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Dear Neighbors,

I live at 49 Prospect Drive. I have lived on Prospect Heights for more than forty years. I was raised in this neighborhood. Some of my neighbors remember hiring me to mow their lawns and firing me when I didn't show up on time. This neighborhood, for better or worse, helped to create who I am today.

More than twenty years ago, I returned to the neighborhood. I wanted to live among people I could respect. I wanted to live with those who had worked hard to be where they were and took pride in themselves, their property, and their neighborhood. I did not want to live in an area where my neighbors were arrested or even where police had to be regularly dispatched. I did not want to be awakened by a drunken brawl next door at three o'clock in the morning. I wanted to live in a neighborhood where I could talk to neighbors about their barking dogs and they would respect my feelings.

Several years ago Charles Bocock moved in with Cheryl Reichert at 51 Prospect Drive. When Art Swap at 47 Prospect passed away his widow sold the property to Charles Bocock. Charles turned the property into a rental. The drunken brawls at 47 Prospect Drive began immediately. The police were summoned on a regular basis to control Charles' tenants. Charles ignored the pleadings of his neighbors. Charles ignored us until each and every time the police were called, I called Charles. Charles finally evicted the tenants and replaced them with dog owners who allowed their animals to bark day and night.

Charles began to construct a double garage at 47 Prospect Drive encroaching on a neighbor's property and violating the covenants of our neighborhood. When the neighbor protested, Charles ignored her. Charles ignored her until she was forced to hire an attorney to protect her rights. Only under the threat of a lawsuit did Charles relent.

Over the years I have tried to discuss with Charles problems that he has caused me. I have tried humor, I have tried anger, and I have tried begging. Consistently, the only successful strategy in dealing with Charles has been to threaten legal action.

Recently, and in violation of city ordinance, Charles moved chickens into the property at 51 Prospect Drive. A neighbor filed a complaint with the city asking that the ordinance banning livestock operations be enforced. The city agreed. Charles refused to cooperate with investigating officers. Charles refused to comply with the city ordinance. The city attorney is continuing efforts to enforce the statute.

Our city has spent countless hours and dollars due to Charles' defiance of the city ordinance. This should infuriate all of us. Our city attorney and law enforcement officials have better things to do.

Charles has taken his chickens to the press. He has vowed to take the issue to the city council to get the ordinance changed. He has said that he is sure we can all just get along and he will be glad to work things out with his neighbors. Extensive experience with Charles tends to deny credibility to these assertions. Things will be just fine only as long as Charles gets his way.

Charles will not stop at chickens. Please knock on my door. I will show you that chickens are only one of the steps Charles' is taking to turn Prospect Heights into a major agricultural center. [While you are here we can discuss other eccentricities such as the belief that lawns can live without water. We can also discuss Charles' incredible success in the cultivation of dandelions, thistles, and Japanese clover which remorselessly invade neighboring lawns.] My imagination used to be complacent. It could not envision the presence of sheep, goats, or pigs on Prospect Heights. My imagination is no longer complacent. Neither should yours be sleeping. Please envision the chicken coop in your neighbor's back yard. Please envision the noise, the smell, and the feathers drifting in along the fence line.

The two women who have taken Charles to task through legal channels have shown uncommon courage. They are senior members of our neighborhood who have earned the right to live in peace. Their strength of will to do the right thing and enforce their own rights and the rights of others has sparked my admiration. Unfortunately, it has also brought a touch of shame.

Driven by this shame I have relinquished my membership in the silent majority. I wanted simply and foremost to be left alone. I do not like politics. I wanted to do my work, write my books, and visit my grandchildren. I do not like causes or conflict. However, when my rights and the rights of my neighbors are infringed upon, it is time to draw a line in the sand.

I will be taking this issue to the neighborhood council. I will take the issue to the city commission. I have already taken the issue to the city attorney. I ask for your help. Please take a moment to respond with your feelings on the situation.

The women who have stood up to Charles should not stand alone. I will stand with them. I ask you to stand with us.

Sincerely,

Nicholas L. Bourdeau, CPA/ABV/CFF, CFE