

HOW A CABLE ACROSS A SIDEWALK BECAME A CASE FILE

We just wanted to charge the car. Here's what happened.

Twenty-seven 311 reports, five signs, one vote, two meetings with the City, one surrender. Posted so the neighbors who keep asking can read it in order.

JANUARY

We bought this house, three blocks from our old one on E Linden, where we had a driveway and a charger. Here, the previous owners had a charger whose cord crossed the sidewalk under a protective ramp — the kind you see at construction sites and concerts. We'd seen them all over Alexandria. **Not a problem, we thought.**

MAY

A notice from the City: an inspector had been by, remove the cord. Odd, we thought — it's out there about three hours a week. We didn't think much of it.

JUNE

A second notice. I looked at the public records on Alex311 and found someone had been busy: four or five reports already. It seemed too silly to be serious, so I made a snarky website declaring myself a scofflaw.

EARLY JULY

The reporting started to feel like harassment. I dug into the rules looking for a lawful way to do this, and started estimating what households without driveways actually pay. I met with City staff, who told me the City had **no way to enforce** the encroachment rule. Reassured, I posted a snarky sign about reports that cost everyone time and did nothing. *(Sign one.)*

LATE JULY

The website grew into the advocacy site it is today. The research made it plain: without a driveway you are simply out of luck if you want an EV, and the City's answer — public Level 2 chargers — leaves the gap open. Peer cities allow this. I emailed City Council; at least one member forwarded it to staff.

EARLY AUGUST

A second meeting with staff, who were not sympathetic. The City would not support charging across the sidewalk; a permit program would be too onerous for residents and staff alike. Could it be lighter — approved equipment instead of permits? **No.** They corrected the earlier reassurance: there are fines, or jail, to fall back on, and Council was weighing punitive options.

LATE AUGUST

The reports kept coming, and the first sign had enraged the two or three people filing them. New signs went up: one on the penalty situation, then a vote board. Driveway? At least \$10,000. Fast charger? Thousands a year. Or: be cool while we work this out with the City. **Kindness won, 67 to 33** — with one suspicious burst of ten votes for the other side appearing after a single passer-by. Still a win. *(Signs two through six.)*

EARLY SEPTEMBER

Not content with 311, the people filing found that I sit on the City's Environmental Policy Commission and that the handbook lets Council remove a commissioner who breaks the law. They took it to Someone Important, who let it be known: **step down, or stop using the cable protector**. Meanwhile several more reports arrived that were just photographs of our signs, not of any encroachment. And yet: neighbors kept stopping by with sympathy, and many used the website to email Council.

SEPTEMBER 11

I was tempted to let the disobedience circuits kick in. Instead I signed a pledge and swore off charging at home. Then I tried the supercharger to see how the alternative is. **It sucks**. Another sign said so. The kindness of neighbors became overwhelming, including offers of driveways to charge in. (*Signs seven and eight.*)

LATE SEPTEMBER

The Environmental Policy Commission **voted unanimously** to send Council a letter supporting residential curbside charging access. Many thanks to my fellow commissioners. After a final burst of bizarre reports — including two that reported the pledge itself, and two that reported the City for closing earlier reports — the total reached twenty-seven, six of them after we had already stopped.

OCTOBER

An uneasy truce. We charge in neighbors' driveways and pay them by Venmo. That is a testament to good neighbors. It is not a substitute for City policy.

WHAT WOULD ACTUALLY CHANGE THIS

City Council. The site drafts a letter of support in two minutes, and now also a **follow-up** letter asking Council to keep tracking the issue and bring it to a meeting. If you want to help, that is the single most useful thing you can do. Thank you for reading this far.



The whole case, with
research

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Email City Council (it
drafts the note for you)

curbsidealx.com/email-council.html



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