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Hon. Members of the Cambridge City Council,

I write to you today regarding the matter before the Council concerning wood burning at the restaurant Shepard.

I know that Shepard's quality is renowned, its ownership and staff hard-working and empirically professional. I know that Hi-Rise and Shepard are the kind of establishments that define a city. Neighborhood hangouts and five star dining don't often go hand in hand; less so those that become bedrocks and bastions of employment (at real wages) to generations. But let's talk about the smoke.

I walk past the restaurant during operating hours on my way to and from my home at 34½ Shepard Street. The smoke, since the restaurant's opening, has become far less noticeable. (I can say this because I quite like the scent of autumn it delivers, and notice lately that it's more of wisp.) It is, to my eyes, never visible. And it smells far nicer than the burger and fry grease that I definitely notice when walking by Cambridge Common restaurant, just across Massachusetts Avenue. I have never heard a sound from fans or chimneys from Shepard's rooftop.

I trust City Health Inspectors, Fire Department Officials and others to make determinations as to the safety of Shepard's operation, as it relates to fire and smoke. Barring those kinds of real problems, this leaves us with, essentially, a neighbor/s grievance, and one that, for the record, this neighbor does not share.

I am concerned that the City Council would want to be in the business of telling restaurants how to cook their food, and think that forcing a restaurant to change their method of cooking, on which its entire experience is designed, would have no effect on its future. Codes are placed to be enforced, yes. But wood burning cooking is not new to the city, nor are fireplaces or outdoor grills banned. An ex-post-facto measure declaring illegal what the city has expressly approved, inspected, and forced modifications to (at substantial cost) while the restaurant was permitting and building, is a very dangerous precedent to set.

While I bemoan the number of banks and chain-stores that have taken over my old Harvard Square haunts, I savor establishments like Shepard. You can stop at the bar for a bite and a drink on the way home from a long workday, or walk up for date night with your wife, skipping the taxi, knowing the kids are two minute walk home. I urge the Council to

apply a wider lens to an issue that would affect too many residents of this city, and to consider the full ramifications of what it is considering.

Yours,

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