

Struggling to Hold its Place

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ried to 89-year-old Eastern Star member Annie B. Danielson.

Danielson keeps a record of the city's requirements on the location and has even started a petition to demand the city provide a full and complete examination of the fines and actions it has taken against the lodge.

Fito Roberts a friend and neighbor of both the lodge and Danielson said the city requirements are so expensive it could be the difference between the lodge staying open and it closing its doors.

Both men complain about the lodge having already tried to meet the expectations of city inspectors when it planted native grasses, blueberries, salmon berries, and Marion berries along a bordering hillside, only to be told it had to be nursery-stock ground cover, hedging, and maple trees. To make matters worse, Danielson pointed out that the change to the natural environment has caused severe erosion on the hillside and left the aging membership the task of fixing this problem.

City officials admit they had previously approved and signed off on some improvements they now say are not adequate.

The enforcement manager for food cart locations in the city's Bureau of Development Services, Michael Liefeld, told the Portland Observer said that complaints against food cart locations are not unique, and that they have seen an uptick in residents clashing with carts throughout the city.

He also explained that the building inspector who originally approved the Freemasons' location for food carts was not really familiar with the requirements for vending cart development, and that this is why the city had to rescind its approval.

"Essentially," said Liefeld, "The city made an error." Looking at his records, Liefeld confirmed that the lodge's fees and fines totaled about \$42,860, a figure far out of the reach of the lodge's budget.

Roberts shared his feeling that city codes are not being enforced equally.

Across the street it's all white-owned businesses with the same structures, charging \$20 for dinners we can't afford, but their tables in the street aren't the problem, it's our tables in the street," he said.

Danielson's petition asks the city to compare the reportedly "out of code" seating area surrounding the lodge's parking lot, and what looks like unfettered



PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Leslie Green, a Master Mason and member of the St. Joseph Grand Lodge, helps the building with maintenance issues and remembers that a few years ago the building was vandalized by white supremacist graffiti.

outdoor sidewalk seating littering the rest of Mississippi and many of the gentrified businesses located on the most popular streets of north and northeast Portland.

His wife senses the lodge's inevitable closing, and grieves the changes she's seen on Mississippi and throughout the inner city. If the Lodge disappears, many community celebrations, birthdays, and events for black residents will also be pushed out.

"When they close this lodge, there won't be nothing left for us here. No trace of the African-American community will remain in this corner of the city," she said.

Roberts wondered if the person who complained about code enforcement might be tied to racist graffiti that vandalized the lodge a couple of years ago.

"It wouldn't surprise me," he said, "If it's the same folks, But even it's not, they both have the same effect of letting us know we are not wanted here."

Leslie Green, a black maintenance worker and Free Mason who spends time regularly working at the site, wondered if the petition was the best way to remedy the problems the lodge faces.

"You can't fight City Hall," he said.

Bryant, as manager of the lodge, is working closely with the Boise Neighborhood Association to help its case with the city. He doesn't really know if he is on board with a petition, but agrees that the lodge's problems with the city need to be addressed.

Once the petition collects sufficient signatures, Danielson will present it to the city and ask for assistance in working together to create some kind of financially plausible way for the lodge to keep its doors open to the community.



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