

From: **Marcel Lahsene**

Date: Sat, Aug 7, 2021 at 2:11 PM

Subject: Pertinent information for upcoming City Council Meeting

Mayor William, Counsel Members and City Manager,

I ask that you take the time to indulge me this letter and take it into your consideration not as the same old noise you've heard before for years, but as true heart felt and actual experiences of not just one but many long term citizens that you represent. Try to honestly step inside our experience, our homes throughout the summer. How would you, other residents or perhaps a family member feel if these circumstances were forced upon their immediate neighborhood and their homes. Please bear in mind that, that noise City Council understandably grows deaf to year after year intensifies each year for us. The traffic, the way too many people-noise and now inconsiderate overt neighbor-bashing both on the internet and in person. I am attempting to share and accurate portrayal of our situation from the inside and offer meaningful and livable solutions for all.

Truly my wish is that as a citizen of Rivergrove is that I could focus my resources and efforts with City Counsel on good things that would help to improve the livability and quality of life for all my neighbors and the citizens of Rivergrove. We are in a time of our lives when we are looking to give back. Unfortunately, for far too long I find myself asking for the same simple pleasures of a quiet residential neighborhood that the rest of my fellow Rivergrove citizens enjoy. Of course that refers to those Rivergrove citizens that don't live in the immediate proximity of the boat ramp.

I have lived here for well over twenty years and this situation has deteriorated to a near unbearable state. We have asked, cajoled and argued with City Council for years to do something to alleviate this situation that only gets worse. It has gotten divisive, mean spirited and way beyond what could be considered neighborly. I've had conversations with my neighbors and some of us, my self included, are often uncomfortable inside and outside of our homes on weekends and evenings because of the constant influx of people, inconsiderate noise and traffic directly around our homes.

By now I'm sure you are aware that recently two of my neighbors were either verbally abused and accosted in incidents surrounding the boat ramp. Yet when we ask for our right to live peacefully in a residential neighborhood we are branded negatively and our very real concerns are written off. When we ask visitors to slow down, not block traffic or to keep the noise down; our efforts are characterized negatively by residents that truly have no idea what we live with all summer long. Further City Council appears to side with the actions of some neighbors by condoning strong language such as "harassing", while ignoring the social media "harassment" surrounding the boat ramp issue. I assume that you are also aware the both of the aforementioned neighbors are long time residents and seniors. In fact we are all long time residents. Much longer than

many of the loudest, most vigilant detractors which are in fact relatively new to the neighborhood in comparison.

In a recent council meeting there was discussion questioning if the preponderance of traffic was for the park or the boat ramp. The majority of the traffic is to the boat ramp, not the park. Furthermore, much of the traffic is not from Rivergrove. To be clear, we are not asking to slow traffic to the park, it is often foot traffic and mostly local. While children can be quite loud at times, they are truly a part of a neighborhood. There is also a green space and a buffer zone so they are not directly adjacent to our homes and they are rarely outside making noise past 7PM. For the record and to those that accuse us of wanting to take away the park, it was Councilor Lahsene that prepared the work that secured the Grant Money for the play structure. This was done as a contributing private citizen years ago during previous a City Council with then Councilor Arne Nyberg.

The boat ramp on the other hand is another story. It does not have a buffer zone, zero. In fact it is next to water that helps to amplify voices and noise. It was never built with the intent to serve as a public park, boat ramp, fishing hole and swim park hosting upwards to thirty vehicles at a time. It is a thin strip of pavement, that served as a water transport route for the farm that was this community before the residences were built. It is in disrepair and located directly between two homes. Parks and public spaces are not constructed in that way ever, and never so close to residential homes. It was added to the park as an afterthought when the City accepted the ramp from the county. This occurred after the City was incorporated and after residential houses were in place. Clearly peoples homes and residential zoning take precedent.

I know you are all aware that we are attempting to manage parking in an effort to improve the safety in the neighborhood. We are also asking for this to give the residents that are directly effected some relief from the feeling of living in an overrun destination resort town every weekend and evenings during the summer months. Less traffic along with management of use restrictions of the boat ramp is what is truly needed. The hope is that over time when people that don't live here come and can't park they will make their initial plans destination elsewhere. Hopefully to larger park with facilities and parking that can adequately manage the volume.

I have heard and I agree with the arguments concerning the City of Rivergrove's inability to manage or enforce rules due to lack of personnel and funds. If we cannot manage it as a city. Given the city's inability to manage the this environment with limited resources , clearly managing parking alone will help but will not be enough to address the issue. In order to use the boat ramp effectively within confines of the space, it too has to be managed.

I would like to make the following suggestions for the City of Rivergrove to consider and impose at the boat ramp before next spring 2022:

- **Reduce the hours of use from 7AM-7PM** It is much more conducive to a residential neighborhood and there are other parks with better facilities for diehard users to go to that are close. for them to access. Remember, the bulk of traffic is from outside the neighborhood.
- **Restrict use for loading and unloading into the water.** Swimmers are often load, yelling back and forth assuming they are in a state park. If your neighbor was constantly loud you would ask them to be respectful. These are strangers with rights and often times, no manners. Fishing people are casting, using barbed hooks, loosing hooks and line in the water around the ramp, etc. All of this mixed use is not conducive to safety in such a confined space nor is it conducive to the use of inflatable crafts and the residential environment.
- **Post clear rules for use and noise levels.** Soft, suggestive language will not work. People that visit the area have no idea what is acceptable. Many find if on the internet or are send by paddle board rental companies. They think they are at a state or big city park. And why wouldn't they. WE NEED STRONG CLEAR AND PRESENT SIGNAGE.
- **Require permits to hold events in the park.** If they are from outside Rivergrove a permit should be considered and perhaps a fee. So random groups don't just show up. Other parks require permits. Rules should apply.
- **Make a concerted effort to make sure Rivergrove residents aware that Rivergrove has another park** Loacated on the other Dogwood with a bank they can fish off and a bench they can sit on and pass the day. They can walk around the path, picnic, hold meetings, have family gatherings and play with their dogs.

I think we all know by now that the City of Rivergrove actually has the right to regulate the hours of the boat ramp and that the hours do not have to be consistent with the park. The City also has the right to regulate the manner of use and access allowed at the boat ramp; therefore excluding fishing and swimming as other local parks already do. We can't just continue to throw the doors open in a "free for all" then chastise those that speak up about having to live in it.

I believe that City Council also knows that this is really not a numbers game of voting and popularity or majority rules. It certainly should not about be about how much support or negativity one drums up on the internet. It's about land use compatibility, basic rights and fairness to all residents This entire area is zoned residential. Therefore residential matters come first, not what hours one can access the boat ramp away from their homes. Our right to live in the same peaceful residential neighborhood as other Rivergrove residents supersedes boat ramp issues. If the city can't manage the situation and the environment due to lack of resources then it should make meaningful changes to restrict the use and manage it in a manner that is consistent with the rest of the City of Rivergrove neighborhoods.

What happened to my neighbors last week as well as what has gone on surrounding this issue in the City of Rivergrove in past years is deplorable. Its time for something meaningful to be done.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I reached out to both Councilor Pierce and Councilor Barhyte to discuss the issue after the last City Council meeting in an effort to find some common ground. Councilor Barhyte did not respond, I did have a rather productive and enjoyable exchange with Councilor Pierce who not only responded to my request but took the time to listen, understand and exchange ideas. I thank him for that.

This letter is addressed to the City Council and is intended to assist in a meaningful and fair resolution for all the citizens that live in the residential areas of Rivergrove. It is written with years of first hand experience of actually living in the situation as it has evolved. Of course I am open to any meaningful dialogue with Council Members, the Mayor or City Manager if it would help or be of assistance in helping to resolve this issue. I would appreciate that council uses this letter in good faith and does not publish it on the internet as we have already seen how effectively negative, disparaging and personal these things get.

Respectfully,  
Marcel Lahsene