

September 23, 2013

To: The University of Pittsburgh Board of Trustees and Paul Supowitz

I would like to respond to the six-page letter that Paul Supowitz sent to me on September 20, 2013. You should each have received a copy. I would like to give my response in a way that will give additional information to what is included in my "open letter" dated August 22, 2013 that was forwarded to you by Jean Ferketish.

It is obvious that Paul Supowitz and I have vastly different viewpoints on the University of Pittsburgh's history in the community of Oakland. His assertion is that, "Pitt's ongoing commitment to the betterment of the Oakland community is being recognized nationally as a model of the best in town/gown relations." Then why have no Trustees or University administrators come forward to affirmatively answer the question we posed: Would you want a university to impact your community the way that the University of Pittsburgh has impacted Oakland? Perhaps Mr. Supowitz will be the first person at the University to speak up for his residential community and answer "yes" to this question.

I would like to begin with the last sentence of Mr. Supowitz's letter. He asks on behalf of the University that I "refrain from continuing this injurious behavior." Is this a veiled threat to me or to anyone in our community who dares to speak the truth about this University? I certainly hope that was not his intention.

Mr. Supowitz said that I have made numerous mistakes and factual errors in my open letter. The letter is basically a compilation of information our grassroots movement has gathered since it began in March 2007. We have sent numerous emails to University administrators, including 39 to Chancellor Mark Nordenberg. Mr. Supowitz and others at the University have had ample opportunity to correct mistakes or factual errors. For example, Pat McAteer, now editor-in-chief of *The Pitt News*, interviewed me for an article that appeared in his paper on February 16, 2012. In the article, Vice Chancellor Robert Hill accused me of being inaccurate and unfair. I sent him an email on February 21, 2012 asking him to please delineate any inaccurate and unfair accusations. Vice Chancellor Hill never responded to my email, and finally retired earlier this year.

Mr. Supowitz said that it has been his experience, particularly during the 18-year tenure of Mark Nordenberg, that there have been strong and expanded levels of engagement, interaction, and support with the neighboring communities. Last Wednesday, September 18, I had a conversation with a University of Pittsburgh police officer following a community meeting, and he said that he has seen an increase in University administration involvement with the community only in the past two years. I recommend that Board members talk to the front-line Pitt police officers and elderly longtime residents of Oakland. A perspective will appear that is very different than Mr. Supowitz's.

Mr. Supowitz mentions in his letter that University representatives have met with me on a number of occasions to discuss issues and to provide me with factual information, which I seem to have ignored in my recent letter. He grossly overestimates the factual information I have received from University officials. I have made attempts but have never met with Chancellor Mark Nordenberg in his eighteen years as Chancellor, nor has any other member of our community, to discuss our myriad problems.

My first correspondence to the Chancellor was a letter that I hand-delivered to his office on May 12, 1997. Copies of this letter are available upon request. In the letter, I mentioned that our community has a litter problem, that diligent and daily effort was necessary, and I requested a meeting with him. In my letter I also sincerely hoped he would establish an open-door policy with residents of South Oakland. (Willingness to have an open-door policy is another trait that the new chancellor must have.) The Chancellor never responded to my communication, and as such never provided me with any factual information.

I met with Vice Chancellor G. Reynolds Clark on November 12, 2008, and gave him 96 signatures in support of the SOUL program, as well as letters of support from Councilman Bruce Kraus, Councilman Bill Peduto, Senator Jim Ferlo, Senator Jay Costa, Senator Wayne Fontana, and Representative Dom Costa. The response from the vice chancellor was a harsh "You are not getting any money." He gave me a letter from Adrienne Walnoha, something I had previously received, which listed the in-kind services the University does for the Community Human Services organization. I tallied the approximate value of the legitimate in-kind services which was equivalent to around three dollars of a student's tuition fee. He did not dispute the figure and provided me with no additional factual information.

On February 11, 2009 I attended a meeting with Vice Chancellor John Wilds in the office of Councilman Bruce Kraus. I asked him for the University's support for our litter program. Vice Chancellor Wild's response was, "The litter problem is not the responsibility of the University." He went on to say that our community should start a Neighborhood Improvement District. He provided me with no factual information.

I attended a BACA meeting on October 4, 2011 and asked Mr. Wilds to provide our community four individuals to patrol the streets in the evening hours, Thursday through Sunday. Their task would be to report drinking problems and thus protect our elderly residents from having to report problems. Many of Oakland's elderly residents fear retaliation when they call 911 to report problems, and my request of evening patrols would have eliminated that fear. He ignored the request and provided me no factual information.

Mr. Supowitz and I have never met face-to-face to discuss our community's many problems. We did have a lengthy email exchange in November 2008. In one email, he said that I should confine my communications to Vice Chancellor John Wilds. My response was that "I will not limit myself to communicating exclusively with Dr. Wilds when our community's concerns are best

served by the knowledge and expertise of others at the University of Pittsburgh, a public institution.” He rehashed some items in those email exchanges that are in his most recent letter.

Mr. Supowitz questioned my figure of \$23,000 that the University gives to Oakland organizations in direct funding. In 2009, I asked the leaders of residential organizations (OPDC’s Wanda Wilson, Oakland Community Council’s Nathan Hart, Community Human Services Adrienne Walnoha, Peoples Oakland’s Sandra Phillips and OTMA’s Mavis Rainey) this question: How much money does the University of Pittsburgh give you in direct funding? The answer was that the University gave \$3,000 to OPDC for the rental of a dumpster and \$20,000 to OTMA. The other three organizations said they received no direct funding. Recently I asked Nathan Hart if those figures had changed, and he said they had not.

Supowitz goes on to say that the University provides \$115,000 annually to OBID, including \$59,000 as an annual voluntary contribution. OBID is a business organization, not a residential organization. Mr. Supowitz fails to mention that the University was required to join a business improvement district organization, should one be established, as a condition for the approval of Pitt’s Master Plan in the late 1990s. A visit to the Pennsylvania room at the Carnegie Library in Oakland will verify that fact.

He goes on to talk about the millions of dollars invested in Schenley Plaza, Forbes Avenue, Fifth Avenue and Bigelow Boulevard. This investment was necessary because of the numerous buildings the University owns in these areas, and to support their 27,000 students as well as their faculty and staff. He also highly touted the University’s support of the Adopt-A-Block program, a program in which students pick up litter on residential streets once a month on the last Saturday of the month. The litter pickup is often canceled when there is inclement weather, and is usually not done during summer months. Under this program, litter is sometimes picked up only eight days a year, though the litter problem exists 365 days a year.

Mr. Supowitz knows full well I never claimed that the University exercised eminent domain under Chancellor Nordenberg’s leadership. The information I related about eminent domain was taken from a March 16, 2000 article in the *University Times*. The article states that: “In 1967, to expedite Pitt’s expansion, the General State Authority (GSA) stepped in and, invoking eminent domain, condemned all the buildings in the two-block area south of Forbes Avenue between Oakland Avenue and South Bouquet Street, and sent eviction notices to tenants and business owners there, many of whom were long-term occupants. The GSA also declared that only academic buildings could be developed in the two-block area, a position that became important later.”

Mr. Supowitz talks about the University’s Master Plan and the Bouquet Gardens dormitory expansion, but fails to mention the request that our grassroots movement made to the University for an honest and comprehensive Impact Statement before any further expansion in our community. Why do the Chancellor and his administrators refuse this assessment? Mr. Supowitz

also failed to mention that the University can now bypass the Pittsburgh City Council and go directly to the Pittsburgh Planning Commission for approval of its projects.

He goes on to say, “That Master Plan included the identification of the location of Nordenberg Hall as an area that would be developed for student residential use in the future.” I urge you to get a video copy of the May 6 and May 12, 2010 hearings. You will see that in the May 6 hearing, Vice Chancellor Eli Shorak never makes mention of the very important fact that Nordenberg Hall was intended as student housing in his presentation to City Council Members. The May 12 hearing lasted approximately one minute, and no council member made mention of the potential massive expansion in Oakland. Additionally Mr. Supowitz doesn’t mention that Nordenberg Hall is a 559-bed dormitory building used only for first-year students. Where will these students live next year when they have to move out of Nordenberg Hall? Many will end up in our residential community. Nathan Hart of OPDC is one example of a community leader frustrated by the University’s enrollment increases. Is Nordenberg Hall another example of the University’s self-interests at the expense of our community?

Supowitz states, “To be clear, it was the direct action and efforts of the University and its partners that put a stop to Semple Fest.” He fails to mention that it was our grassroots movement that initiated this action. The Semple Fest events described in my open letter occurred on Friday, April 18, 2008. The next morning after Semple Fest, Pittsburgh Police Detective Donald Pasquarelli and I stood on the street and were taunted by students on nearby properties. The street looked like a war zone, with two burned-out dumpsters and debris scattered everywhere. I approached a man cleaning up the debris and asked what the carnage was all about. He replied, “This happens every year. We call Pitt and no one returns our calls.” I didn’t know what the event was called until a student at a copy center saw photographs I had taken of the street and said, “That looks like Semple Fest.” On April 30, 2008, I sent an email to Chancellor Mark Nordenberg regarding the event, and also notified city council representatives and Oakland organizations. Thus the process began to end this dangerous yearly occurrence.

Another student action that threatened the lives of residents occurred when students occasionally recreationally burned couches on our residential sidewalks and streets, usually following sporting events. Councilman Bruce Kraus will tell you that the public comments of our grassroots movement at city council were some of the first to urge passage of a law to ban indoor couches on outdoor porches. That is now a law in our city.

Mr. Supowitz talks about the long-standing tradition of Pitt’s Homecoming Week fireworks display, but it is a tradition that never should have begun. In what neighborhood in the city of Pittsburgh, other than Oakland, do you have a display of over 1,500 fireworks within such close proximity to residential homes? There are none. He is correct in saying that notice is now given to residents about this event, but that occurred only after protests from our grassroots movement and nearly 20 years of the University ignoring these residents. Mr. Supowitz also talks about the

reporting and disclosure activities of the University but ignores Pitt's exemption from the Right-to-Know law. Something is terribly wrong at the University of Pittsburgh when our grassroots movement cannot get a simple copy of the invoice that the fireworks manufacturer gives to Pitt for the Homecoming Week display.

Finally, Mr. Supowitz talks about the Park Plaza Condominiums. In my letter, I inadvertently stated the lease rent was \$492,678 "per month" when it should have said "per year". Mr. Supowitz fails to mention that this lease with a Greensburg development company is for a 10-year period at a total cost of little more than \$4.9 million. What entrepreneur could compete with Pitt and this development company to purchase the restaurant and keep it available for the elderly residents of the building? He also fails to mention the human tragedy of this issue. This is not an issue about dollar and cents. It is about human dignity, as are all of our issues. I met an elderly woman who lived there and asked her if she would rather have the restaurant or Pitt offices in her building. All of you know in your hearts what she said. On a personal note, I had a 90-year-old friend who lived there and saw her sadness at the loss of the restaurant. That sadness was compounded when an elderly friend of hers moved away because of Pitt's expansion into that building. The elderly people in our community deserve to live out the remaining years of their lives in peace and harmony, and not be caught in the throes of the insatiable greed of this University. We buried my friend this year. It is interesting to note that Mr. Supowitz never talks about human dignity and the pain and suffering of the Oakland residents caused by the University's presence in our community. Is he oblivious to that sorrow?

On August 22, 2013, I requested to Mr. Stephen Tritch that the Oakland community be represented on the search committee for a new chancellor. The request was ignored. I would like to now request that Mr. Tritch, on behalf of the community, explain in detail why there is no Oakland community representation on the 26-member search committee. Other members of the Board are welcome to respond to this request.

Carlino Giampolo