

May 31st, 2018

Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Re: Responses to Question/Comment from Land Use Committee Members
Subject – Petition #215-18 for Special Permit/Site Plan Approval
156 Otis Street, Newton MA

Dear Nadia,

Below are a number of questions we received from committee members related to the petition for Special Permit/Site Plan Approval. We've worked to address these questions with updates to the site grading plan, landscape plan and Front Lot basement floor plan (see attachments). Please include these responses and attached documents in the upcoming continuance meeting package.

1. Could the driveway alignment move toward the west to provide a wider buffer to the abutters along Walden?

The buffer width is currently shown at 5 feet. Unfortunately moving the driveway to the west in an effort to widen the buffer area would require more cutting into the grade and retaining walls higher than 4 feet.

Additionally, we have a 30' wide easement for driveway and utilities serving the rear lot. With 16' of that space being paved surface as requested by FD, we're left with just 14' for utility runs with associated clearances, retaining walls and the buffer area.

2. Could the driveway alignment be less formal (straight)?

The grade change and retaining wall heights are the main factors that prevent us from adding curvature to the driveway.

3. Finesse the curb cut to facilitate entering from both the east and west.

The curb cut is 20 feet wide (minimum requirement = 12 feet) and is oriented at the entrance to be perpendicular with Otis Street allowing easy access from east and west. The current curb and driveway entry orientation also allows for the capture of storm water running down slope across the driveway opening.

4. Improve the separation of the rear lot driveway from the front lot garage access (Andrea specifically questioned the retaining wall between the two)

We have reconfigured this area to introduce a 3' wide planting bed at the top of the retaining wall that separates the driveways. This involved recessing the front house garage doors by 18". We also curved the short retaining wall adjacent to the garage doors, for an improved appearance and to allow for easier turning when backing out of the garage.

In addition, to soften the aesthetic of the embankment at the rear of the front house, we have revised the grading to reduce this slope from approximately 2:1 to 3:1. This will also provide a more favorable slope for landscaping and plant materials.

5. Develop the plant material along the driveway buffer further.

MCLA has revised the plant material specified for the buffer, to add some variety and break up the appearance of the arborvitae wall, while still satisfying the screening requirements. Please see revised Landscape Plan.

6. Develop the plant material on the landscape berm on the front lot.

MCLA has revised the plant material specified for the embankment area. Please see revised Landscape Plan.

7. Could the number of Cultec storage tanks be reduced in favor of a natural water management device like bio-swale or rain garden?

This was reviewed and there are a number of factors that make this site unsuitable for a bio-swale or rain garden type systems. Soil condition is one of the primary restricting factors, along with grade and resulting lack of suitable space to locate the system.

There was also some concern regarding the concept of adding standing water to an area that may already have a strong mosquito population due to the wetlands on the uphill lots.

Best,

Treff LaFleche
Principal