To whom this may concern.

I want to begin by explaining that by no means do I wish to disrespect the great city of Saint Paul in any way. Having grown up in the western suburbs of the metro area, I never once thought I'd wind up living in Saint Paul during the time I was there, but here I am and going on 30 years now. I could go on and on about the reasons why, but suffice it to say that I love Saint Paul. I love Saint Paul and I must admit I am still quite surprised by the drama my lawn seemed to cause last summer.

When I received the long grass complaint, the first thing I did was call the number at the bottom of the page – (651) 266-9058 – to explain the following:

- I was recovering from shoulder surgery. The rotator cuff of my right shoulder was surgically repaired by Dr. Peter Parten at Summit Orthopedics earlier that year and this prevented me from operating a lawn mower at any time during 2024.

- Sustained in September of 2023, the original injury actually prevented me from doing anything to my lawn for the rest of that year as well – at which point I was in the second year of converting my lawn to something a little more sustainable, environmentally friendly, conducive to pollinator habitation and without any need for much irrigation or machinery.

- I was doing what I physically could and that I wished to have a conversation with somebody about the issue so I could avoid any further conflict.

- I also explained that, while long, the grass was actually pleasant looking waving in the breeze and the only alternative was to dig it up.

This all seemed reasonable to me from the point of view that I was moving forward and doing what I could and that whatever eyesore my yard might have become was merely temporary. After all, I've never received a complaint like this in the nearly 30 years I've lived in Saint Paul and certainly not in the 17 I've been living in my place at Battle Creek. I felt pretty certain I just needed to discuss things with the Code Enforcement Area Inspector and I should be allowed some grace.

Unfortunately the discussion I was hoping to have never actually happened. However, I can say that within 45 minutes or so of leaving the voicemail, a police squad drove by my home while I was surmising the situation from the front step and the officer behind the wheel kindly waved at me - of which I made no interpretation with regard to my lawn.

I had been focussed on the backyard for most of the year up until that point, so I shifted my focus to the front yard by spraying it with grass killer and tilling it by hand (again, with a recovering shoulder). I also had five tons of boulders and seven yards of wood mulch delivered.

Thus, by the time the contractors the city hired to mow my lawn arrived, three quarters of the front yard had been turned over and a pile of boulders covered about a third to a half of what remained – which was an approximate three foot strip of dead grass extending from the street to the house along the property of my eastside neighbor.

I'd be remiss not to mention at this point that by this time Xcel had begun work in the neighborhood to replace the gas lines of all of the homes on the southside of the street bordering the park (including mine) and that the aforementioned three foot strip of dead grass was now painted at the street indicating the location of my gas line, thus I had decided to forgo digging in that portion of the yard until Xcel had concluded the work it had begun.

I do not feel there could have been any mistake made about the fact that my yard was clearly undergoing major work at the time and that any civil and reasonable person wishing to contribute to the state of affairs (especially with a lawn mower) would probably wish to announce themselves and their intent. But, unfortunately, this never happened either.

What did happen was this. The city contractors mowed the three foot section of dead grass in the front yard and property belonging to Battle Creek Regional Park in the back. It is my opinion that the contractors had very little if anything at all to possibly mow. There was absolutely no grass for the contractors to mow in back as the entire property belonging to me in back had been dug up in preparation for the fence that would later be installed that summer.

I should probably mention here that in 2023 I had made an agreement with the County that I wold NOT mow the park property in the backyard. Earlier it had complained that I had been mowing too far into the park, but this had in fact been my eastside neighbor's lawn service. Regardless, I explained to them that I had not mowed that area that entire year and was planning on going "mowerless" anyway.

In fact, the contractors were not on my property long enough for me to ascertain what was actually happening. I had actually thought it was my neighbor's lawn service and didn't think much about it until I went out to check the mail (within an hour of when the machinery could first be heard) and realized it was my dead grass that had been mowed and the contractors were already gone. Yet the bill the city wants me to pay is nearly $500 – I'm hoping the contractors have itemized their costs for the city.

When I saw the photos provided by the contractor, I really had to kind of laugh. The photos, at least those attached to the complaint and bill I later received, really obfuscate things as to just what the contractors did. I've attached them herein with my notes as well as a couple of other photos I've taken to hopefully help the council understand the real situation further.

Sadly, I attempted to explain all of this to Marcia Moermond (the city's legislative hearing officer) but to no avail. Perhaps she was in a hurry to get to lunch, but it was clear she had no time for me or my explanations. In the short time that I spoke with Marcia she impressed me with the following:

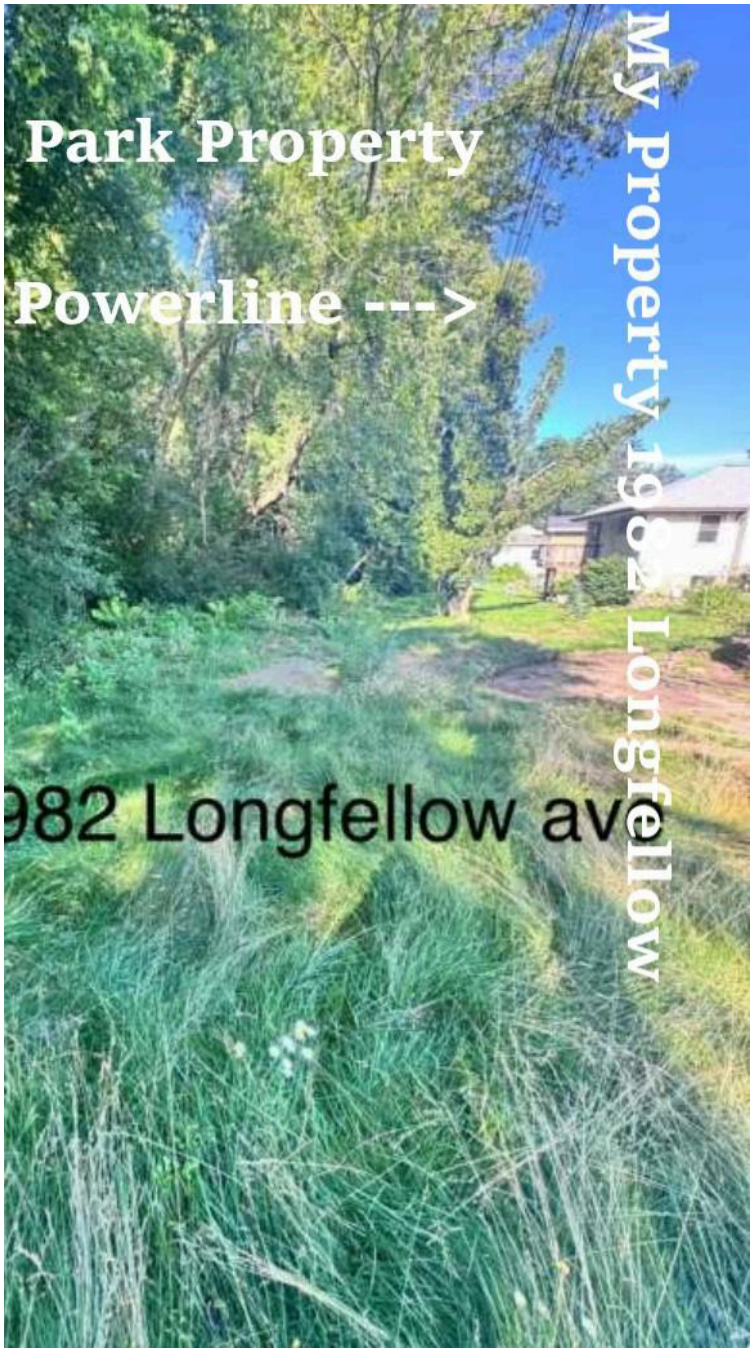
- I had actually received an extension (unbeknownst to myself)

- The wave from the officer in the squad car was to indicate to me that I had been granted some sort of extension. How she interpreted this to be the case I will never know.

- The park property I indicated in the pictures of the backyard was not actually park property.

- Because I had conversations with the park about the encroachment to its property I must be somehow presumably “guilty” of something.

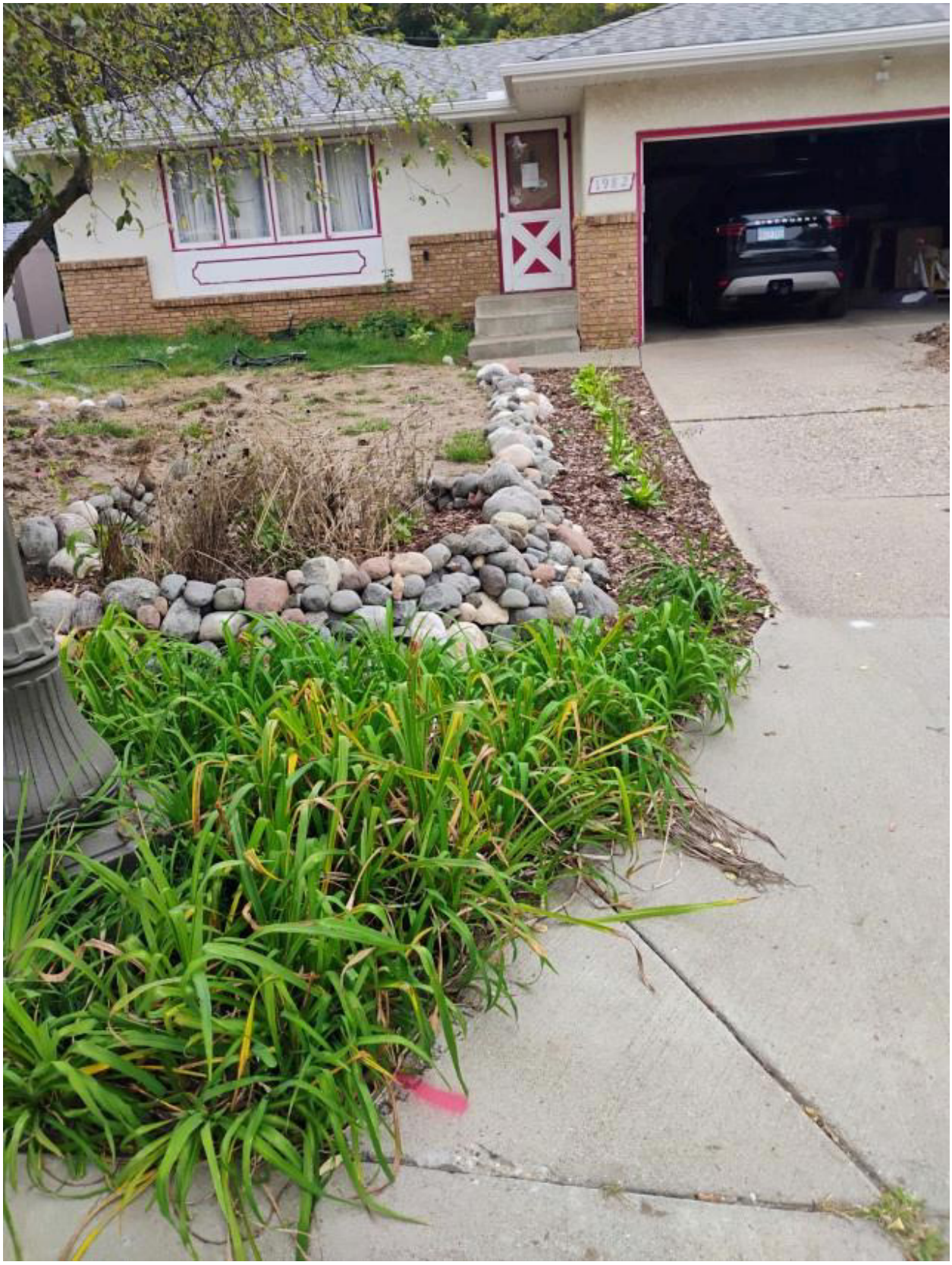
So here we are. I hope the following photos and explanations help you understand further. Thank you.



The powerline in the photo above is the border between the park and all of the properties on the south side of Longfellow Avenue. The arrow pointing at the powerline also indicates the place where the powerline runs through my westside neighbor's cedar tree, indicating the western edge of my property. Clearly this "before" photo shows nothing but the landscaping work (bare dirt) I'd been doing on my side of the property. There is absolutely nothing for the contractors to mow. However, within the grass on the park side of the property were five juvenile Aspen trees and several ferns and wildflowers that the contractors completely obliterated.

The entire length of the east side of my house is mulch and flowers – most of which will be moved to the front yard to make room for more pollinator friendly flowers and plants. Just behind the photographer is a powerline pole with a park property indicator – quite literally a sign that says “park property” -- just beside it.

With a large mulch pile in my driveway and an equally large pile of boulders in the yard at the edge of the street, not to mention that 100% of the yard is brown (in other words dead) and two thirds or more of that has been tilled, it's clear that 1982 Longfellow is in the midst of work.

Clearly the visible depth of the long grass in this photo does not exceed two or three feet. In other words, clearly not all of the grass in the entire yard is this length. If it were, I doubt you would be able to see the living room windows, determine if the garage door is open, or see my neighbor's blue recycling bin. This is the front yard strip of grass described in this document that began at the street and ended at the house. All of the other grass in front had been turned and/or tilled.

The following photos should help understand the work a little more although they were taken later in the summer.