Lucas Media Statement

August 27, 2018

The Lucas Estate has been the subject of numerous media stories over the last several months. Unfortunately, much of the information published has been incomplete or inaccurate. We would like to set the record straight.

Charlotte and I purchased our estate almost eight years ago with the intention of restoring a piece of property that was valuable to the community. The house had sat empty for several years and was in need of substantial repair. When we bought the property, we were praised for wanting to continue using the property for community events. We invested millions of dollars to restore and upgrade the property, including the existing sports facility and a new outdoor pavilion, all of which enhanced the value of all neighboring properties. Charlotte and I made this estate our home. As originally intended, we opened our home to be used for charitable and political causes that we personally support, as well as for community events (such as the NFL Super Bowl Gala).

More recently, when the Nancy Irsay property became available for sale, we purchased it rather than see it dismantled and populated by higher density housing. The Irsay Estate also has been empty for many years. Again, we refurbished and restored the property.

We have not added any new buildings. All of the buildings on the site existed before we bought the properties and were used to host parties, fundraisers and other such activities for decades before we bought them.

Contrary to what has been reported, we are not a "commercial business." Our estate has never been for rent, nor have we ever charged for the use of the facilities. Charlotte and I only allow our property to be used for charities, fundraisers or other activities that we invite or select.

Charlotte and I have personally donated hundreds of thousands of dollars and have allowed our property to be used to raise millions of dollars from our guests for the local charities. Our property is different than "event venues" where no one lives and whose purpose is to make money.

Some have asserted that we are a commercial business because many of our events are catered or offer valet services for their guests, but these activities are common with larger estates or functions, and is not prohibited by the zoning laws. The fact that we have a larger piece of property and can invite more guests does not change the fundamental nature of our events or convert our activities to commercial activities. It does not make our private events into a commercial business.

Charlotte and I have been living in our property since 2011, hosting private events, without incidents or complaints. We were never cited for a violation of any zoning ordinance or a violation of a noise ordinance, until one recent minor noise ordinance citation that is being challenged. Contrary to reports, we have never been "ordered" to stop hosting events.
Last year, the City of Carmel requested that we seek a variance to allow commercial activities on the site. Although we did not believe we needed a variance, we pursued it because we were asked to do so. The City of Carmel supported our request. There were also many neighbors and charities who supported the variance request. There were a few neighbors that objected, but the petition drew protestors, many believed to be political in nature, who came from miles away or raised issues that were not relevant to our property. Ultimately the variance request was defeated in a close vote. Legally, this denial did not change anything. What we were legally doing before the denial, we could continue.

Last November, the City of Carmel issued a "Director's Determination" that sought to place restrictions on the Lucas Estate that did not apply to anyone else. The Determination was essentially the City of Carmel's opinion about how our property should be used. In our view, many of these restrictions were unreasonable and deprived us of the full use and enjoyment of our property without due process. We had no choice but to appeal.

We simply had differences in the interpretation of the ordinance, and we were committed to trying to work out those differences. We had lengthy discussions and even agreed to a mediation. Although we did not resolve all of our differences, we did make progress in our discussions. Following the mediation, the City of Carmel withdrew its Director's Determination that ended the need for an appeal.

We are not looking for special treatment. We have repeatedly said that we are willing to abide by the same rules as everybody else. We have committed to work with the City of Carmel to ensure that we are in compliance with the zoning and noise ordinances. We want to continue to use our property to be charitable to people who need it.

We also said repeatedly that we want to be good neighbors. The news reports make it sound like we are having wild and raucous parties which is a mischaracterization of what occurs on our property. Our events are orderly. Our guests are respectful, good people. We have law enforcement officers as security at almost every event. Most of the events are indoors. For outdoor events, we have put in place directional lighting, and directional sound systems, buffering and sound monitoring equipment to ensure that we comply with the noise ordinance. We end most our events early and save the clean up for the following day. We have met many times with neighbors and believe that we have satisfied all but a few protestors. We are not trying to minimize their opinions. We will continue to be sensitive to our neighbors and their legitimate concerns.

We love our country and our community. We want to continue to lead the way to help those who are less fortunate. We hope that the City and the neighbors will find a way to work with us to achieve this goal.

Forrest Lucas.