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Town and Others Have Tried To Help

Town could step in to settle property feud

Tenant proposes fines that would force cooperation

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Lousy Landlord

Article Text:

Feuds With Everyone

CHAPEL HILL -- P.H. Craig and **Spencer Young** have been put on notice.

The feuding property owners have failed to reach an agreement on parking for employees and customers of The Courtyard shopping center for so long that 3 Cups coffee shop owner Lex Alexander told the Chapel Hill Town Council Monday night that tenants there are struggling for survival.

Speaking during the citizen petition period of the council meeting, Alexander issued a plea for local government to intervene because "basically nobody is doing anything."

Mayor Kevin Foy responded by asking town staff to research what action Chapel Hill could take to move the stalemate to a resolution. Foy requested a response "as quickly as possible."

Craig has owned the land that contains more than 50 parking spaces adjacent to The Courtyard for decades. A rental agreement for the spaces lapsed shortly after Young purchased the West Franklin Street shopping center in 2005 and the men have never come to terms on their use.

Getting personal

The disagreement has grown increasingly personal over time, with Craig charging earlier this year that Young was using the adjacent land as a staging area for Courtyard construction without permission and Young issuing a threat of physical harm against Alexander. In July, Craig installed makeshift barriers between the properties that prevent anyone from using his spaces.

Lousy Landlord

Town and Others Have Tried To Help

A mediation session bankrolled by the Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership failed to achieve a resolution last month.

Alexander contended that the lease he signed in 2002 guaranteed 79 spaces for Courtyard employees and customers. According to Alexander, Courtyard tenants now have use of 27 parking spaces.

He also told council members that terms of a previous special use permit issued for the commercial center provided for joint ownership of parking designed to avoid the current situation. Alexander recognized that no sitting council member was responsible for that SUP, but said he believes it's up to this government to get involved.

"The only way these two property owners are going to cooperate is to be fined for not doing so," Alexander said.

The council seemed to agree.

Council member Cam Hill referred to two property owners who "aren't paying attention to anything that's logical." He raised the prospect of compliance violations tied to the piles of gravel and "junk cars" being used to block Craig's parking lots.

In other council business, members adopted a resolution accepting an \$80,000 contribution from the UNC Student Government for improved pedestrian-level street lighting in three downtown areas and the installation of three emergency call boxes.

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