

For Consideration by the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

Response to Additional Submission package for SDAB20019-0016

February 19, 2020

Dear Board Members,

Since early 2019, when this matter first appeared before you, I have watched as the file grew with neighbors submitting letters in opposition to my relationship dynamic and sexual orientation. Now that the hearing is back before you, I welcome the opportunity to address some of the misconceptions, false assumptions, and outright ignorance evidenced in those letters. As well, I will explain the realities that would dispel some of the negative and naïve views surrounding my home and the chosen family and friends with whom I share time and space.

This campaign against me has been ongoing since 2015. Despite this, not once have I been approached by neighbors or by the City to discuss or mediate any issues. In news articles, City officials comment that they prefer to use education and discussion, rather than fines and censure, to address regulatory compliance. The City's own claimed Standard Operating Procedure was not followed. From the Affidavit of Christopher Meakin in this case:

32. The standard operating procedure for a Development Inspector when a land use contravention occurs is to deal with the owner of a parcel to obtain compliance.

No one "dealt with" me. No one contacted me other than to issue a Stop Order without any other attempts to discuss concerns. To some degree, I understand the complainants' concerns; in 2016, the City acknowledged this was not a business licensing issue. Yet that fact was never conveyed to neighbors who expressed their concerns. Instead, they were told I was a "safety concern":

From: Cameron, Bob
Sent: Friday, October 07, 2016 8:49 AM
To: Davidson, Bryan
Subject: RE: Club Menage & Mr. Matt Mills

Morning Bryan,

I advised her the investigation had been concluded due to officer safety issues, however I also advised her this would not preclude us from investigating again in the future, should there be some future allegation of an activity requiring a licence taking place. I see this matter as no different than any other complaint we may receive where there have been previous complaints.

Based on the information you have received in the below email, perhaps we need to open up a new file?

Bob Cameron
Deputy Chief Licence Inspector
Compliance Services
The City of Calgary | Mail Code #128
T 403-648-6350 | F 403-648-6351
#100 - 2116 27 Avenue N.E.
Calgary, AB Canada T2E 7A6
bob.cameron@calgary.ca
ISC: Confidential

From: Davidson, Bryan
Sent: Thursday, October 06, 2016 8:17 PM
To: Cameron, Bob
Subject: FW: Club Menage & Mr. Matt Mills

What did you tell this lady? She seems to think the file is still open.

As a result, my neighbors continue to believe that. My neighbors have yelled at my guests and friends. Motivated by the fear of the unknown and this lack of clarity from the City, they continue to pressure officials to come up with something – anything – they can use to harass me and my chosen family and friends. The result now, is the City's concocted scheme under the claim that this is now a development issue. Had there been **any** approach or discussion at all, not only could many fallacies about Ethical Non-Monogamy have been addressed, but any practical concerns could have been assuaged as well.

There was a time, between 2010 and 2015, when neighborly relations were evident on my street. To my neighbors, I was just another white, middle class suburbanite, presenting as a cis-gendered, heterosexual male. I undertook friendly and helpful conversations and activities with my neighbors. I shared homemade wine with nearby aficionados, I helped boost cars that were frozen, and pull them from snowbanks when they were stuck. I cleared driveways and sidewalks for those who couldn't. I helped steady and maneuver a trailer as a neighbor readied it for winter. Likewise, others helped me: expressed concern when my garage door stayed open overnight, watched over my home when I went away, and most invaluable, helped calm my dog when he ran out the front door and down the alley. I shared pleasantries and aid with some of these very letter-writers. All in all, I hope we had a positive effect on each other's lives – a condition that shouldn't have to be expressed or praised; it should just be the way people treat each other – as decent humans.

In 2015, that changed. A single piece of information became known about me in my neighborhood. My orientation and relationship dynamics became a matter of public discussion among neighbors. That solitary piece of information fundamentally changed how I was viewed. Those same people who would smile and come over to talk would literally no longer look at me or acknowledge my greeting. When the City sent its heavy-handed response to their concerns, it became apparent to me why this change had occurred. It is still astounding to me that in this day and age, a person's private life, orientation and personal relationship dynamics should create this kind of shift. I have become a neighborhood "Boo Radley", complete with urban myths about the happenings in my home.

To date, there are 9 letters published as part of the SDAB Additional Submissions file. One of those letters (p 1401) is a complete copy of a previous (p 38) but contains no identifiable information to determine if it's even valid. Of the others, only 2 are from those on my street. The rest contain nothing but moral objections from people who are not directly involved, and who had no awareness or opinion until they were "educated" by some ill-informed and morally motivated ring leaders. Nonetheless, they show a pattern of misinformation that must be addressed if my neighbors are to understand that my chosen family and friends are no different than anyone else in our society, and indeed aren't even identifiable from anyone else in the neighborhood.

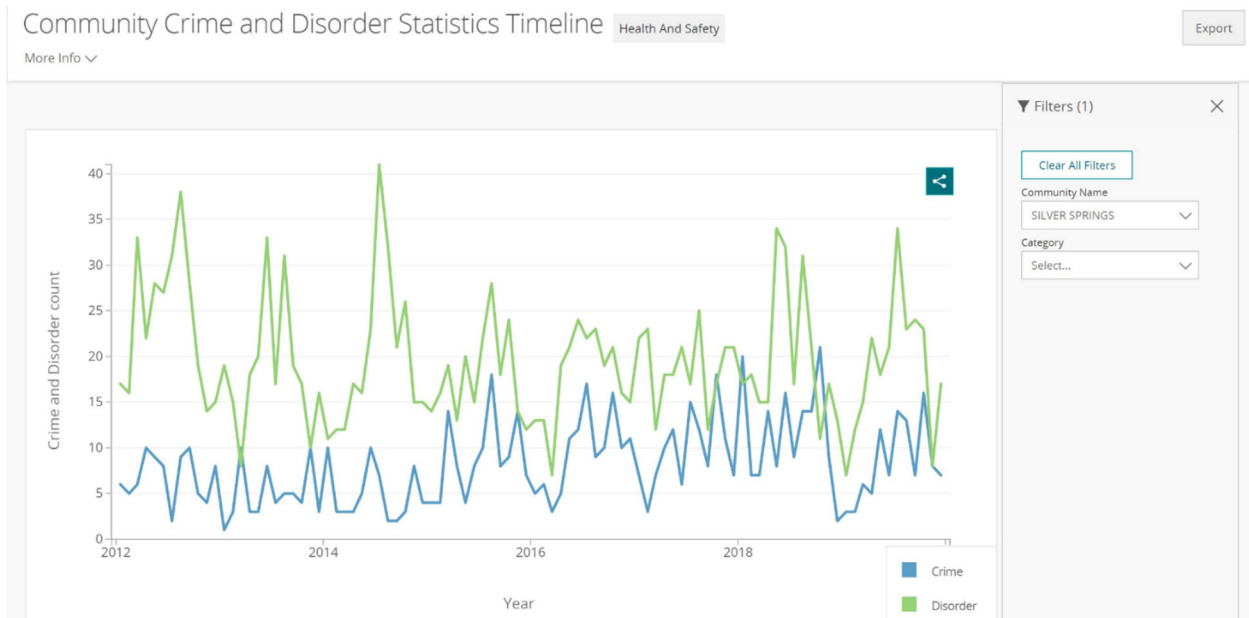
One of the most concerning themes is the assertion that somehow, neighborhood children are at risk from those in my home. To say things like "We are opening up our children and our residents to possibly dangerous situations" (p 36) and "people of questionable character [have] more opportunity to meet with children" (p 38) is nothing short of defamatory and feeds an abhorrent and grossly ignorant narrative. These fears are borne of naivete, but even a modicum of motivation and research will show that there is absolutely no correlation between the ethically non-monogamous community and pedophilia. Ironically, these same people cite the proximity to a Catholic Church as a reason for their concern. If those letter-writers were truly concerned for neighborhood children, they should be examining the historically well-documented cases of child abuse within that institution.

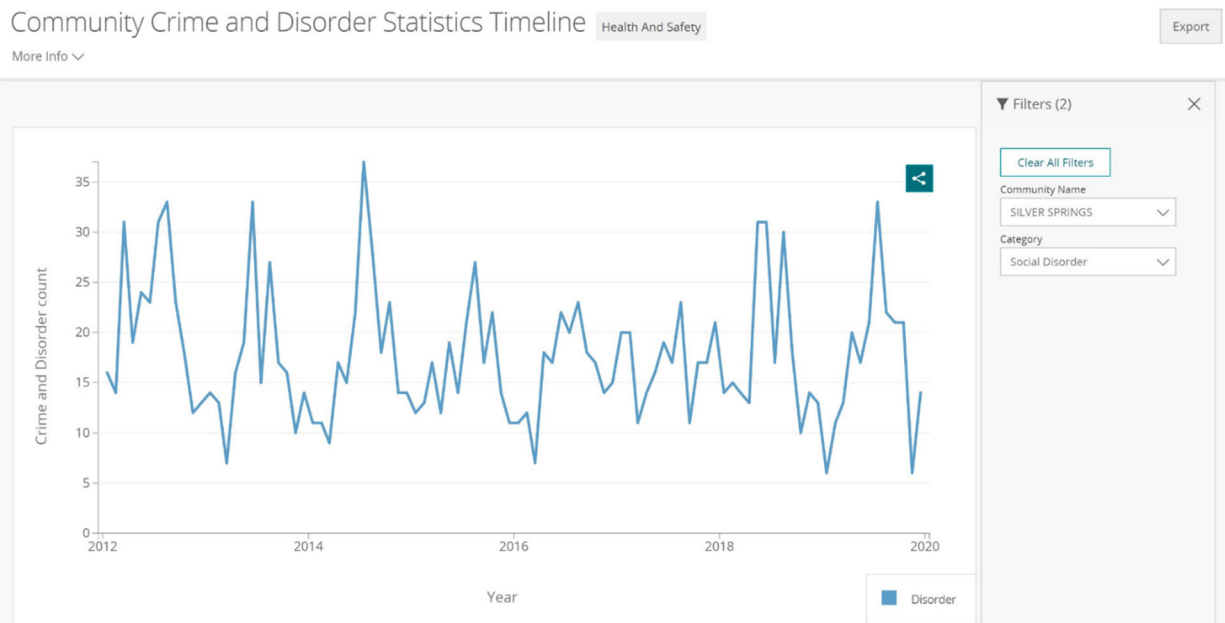
Further, that misinformation extends to concerns such as "they cannot account for what their guests do, and to whom they may do it to [sic], in the neighborhood once they leave" (p 1404), specifically suggesting that young adult women in the neighborhood are unsafe. This thinking perpetuates a disturbing example of rape culture that I would hope all citizens find reprehensible. I sincerely hope the writer is not suggesting that they agree with or support the notion that adults are incapable of self-control in the presence of women. Not only is this suggestion preposterous and inappropriate, it is a direct affront to the consent culture so valued in the ethically non-monogamous community. Once again, even cursory research would highlight the ties between consent communication and our community. The over-consumption of intoxicants – legal and certainly illegal – is strongly frowned upon within our community for just this reason.

Another misrepresented theme the letter-writers would have you believe, is that the streets are lined with cars, day and night, with a drastic increase in traffic and parking congestion. This simply is not the case. Gatherings are not held daily, or even weekly. When they do come over, data the City requested showed an average of 11 couples attending. Given that at least half of those take some form of ride sharing, that leaves 5 to 6 cars, on average, parking near my home. This is hardly disruptive or limiting to anyone in a neighborhood such as mine. There is even non-homefront parking amply available within a few houses of my own, where my guests aren't even parking in front of someone else's home. This is so far from the picture painted by the letter-writers, that I have taken to photographing the street when I have people over, to show that it is not the rampant parking lot that others would claim.

I understand the claim is that they don't like it when a car parks near my home, on the public street. But any examination of the content of their letters or their verbal motivation shows that the car isn't really the issue: it's the knowledge that those people are coming to visit me, and the wild imaginations of what those people are doing in my home. My guests' private activities – perceived or real – are what upsets them. "It is disturbing to say the least" to watch people go through my gate into my private back yard (p 1402), and they seek to stop the "objectionable activities that are so abhorrent" to them (p 1400).

A few of the letters vaguely claim that there has been a rise in neighborhood crime since they became aware of activities, although they leave it to the reader's imagination whether that crime increase can be attributed to me and my guests (p 36). However, even the base assertion is patently false. A simple look at the Calgary Police crime stats database shows nothing other than seasonal and regular crime spikes and dips, going back to 2012. Their claim, while ominous, is completely false and designed only to illicit fear.





While I understand that most do not identify with my orientation, or practice my relationship dynamics, those who object must understand that approximately 20% of the population is estimated to have engaged in ethically non-monogamous dynamics in their lives (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27096488>), and 4-5% actively identify with the orientation (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-polyamorists-next-door/201905/updated-estimate-number-non-monogamous-people-in-us>). These people coexist with the letter-writers – some within our very neighborhood, and within walking distance of my home. We teach their kids, we enforce their laws, we raise our children, we coach soccer, we shop in the same grocery stores, and we work in the same professions. We are, in many unrecognizable ways, no different from anyone else. We are also different in some notable ways. Research indicates we are highly effective at communicating in our relationships, lead healthier lives, have a higher degree of relationship satisfaction, lower rates of divorce and STIs (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1047840X.2014.876908>), and have children who “are more insightful and wise, and open to understanding diversity and many forms of religion and culture.” (https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-4614-4556-2_8), Our relationship dynamics may not be normative, but we do not deserve the vitriol and exclusion representative in their views, and as a segment of society, we are not going anywhere.

The case before you has been manipulated to be presented as a bylaw issue. In fact, as over 3 000 pages of FOIP documentation shows, the concerns are morally driven by a few offended individuals. The litmus test for this is simple: ask the complainants if I stopped hosting parties using a web page, but instead send personal invitations to all of the people in my immediate social circle, or stopped charging to cover expenses, would they continue to have an issue with my lifestyle and orientation? The answer, I’m sure, is yes – they would still object, and they would still participate in an ongoing campaign of misinformation in my neighborhood and to City officials. If I have people over at my house, these individuals have made up their minds that I and my chosen family and friends are some form of degenerates, and will continue to harass me, reporting my daily activities to City officials. I could have a BBQ, but because these people have a particular view of what occurs inside my home, they feel they have standing to object. They do not. Section 307 of the LUB is overreaching and vague, and violates the values espoused in s2, 7, 8, and 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Further, s308 of the LUB is more than adequate to regulate instances where citizens choose to have parties and events in their homes. I ask that you do what City officials have not, for so many years; put the complaints to rest. It stands with you to recognize and acknowledge that I am complying with bylaws and regulations, and to direct the City to explain said compliance to those who object to my lifestyle and orientation.

Respectfully Submitted,
Matt Mills