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July 19, 2017

City of Grand Rapids Planning Department/Planning Commission  
1120 Monroe Ave NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Re: 1560 Lake Drive SE, American Gas & Oil, Inc. (Eastown BP)- Special Land Use

Dear Planning Department and Commission,

Earlier this month, the Eastown Community Association (ECA) learned that the BP convenience store and gas station in Eastown has made a request to sell beer and wine for off-site consumption. After posting this information on our social media outlets and discussing as a Board, there was a unanimous vote (12-0) to officially oppose this request. We based our decision on the following findings:

1. Not Compatible with Adjacent Residential Use. The subject property is on the outside edge of the Traditional Neighborhoods - Traditional Business Area (TN-TBA) Zoning District. The current business is auto-oriented with impacts such as late-hour traffic, noise, bright lights, and customer activity. Further expansion to allow beer and wine sales will only add to those undesirable impacts. If the Eastown BP was centralized, rather than on the fringe, our concern of compatibility may be less significant. However, the subject site abuts residential property. While a different site design could allow for compatibility or a sensitive transition to the residential area, this particular site does not.
2. Not an Underserved Area. Beer and wine can be purchased for off-site consumption in several convenient locations in and around Eastown.
3. Not Necessary for Eastown Economic Growth and Prosperity. Another location for retail beer and wine sales will have a negligible impact on economic growth and prosperity. We do not anticipate job creation, any demonstrable community benefit, or any desirable physical improvements to the property.
4. Higher Potential for "Secondary Effects." We believe there will be a higher potential for loitering, increased late-hour vehicular and customer traffic, noise, and crime. Although the management of a retail operation can reduce secondary impacts and effects, we are not willing to support any project with higher risks when near residential property.

5. Long-Term Vision. Easttown is a walkable neighborhood and we support small businesses, restaurants, and services. Although gas stations with associated convenience stores and alcohol sales are classified as special land uses in the TN-TBA, we do not feel that auto-oriented businesses are consistent with our community vision. This community perspective was clear during the Fulton/Carlton Family Fare Service Station proposal, which drew strong opposition. We believe opposition would be even stronger if the current BP station was proposed today in its present location. While the current land use is conforming, we do not support the long-term existence.

Ultimately, zoning changes, the right development partners and investors, community involvement, and public expenditure will allow the community to achieve its vision. As such, we choose not to support a request that would increase the likelihood of long-term survival of the land use in this location.

Thank you, in advance, for your careful consideration of our justification of this position concerning the special land use request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shannon Cunningham".

Shannon Cunningham  
Board President  
Easttown Community Association