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Candace Havens  
Director

## PUBLIC HEARING/WORKING SESSION MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 30, 2014  
**TO:** Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen  
**FROM:** Candace Havens, Director of Planning and Development  
Alexandra Ananth, Chief Planner for Current Planning  
Stephen Pantalone, Senior Planner  
**CC:** Petitioner

In response to questions raised at the Land Use Committee public hearings, and/or staff technical reviews, the Planning Department is providing the following information for the upcoming public hearing/working session. This information is supplemental to staff analysis previously provided at the public hearing/working session.

### **PETITION #69-14**

### **79 Shornecliffe Road**

Request for Special Permit/Site Plan Approval to allow a retaining wall greater than four feet in the rear setback, at 79 Shornecliffe Road.

The Land Use Committee (Committee) held a public hearing on April 8, 2014. The public hearing was kept open so that additional information could be provided. The Planning Department has received the following information in response to questions raised at the public hearing.

- **Engineering Review**

The petitioner submitted a drainage plan to the Associate City Engineer for his review. The proposed drainage plan calls for three infiltration systems of varying sizes at different locations throughout the site, but does not propose a system within the rear yard. The drainage calculations provided by the petitioner's engineer show a peak flow reduction of .57 CFS. The roof drain on the addition to the rear of the house will release to the lawn area, and all other roof drains will release to areas with infiltration systems.



The Associate City Engineer reviewed the drainage calculations and had several questions for the petitioner's engineer, which were not answered in time for the filing of this memorandum. The Planning Department expects that those questions will be answered prior to the working session and notes that the approval of a final drainage plan could be included as a condition prior to receiving the building permit. The Associate City Engineer also raised concerns about planting trees too close to the geogrid of the proposed retaining wall, as it may cause damage to the wall over time. The petitioner's contractor is aware of the issue, and indicated that they may need to move some of the landscaping further away from the proposed retaining wall.

- **Landscape Screening**

The petitioner's landscape architect submitted a revised landscape plan, which replaced a number of the evergreen trees on the western side of the rear yard with three London Plane trees. London Plane trees are deciduous and provide a taller and broader canopy. The change to the landscape plan was partially due to the request of the property abutter at 100 Nonantum Street to expand and increase the height of the tree canopy and to better integrate the landscaping plan with the surrounding vegetation. The Planning Department believes that the larger deciduous trees will provide the type of canopy the abutting property owner is requesting, but is concerned about its impact on the geogrid of the proposed retaining wall. The Planning Department recommends that the large deciduous trees be replaced with smaller deciduous trees, if necessary.

The proposed landscape plan does not provide landscaping between the retaining wall and the fences on the abutting properties. The petitioner's landscape architect indicated to city staff that the growing conditions will be poor in this area due to the shading from the proposed retaining wall and the existing fences, and that the existing fences will screen portions of the proposed retaining wall. The Planning Department agrees that the eastern side of the proposed retaining wall will be mostly screened at the ground level from the rear of the abutting property at 96 Nonantum Street by the existing wooden fence. In terms of the western side of the rear property line where the abutter's fence is the shorter, most of the proposed retaining wall will be visible from the rear yard of the property at 100 Nonantum Street. In order to screen a portion of the wall and to help it transition into the vegetation on top of the retaining wall, the Planning Department suggests that the petitioner plant small shrubs at the base of the wall that can grow in shaded areas.

- **Cross-Section View**

The petitioner's architect provided a cross-section showing the view of the proposed retaining wall from the rear of 96 Nonantum Street and 100 Nonantum Street. The cross-section assumed no vegetation on the site. The petitioner also constructed an approximately ten foot wide mock-up of the proposed retaining wall on the site, to physically illustrate its approximate height. It appears that approximately two feet of the retaining wall will be visible from the rear yard of 96 Nonantum Street, and that approximately five feet will be visible from the rear yard of 100

Nonantum Street. The proposed retaining wall will be mostly visible from the second story of the abutting properties.

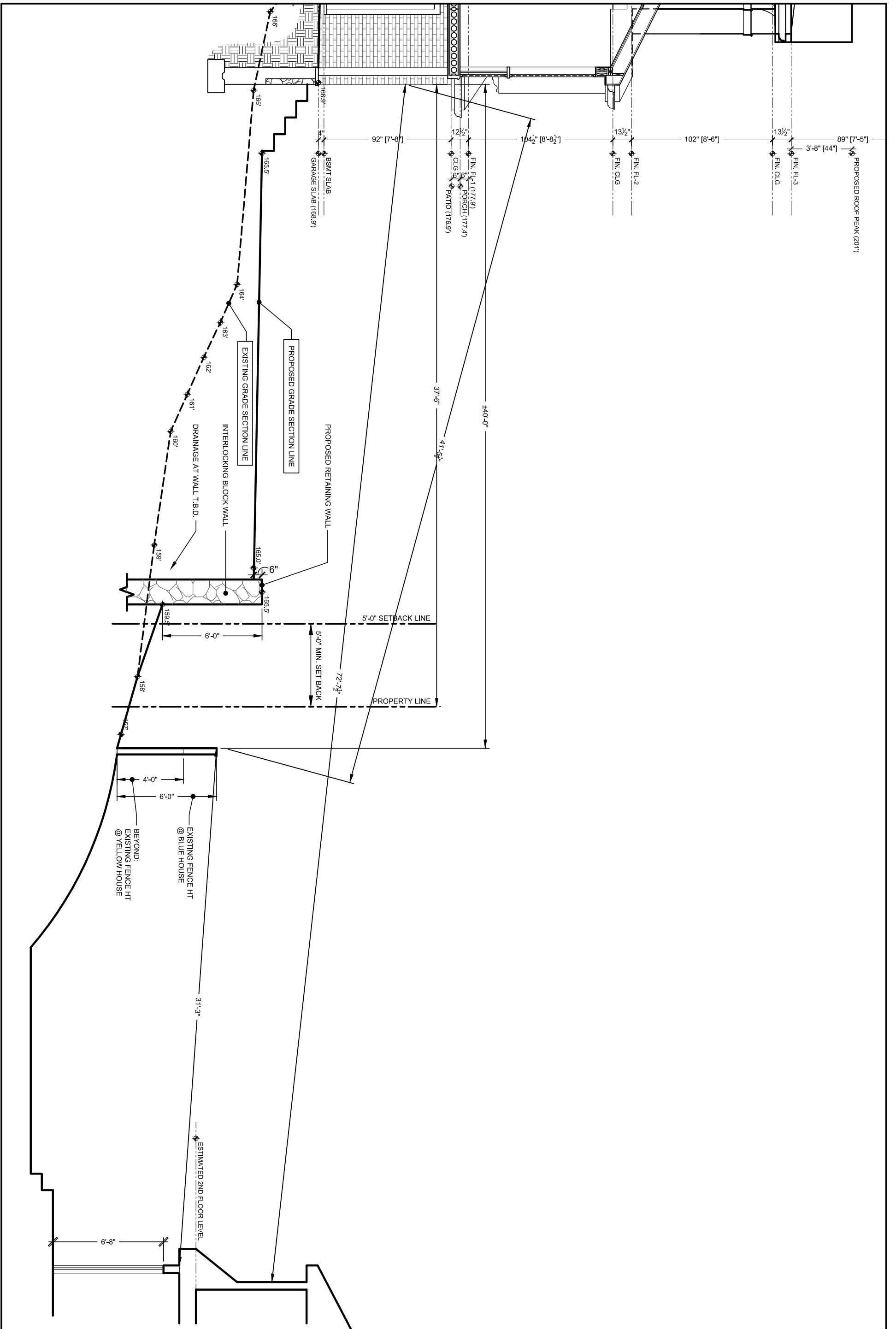
Based on these submittals, the petitioner has responded to each of the questions raised at the public hearing. The Planning Department is concerned about the impact of the landscaping on the proposed retaining wall, and suggests that the petitioner's contractor address the issue with city staff prior to building permit, if approved. The Planning Department also recommends planting small shade-tolerant shrubs on the western portion of the base of the proposed retaining wall. These changes could be made prior to receiving a building permit with the approval of the Planning Department.

**Recommendation**

For the reasons stated above, the Planning Department recommends approval of this petition, with conditions.

**Attachment A** – Cross-Section Drawing

**Attachment B** – Photos of the Mock-Up Wall



SHEET:  
 DATE: 05/13/2014  
 SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"  
 DRAWING TITLE:  
**EXISTING + PROPOSED  
 SITE GRADE SECTION**

PROJECT:  
**GANN RESIDENCE  
 79 SHORNECLIFFE RD  
 NEWTON, MA 02458**

SILVERSTONE + BAKALCHUK  
 ARCHITECTS  
 692 COMMONWEALTH AVE. NEWTON, MA  
 Tel: 617 969 6180 Fax: 617 969 2080



View of Mock up wall  
from side property Line



View of Mock up wall from  
second story at 96 Nonantum St.



View of Mock up wall  
from Nonantum St.



View from rear of 100  
Nonantum St.



View from rear of 100  
Nonantum St.



View from rear of upper level of site  
showing fencing on abutting properties



View from rear of 100  
Nonantum St.