

File ABZA 20-6

From: Kathy <kathy@highlanddistrictcouncil.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:54 PM
To: CouncilHearing (CI-StPaul) <CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: HDC -Resolution 1493 Highland Pkwy

Council Member Tolbert,

The Highland District Council's Community Development committee spent time meeting with the applicant and neighbors for the variance request at 1493 Highland Parkway. The Committee looked at the property and neighboring properties, and asked about the history of variances for attached garages in the Highland Park neighborhood. The Committee felt that the design of a Universal home, with an attached garage and a .2% lot coverage variance were reasonable, and they would support these same variances for any applicant in the HP neighborhood.

There was some concerns that neighbors were not called on or recognized at the HDC Zoom meeting and that all of the neighbors questions were not heard. The response of the HDC is below:

We appreciate hearing from all community members, particularly from those most affected by a project like you are. I'm sorry you were not called on earlier in the meeting to ask a question or make a comment. Our volunteer committee members are used to meeting in-person and are still learning the skill of effectively managing online meetings. We did start the meeting with instructions on how to be called on, but clearly need to work on having our facilitators consistently reviewing the Zoom participant window for raised hands and the comments window for questions/comments.

The CDC is intended to provide a forum for residents to discuss issues and have conversations about developments throughout the entire neighborhood. The city trains district councils to consider variances narrowly and to provide feedback in the context of the seven findings of the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). The committee must consider the facts in front of them as it pertains to the specific variance requests because judging an applicant or community member's attitude, intent, or other subjective qualities could invite bias. It's also important for the CDC to be fair and consistent in its consideration of variance requests. Historically the committee has supported variances of such small degrees, especially when it allows the property to be adapted to senior living or for people with disabilities. We strive to make Highland accommodating to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Please let me know if you have any questions about HDC support of the 1493 Highland Parkway variances or if you would like more information regarding the HDC process .

Thank you for your consideration,

Kathy

Kathy Carruth
Executive Director
Highland District Council
651.695.4005

kathy@highlanddistrictcouncil.org
www.highlanddistrictcouncil.org

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