Hello,

I cannot attend thsi Wednesday's ZBA meeting. Below is a comment that I would have made at the meeting if I were able to attend. I'm hoping you can pass this comment along to the committee and/or have someone else read it at the meeting. Many thanks!

Dear Zoning Board Members:

I write regarding the proposed townhouse development at 427 Madison Street as a neighbor on the 500 block of Elmwood. I am unfortunately unable to attend the June meeting but am grateful I can share my input via email.

First off, I understand that this particular lot is difficult to develop, and I am glad there is a proposal to develop it. I support the spirit of this proposal and hope it leads to a successful development, but I do have a few specific concerns:

1. Mr. Scheiss does not have a good track record from the recent 435 Madison development, next door to this proposal. His initial proposal was riddled with errors, and several of his promises to the neighbors in the last stages of the approval process went unfulfilled. In addition, although the apartment building has been open for more than a year and reached 80% capacity by December 2023, as of a few weeks ago he still had not submitted a proposal for the required public art component to this development.
2. The pattern seems to continue with this proposal. The initial application listed only 2 of the 3 variances they are requesting, with the height variance missing. The development was also described in its initial application as “3-stories,” when it is clearly 4 stories in reality. (The “penthouse” level of this building covers over 80% of the façade length, so even the amended language of “3 stories plus a penthouse” is not an accurate representation of the proposed building’s true size.)

3. This development would be adjacent to the Gunderson Historic District and would serve as an entrance to that historic district from Madison. It therefore requires an additional layer of scrutiny to ensure that it “should be sympathetic to and complement the scale and design of surrounding historic structures…” (ZO 7.3.C.1.b)

Given these patterns and the historic nature of the adjacent neighborhood, I would request that the Zoning Board require the following measures:

1. Require Mr. Schiess to receive approval for and begin the public art installment at the neighboring 435 Madison development *before approving this proposal*, i.e., make him fulfill outstanding obligations before allowing him new opportunities.

2. Require that the proposal undergo a more rigorous architectural review than is minimally required in this case, either through the Historic Preservation Committee or through the

Architectural Review Process that is required for planned developments. My particular concern is the design of the very prominent 4th floor - the very floor that is above the zoning limits - which is quite insensitive to the historic neighborhood. Re-designing that 4th floor to blend in a bit more would be very helpful. For example, if, instead of a V shape, the roofline was made to peak toward Madison and slant downward toward the neighborhood to the south? That would make it less prominent from the neighbors' angle while still preserving that interior space in the development. This is just one thought; I'm sure an architect or the HPC would have helpful ideas that would improve the building and make it a true asset to the neighborhood.

I appreciate your attention to important details such as these and your service on the Zoning Board.

Best regards,

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