

Lee Higdon, President
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November 29, 2023

VIA US MAIL AND EMAIL

The Honorable John T. Tecklenburg
Mayor of the City of Charleston
PO Box 652
Charleston, SC 29402

RE: UNREASONABLE PROLIFERATION OF PHOTO SHOOTS

Dear Mayor Tecklenburg:

I am writing to you as the President of the Charlestowne Neighborhood Association (“CNA”) to set out CNA’s concerns related to the dramatic growth in the number of, and disruption from, “photo shoots” south of Broad St.

CNA’s members live south of Broad St. and, for many of them, the proliferation of “photo shoots” in their neighborhood has had a material adverse effect on their quality of life. I am writing to you on this topic, separately from my letter about the Veterans Day parade, because this problem is not about a one-time “special event” but, rather, about the cumulative effect of far too many “special events” in our area.

As a preliminary matter, I understand that the term “photo shoot” can encompass a variety of activities that burden our members, including:

- a. random tourists posing for photographs on/in sidewalks, doorways, gardens, private property, and otherwise;
- b. commercial enterprises taking photos for their business purposes; and
- c. video footage taken for advertising, movie, television or other purposes.

All of these photo shoots have increased significantly in our neighborhood, to the great dismay and frustration of CNA’s members.

For shoots in category a. above, the CNA recognizes that tourists have rights to take photos, but we also feel that the City could do more to limit the number and effect of tourists on our residents, including better educating and asking visitors: to respect the property and lives of local residents; and to minimize the impositions on them.

For shoots in categories b. and c. above, the City has an ordinance and procedures in place to regulate those shoots, but it seems that these restrictions, in many cases, are not implemented. We understand that these category b. and c. shoots would be “special events” under the City’s regulations and that those regulations would thus require that the shoot’s sponsor: 1) give at least 30 days prior notice to the “impacted neighborhood president(s) and business(es)... listing date(s), time(s), and location”; and 2) a

reminder 15 days prior to the event. In our view, these notice requirements have not been met for many of the photo shoots.

More importantly, there has been no limitation on these shoots. The CNA is not aware of any case in which an applicant for a shoot has been turned down because the residents in the proposed area have already suffered through too many shoots.

We understand that this issue involves competing interests of the City in: 1) promoting the City's brand and its tourism industry v. 2) preserving the quality of life of its citizens. We believe that the pendulum has long swung too far towards 1) and that the City must now swing back, decisively and quickly, towards 2).

We voiced our concerns in this letter in an effort to ensure that "photo shoots" do not continue to plague our members. We need limits and processes to make these photo shoots livable for our citizens.

We suggest that a next step in addressing this critical issue would be a meeting of: a) leaders in the City administration responsible for photo shoots; with b) some or all of the members of the Board of the CNA. I will cease to be president of the CNA at the end of 2023, and Jack Cleland will take over that role in 2024. Jack has worked with me on this letter; Jack and other CNA Board members fully support it. If you have any questions or concerns about this letter, Jack is prepared to take the lead on responding to them, and to coordinate CNA participation in a meeting with relevant City personnel on this topic. His email address is clelandjh@gmail.com and his cell number is 607-725-1437.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Lee Higdon", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Lee Higdon
President, Charlestowne Neighborhood Association
Tel: 860-867-6881
lhigdon@conncoll.edu

cc (via email):

Daniel Riccio, Director, Livability and Tourism
Katie Giani, Special Events Manager
Scott Watson, Director, Office of Cultural Affairs
Heath King, Lt., Charleston Police
Mike Seekings, District 8 Councilmember, City of Charleston
William Cogswell, Mayor-Elect, City of Charleston