

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF NEWTON

Massachusetts

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: March 19, 2021

TO: Land Use Committee of the City Council

FROM: Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Neil Cronin, Chief Planner for Current Planning
Michael Gleba, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Petition #552-20- 17 Wallace St.**

This petition to allow retaining walls greater than four feet in height in the rear and side setbacks was the subject of a Land Use Committee public hearing on January 12, 2021.

At that hearing some Committee members expressed concerns regarding several aspects of the proposal, including its structural design, drainage, the landscaping and maintenance of areas between the retaining walls and property lines, and the impact on existing mature trees on abutting properties. Other concerns have been expressed about the appearance of the wall and the adequacy of safety fencing along the top of the walls. The Committee voted 3-0-3 on the petition. It was subsequently sent back to the Committee by the City Council for further consideration.

Update

At the time of the writing of the memorandum the Planning Department is anticipating additional documentation from the petitioner detailing certain aspects of the proposed wall's construction, including its facing, safety fencing and the type and extent of landscaping and fill that would be installed between the wall and the parcel's property lines. In the event such material is received in advance of Tuesday's meeting the Planning Department expects to be able to discuss it at that time.

The Engineering Division issued the attached memorandum (**Attachment A**) reiterating the issues it discussed in its earlier memo (dated January 5, 2021), e.g., "wall drainage, finish, grading and structural design," would be, in the event the present petition is granted, addressed at the time of a building permit application. The memo notes that retaining walls' construction are also subject to review and approval by the Inspectional Services Department (ISD).

Engineering has further informed the Planning Department that it is not concerned about runoff traveling from the rear to the front of the lot (i.e. toward Wallace Street) as the rear lawn area would be expected to absorb and retain such runoff. The Associate City Engineer is expected to be available to discuss these issues at Tuesday evening's meeting.

Lastly, ISD has indicated to the Planning Department that it would accept plans for the wall signed and stamped by an architect as is the case with the submitted plans.

Attachment

Attachment A: Engineering Division memorandum dated March 17, 2021

ATTACHMENT A

CITY OF NEWTON Department of Public Works ENGINEERING DIVISION

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Rick Lipof, Land Use Committee Chairman

From: John Daghlian, Associate City Engineer

Re: Special Permit – 17 Wallace Street

Date: March 17, 2021

CC: Barney Heath, Director of Planning
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director
Lou Taverna, PE City Engineer
Nadia Khan, Committee Clerk
Neil Cronin, Chief Planner
Michael Gleba, Sr. Planner

In reference to the above site, I have the following comments for a plan entitled:

17 Wallace Street
Prepared by: Peter Nolan & Associates
&
Robert Therrien, Architect
Dated: 6-10-2020

Executive Summary:

In reference to my memo of January 5, 2021 the issues I brought to your attention as simply housekeeping items (wall drainage, finish, grading and structural design) that can be addressed by the applicant when they apply for a Building Permit assuming the City Council approves the application. Retaining wall construction is within the jurisdiction of the Inspectional Services Department as walls are structures.

Note: If the plans are updated it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide all City Departments [ISD, Conservation Commission, Planning and Engineering] involved in the permitting and approval process with complete and consistent plans.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 617-796-1023