



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Mayor E. Denise Simmons

December 23, 2009

Mark Hoplamazian
President & CEO, Hyatt Regency
71 South Wacker Drive, 16th Floor
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Mr. Hoplamazian:

Last summer, I was dismayed to learn about the Hyatt Regency Hotel Corporation's decision to lay off 100 housekeeping workers at three of its Massachusetts hotels. The employees were replaced with workers from an independent staffing agency for lower wages and no healthcare benefits. The Hyatt's disregard for their employees caused a particular outcry in Cambridge, prompting the Hyatt to issue a statement to the *Boston Globe* declaring that the "restructuring" had been done "...as part of an ongoing drive to address challenging economic conditions." While the harsh economy has unquestionably created steep challenges for everyone trying to keep their businesses afloat, the Hyatt's actions came across as untimely, unseemly, and unconscionable.

I understand, as well as anyone, the distinct challenges we all face right now. The Mayor's Office is regularly contacted by those who are the hardest hit by the economic downturn. Cambridge, like the rest of the nation, has been impacted by these turbulent economic times, and the hardships have translated into longer lines at our food pantries, greater numbers seeking employment assistance, and homeless shelters that are regularly filled to capacity. Employers are being forced to make tough decisions in order to stay in business, and I am mindful that there are occasions when layoffs simply cannot be avoided.

Having said that, I feel that the Hyatt has conducted itself less than honorably during this matter. The way your company chose to go about this process – having the housekeepers train their replacements under a false premise, and then firing them once the training was completed – is outrageous. This wave of layoffs by the Hyatt further destabilizes the local economy, and it negatively impacts one hundred individuals who will no longer be able to provide for their families, who will no longer be able to meet mortgage and rent payments, and who will place greater stress upon our already-strained local assistance programs.

I am particularly troubled by the prospect that the Hyatt, in an effort to stem the flood of negative publicity this has brought, may have misled people into thinking that steps would be taken to reinstate the displaced workers. It has come to my attention that the only measures the Hyatt is willing to take is to refer these displaced workers – many of whom are women, many of whom are immigrants, and many of whom have given over twenty years of service to the Hyatt – to a temp agency. This is a far cry from ensuring that these workers obtain stable jobs with health care health benefits.

I am well aware of the limits of my authority as Mayor of Cambridge. I cannot force a private company to reinstate its displaced workers. There are, however, other ways of voicing my displeasure. I am therefore letting it be known that the Mayor's Office is removing the Hyatt from consideration as a venue for any City functions; I am urging all organizations with any ties to or partnerships with the Cambridge government to avoid giving business to the Hyatt; and I am urging all Cambridge residents to do the same – until such time as these 100 displaced workers have been reinstated. By returning these workers to the payroll, the Hyatt Corporation would demonstrate a degree of compassion to those who have dutifully given their service, and it would also demonstrate a sense of social responsibility to your neighbors throughout the greater Cambridge and Boston area. This would also suggest that the Hyatt Corporation honors and recognizes the value of its loyal employees at all levels of its organization.

I do not doubt the tremendous challenges that the Hyatt Corporation faces in sustaining business during this moment in time. Yet I also recognize that a proper balance must be struck between sustaining your business, and treating your employees – and the communities you do business in – with courtesy and respect. I sincerely hope that once you have given this further thought, you will ultimately make a more charitable calibration in this matter. This is the season for charity and neighborliness, and it is not too late for the Hyatt Corporation to do the right thing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "E. Denise Simmons", written over a horizontal line.

E. Denise Simmons

Honorable Mayor of Cambridge

Cc: *The Cambridge Chronicle*
The Boston Globe
The Boston Herald