

From: Thomas Eckstein [<mailto:tom@arundelmetrics.com>]
Sent: Thursday, August 27, 2015 8:03 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward3
Subject: Zoning Variance Appeal: 1926 Fairmount Ave

Councilman Tolbert,

A zoning variance, granted several weeks ago, is being appealed. The appeal hearing is September 2.

I was to express my opinion contrary to an active campaign to appeal that granting of the variance. We continue our strong support for the variance for 1916 Fairmount Ave. We have expressed our support opening at the community council meeting and in prior emails to Mr. Diatta in St. Paul Department of Safety. We do not support reversal of the granted variance.

We have talked with our neighbors and, like them, mourn the loss of green space, that should not color our decision at this time. Green space is a community asset and should be supported by the community. We cannot expect an individual homeowner to be required to maintain a green space on the block just because it has been tradition.

Today, as the site has several options in which it can be developed, it is a choice of the best way to develop it. The double lot can be purchased, a small porch removed from the east side and the lot divided into two full size lots. This would allow a 38' wide home of two plus stories to be placed on the adjacent lot. (If the homeowner was in in for the money, this is easily the most profitable route.) The homeowner has said that she was approached about a developer already interested in this option or in a total tear down, lot division and building of two houses.

The street view of the current home at 1916 is original. The variance will allow this to view to remain.

The variance will also require that any new home, such as the one proposed by the current homeowner, Ms. Oelschlager or a future builder, will have a smaller view from the street because of the narrowing of the lot per the variance - the maximum house width facing the street would be 29'. This will cause any home to be less intrusive on the block. Current setback requirements for the lot will remain the same, allowing adequate spacing from the current home and from the home to the east.

While the variance is independent of the house design, we feel that the proposed house design does suggest that Ms. Oelschlager is developing a home that is in accordance with the block in both design and materials, it does not appear to be intrusive. As she has been in the neighborhood for 20 years and is proposing to remain in the new home, it shows her commitment to retaining the neighborhood.

We can empathize with the loss of the open feeling of the directly adjacent neighbor and across-the-street neighbors, but that has been a gift to all of them supported by the 1916 Fairmount owner's payment of taxes. A gift, not a right.

"Facts" are being distributed to neighbors that bear scrutiny. "All lot lines in St. Paul are straight." We only have to go 1 1/2 blocks to the west on our street where a lot line may be straight, but it is at a diagonal while all other lines on that block are perpendicular to the street. Same impact as a jog in the line (see http://www.zillow.com/homes/for_sale/Saint-Paul-MN-55105/82106_rid/44.937746,-93.184993,44.936594,-93.18785_rect/18_zm/1_fr/?view=map).

While the final vote at community council was not to support the variance, it was not a unanimous vote. We attended and there was support for the variance at that level, however verbal descriptions that the homeowner was just driven by money even though the council member has never met the homeowner held lots of sway. It was a generalization, unprofessional and based upon apprehension and fear.

In summary, we wish to support the variance as granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals and that the necessary permits be granted for building on the vacant lot.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Tom Eckstein & Diane Harder
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