

October 18, 2017

Montpelier City Council
c/o William Fraser, City Manager
City Hall
39 Main Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

The Honorable John Hollar, Mayor

The Honorable Anne Watson, President & District 2 City Councilor

The Honorable Dona Bate, District 1 City Councilor

The Honorable Rosie Krueger, District 1 City Councilor

The Honorable Jean Olson, District 2 City Councilor

The Honorable Ashley Hill, District 3 City Councilor

The Honorable Justin Turcotte, District 3 City Councilor

Subject: Aja-Zorzi Property, North Side of Barre Street

Dear Mayor & City Council Members:

With the recent passing of my sister, Angeles Zorzi, I am now the eldest remaining owner (age 90) of the Aja Family farm, also known as Sabin's pasture. I am writing this letter to ask for your vote to provide "Riverfront" along Barre Street and "Residential 6000" for the remainder of the pasture and modification of open space requirements in section 3404J (1).

My father immigrated to the United States in 1918 with other family members and in 1943 he bought Sabin's pasture. He recognized that this farm, within the city limits, was a unique property with the potential to provide nearby farm to table dairy and meats and in the long term, land for potential business and housing development within the capital city. His vision was to provide for the immediate and future generations of his family.

The Aja family has always been a good neighbor to the city and surrounding neighborhoods, without asking for special treatment. In the 1940's, the city even provided a rope tow on our upper pasture lands and many enjoyed skiing and sledding on the property. In addition, as requested by Vermont College, we sold a portion of the upper pasture to them.

Zoning has changed on the upper pasture several times since zoning was implemented by the city. These changes were not prompted or approved by the Aja family and we have continued to lose land development opportunities. These actions make it very difficult to maintain any sales strategy or interest in the pasture property. Zoning, real estate marketing efforts and the economy all need to align to sell the land.

As I write this letter, I have learned that the City Council has proposed a change to increase the open space requirement for a new Planned Unit Development from 5% to 40%. We understand the Planning Commission's Final Draft, dated March 9, 2017, noted the Open Space requirement in Section 3404 J (1) is "a minimum of ¼ acre or 5% of the parcel, whichever is greater, must be set aside as permanently protected open space." Upon Googling PUD's throughout Vermont and the country, the general requirements outline 5-20% as common open space values. Bonus density allowances are rewarded for these higher open space percentages. The PUD open space percentage must be reasonable in order for a developer to obtain financing for a project to benefit the city. The 40% open space proposed is excessive. I respectfully request that the council adopt the proposed Planning Commission's March 9th, 2017 Draft as referenced above.

We all know the City's governing bodies have determined there is a need for additional types of housing within the city limits that has available infrastructure adjacent to it. My daughter knows of three individuals that were considering housing in Montpelier. However, they decided not to settle in the city due to lack of housing that met their needs! We believe that the city's current development requirements will provide for a variety of unique housing areas within the property while meeting the needs of today's buyers.

Since our farming/timbering operations are not as productive as the days when we raised cattle and had dairy operations, the neighborhoods adjacent to our farm have had the benefit of quiet and non-offensive smelling pastures. They have assumed the land will become their park, thus our zoning desires and property rights have been ignored. My father specifically anticipated this land would financially benefit the family by providing us income from future city growth.

Our family still believes the original vision to benefit all still exists. As I am sure you are aware, previous sales offers from developers and others have not resulted in any sales-to-date for the pasture. More recently, we know the city was interested in the land and even paid for an appraisal, but failed to provide an offer on the property.

We believe that with the Caledonia Spirits momentum, we may eventually have opportunities to sell the land to the North of Barre Street, if the City will provide the Riverfront and Residential 6000 zoning. With your vote to pursue this course of action; a variety of housing types, open space, expanded tax base and properly planned development will occur to the benefit of all.

We would appreciate your reply to this request by voting to approve the proposed zoning, as stated above, for this land. Our family has been paying taxes on this property for 74 years and feel that our requests are reasonable. We believe the zoning, as outlined in this letter, will meet Montpelier's housing needs, the Planning Commission's vision for greater Montpelier, add revenue to your City and be acceptable to us. The Zorzi family has been apprised of this letter and is in agreement with the content presented. We are available to discuss this issue and invite your reply.

Sincerely,

Antonio Aja, Jr.

Note: Please copy and distribute this letter to all of the persons listed above.

