

The Borough of Sewickley Heights

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Borough Hall
238 Country Club Road
Sewickley, PA 15143-9449

OFFICE OF THE
BOROUGH MANAGER

May 9, 2019

412/741-5119 • 412/741-5946
FAX 412/741-2215

Dear Residents of Sewickley Heights Borough,

As you know, the Borough has spent more than a year defending an appeal brought by Theresa and Scott Fetterolf before the Sewickley Heights Borough Zoning Hearing Board. We are pleased to report that the Zoning Hearing Board rendered a decision on April 25, 2019 finding that the Fetterolfs were operating their property as a commercial venue/event space in violation of the Zoning Ordinance.

In its written decision, the Zoning Hearing Board confirmed that the use of the property as a business for the hosting of weddings, festivals and other large-scale events, as well as the frequency, size, and intensity of these events, was inconsistent with the residential and agricultural uses permitted in the Historical-Rural Residential Zoning District. This was not and never has been about preventing the Fetterolfs from engaging in farming or practicing their religion.

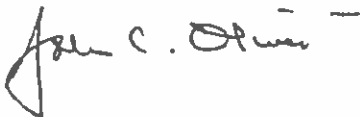
The Zoning Ordinance is the means by which the Borough discharges its responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its residents. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court recently issued a decision addressing the negative impacts that uses like these and other transient and temporary uses have on the character of residential districts. Finding such impacts to be unacceptable and inappropriate, the Supreme Court stated:

[Residential zoning districts are created to] insulate areas intended for residential living from increased noise and traffic, protect children living there and their ability to utilize quiet, open spaces for play, and to maintain 'the residential character of the neighborhood'. . . [where] neighbors can know each other and look out for one another, and people can enjoy the 'quiet seclusion' of their homes.

This is precisely what the Borough has fought so hard to defend and preserve. While many residents in the Historical-Rural Residential Zoning District host the occasional wedding reception for family members and the intermittent fundraiser for favored charities, the operation of an event business goes well beyond what is consistent with, or considered accessory to, a residential and agricultural use. Such a use erodes the quiet, rural, secluded character of this Zoning District that so many residents value and enjoy.

In light of the Zoning Hearing Board's thoughtful and comprehensive decision, and consistent with this ruling of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, we hope this letter is the last one on this topic we will have to send. The Borough respects the Zoning Hearing Board's decision and trusts that the Fetterolfs will do the same.

With appreciation for your patience and support.



John C. Oliver, III, Mayor, Sewickley Heights Borough



S. Phil Hundley, Council President, Sewickley Heights Borough