

Don't have to not only oppose Policy Order 11, but also

Dear City Council members:

As a resident of 19 Shepard St. I am writing to express my support of Shepard. I understand that you have received several complaints due to the odor of burning wood used in the preparation of their food and the unintended auditory consequences of the air purifier. To be perfectly frank, while I occasionally experience this enchanting, yet completely innocuous aroma, I much more frequently smell the fumes running off of the armada of busses careening down Mass Ave. Or the litany of delivery trucks idling in bike lanes or onto the street. With respect to the noise, while I walk from apartment past the restaurant multiple times daily, I find it impossible to discern any sort of noise emanating from the scrubbers atop the building. It's my experience that these complaints are baseless and without merit; however I'm not willing to dictate how others encounter senses. Instead I offer two other reasons why Policy Order 11 should not be imposed.

Shepard should be supported as the proud member of the intellectual and artistic community that it is. With the massive influx of banks and cell phone stores in the greater Harvard Square area, it is a rare respite that allows one to literally break bread with MacArthur Fellows (Junot Diaz), Pritzker Prize winners (Richard Rogers, architect of the Pompidou Centre), elected officials (Sen. Elizabeth Warren), world renowned musicians such as Yo-Yo Ma, to name only the most obvious. Cambridge holds itself up as a paragon of independent thought. There's a reason we pay a premium to live here: to be surrounded by curious thinkers at every turn. Shepard represents this to the fullest, and to deny it to continue business would be a major blow to the community.

Further, I'm concerned about what this decision is being based upon. It seems rash to completely outlaw a cooking technique without a thorough examination of all aspects involved. Have any of the city's ordinances or regulations been infringed? If not, how have you come to this decision? Have you measured the amount of particulate coming out of Shepard? Does this exceed the benchmark for compliance? Do you know at what efficiency the scrubber should release the vapor? To that end, it is my understanding that the output of the air purifier is, in fact, simply vapor. Do you have any evidence to the contrary? If not, is the crux of the aggrieved steam?

On a grander scale, have you assessed the impact of all stakeholders involved? How many other restaurants use this form of cooking? How many people do these restaurants employ both directly (staff) and indirectly (vendors, etc.). Ultimately, it's not your job to tell restaurants how to cook. It's your job to make sure that rules are being followed. If the Fire Department inspected Shepard and determined the organization to be complaint, what more can you, as a committee, ask of them?

The Mass Ave corridor between Harvard and Porter is becoming littered with vacant store fronts. Please don't let an uninformed decision add to this list. I urge you not to impose this ban and force the removal of a beloved neighbor.

Sincerely,  
Nick Follett  
19 Shepard