from his land should not restrict everyone else's access in the neighborhood.

Mr. Hottle also mentions in his application that he has been caring for these pieces of the alley for 30 years. I'm not actually sure why he says this, other than to point out that the city hasn't done it, but the implication is that it's been a burden to him. I don't see how adding the land to his backyard would lift this burden.

I hope that you will consider the desire for quiet enjoyment of the alley by the entire neighborhood over that of one particular household. Thank you so much for listening to my thoughts.

All the best,
A Concerned Neighbor