

Testimony of Enrique Rodriguez

Petition of Lionel Warrell –Requesting that Parcel No. Remainder 30C Estate Elizabeth, No. 8i Great Northside Quarter. St. Thomas from R-2 (Residential-Low Density One and Two Family) to a variance for a restaurant, bar and scenic overlook (Commercial)

September 15, 2023

Dear Honorable Senators,

My name is Enrique Rodriguez, and I am here today to represent my family, including my parents, Enrique and Maria, as well as myself. We are the adjacent property owners to Remainder 30C Estate Elizabeth, and we wish to express our strong opposition to the variance request put forth by Mr. Lionel Warrell. Our family has a deep-rooted history in this neighborhood, spanning five generations, and we have a vested interest in maintaining its current residential character.

For the record, let it be known that we are firmly against Mr. Warrell's variance request.

When we initially met Mr. Warrell, he introduced himself as a Veteran, a Fireman, and a first responder. We warmly welcomed him into our community, hoping to have a neighbor who valued safety, lawfulness, and family life as we do. Our initial impression was favorable, and we believed that Mr. Warrell would be a responsible addition to our neighborhood.

However, our optimism gradually waned as Mr. Warrell began earth-changing work on his property without a posted permit, illegally close to the gut. Repeated requests to display the necessary permits were met with empty promises, and we eventually discovered that he had no valid permit for the work in progress. To our astonishment, Mr. Warrell claimed that vandals were using his property to dump fill illegally, despite our observations of him directly overseeing the work. Following our complaints, the Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) issued a stop-work order, culminating in a troubling incident involving Mr. Warrell and DPNR officers.

Subsequently, Mr. Warrell announced his intentions for commercial development on his property without pursuing the requisite rezoning. He maintained that he could do as he pleased on his property, a stance we vehemently disagreed with. Despite the zoning regulations, Mr. Warrell placed a shipping container on the property and managed to open a bar, operating under a business license from the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA). This license was revoked after it was discovered that the application was incorrect, and the property was not zoned for commercial activities, significantly eroding our faith in his integrity.

Mr. Warrell further asserted ownership of a neighboring property, Mafolie #6, which unequivocally belongs to our family. Shockingly, one Sunday, Mr. Warrell erected a fence across a public road,

barricading the road and encroaching upon our property. Law enforcement was summoned to remove the barricade, and Mr. Warrell was conspicuously absent during this incident. Officers advised us to contact 911 should he attempt such actions again.

During the past three public meetings held by DPNR regarding this property, there has been substantial community opposition to any commercial development, with a full house of attendees. A remarkable ninety percent of those present, all neighbors, voiced their disapproval, while the remaining ten percent, who supported the development, were not residents of the immediate area. The zoning constraints and the property's unique geography leave only two small building areas available, rendering Mr. Warrell's plans unfeasible. Hurricanes Irma and Maria served as stark reminders of the unsuitability of the property for development due to its natural conditions, a massive gut.

Contrary to Mr. Warrell's claims, there is no public water and sewage infrastructure available for this property. Additionally, neighboring businesses like Mafolie Hotel and Sibs have experienced inadequate parking, water supply issues, and sewage system problems, contributing to noise pollution, traffic congestion, and accidents. Granting Mr. Warrell's request would exacerbate these issues, further diminishing the quality of life in our neighborhood.

Mr. Warrell's proposed driveway entrance, situated on a hazardous curve, is unlikely to receive approval from the Department of Public Works due to safety concerns. The overlook frequented by visitors has already caused several accidents.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that approving his variance request for commercial development would be detrimental to our neighborhood's character, environment, and quality of life. However, we extend a warm welcome to Mr. Warrell if he chooses to build his home or a rental property.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Enrique Rodriguez and Family