

August 13, 2020

Dobbs Ferry Planning Board
112 Main Street
Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522

Re: 58 Colonial - Bray Residence

Dear Members of the Planning Board:

Chelsea and Chris Bray, the owners of the above reference property, recently repaired the existing wood-tie retaining wall in front of their house to the west of their driveway. It turns out that this retaining wall is actually partially in the Village right-of-way for Colonial Avenue, although it does not impede or conflict with either the street or the sidewalk. In fact, this retaining wall prevents dirt from washing on to the sidewalk and sediment from washing into the street where it would enter the Village's stormwater drainage system. The wall that was replaced was failing. The new wall matches the previous in location, height, material, and construction. By the time that we found out that this wall was in the right-of-way, the work on this wall was complete.

The Brays would like to create a new retaining wall built of the same materials in construction to the east of their driveway. This wall would be approximately 50 feet in length and range in height from 2'-6" down to 0'-8" as it approaches the corner. The purpose of this retaining wall would be to also prevent the dirt from washing on to the sidewalk and sediment from washing into the street. The proposed new retaining wall would be set back approximately 6 feet from the front of the existing street curb, similar to the existing wall. Building the new wall would be integral with replacing the existing set of stairs and a brick retaining wall that are in the right-of-way. The existing brick wall would be removed and the new concrete and bluestone steps would replace the existing steps. The Building Department recommended moving this retaining wall on to the property, at which point it would not require a building permit due to its not exceeding 2'-6" in height. However, this would require the wall to be taller and would require the removal of an existing tree that provides nice character for the property and the site. If the Planning Board agrees that the proposed wall would be beneficial to the community, it could make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees that this wall be permitted to be located within the Village right-of-way.

There is also a third retaining wall that has been rebuilt. The third wall is fully located on the subject property and ranges in height from 2'-0" to 3'-0". The new wall matches the previous in location, height, material, and construction.

All three of the retaining walls are composed of 8 inch wood-ties with deadmen anchors to provide stability. Normally, we are not fans of this material for retaining walls and prefer natural stone usually set in a dry stone wall construction. However, given the character of the existing house, we believe that the appearance of these retaining walls is appropriate for this location.

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The horizontal character of the wood is consistent with the siding on the house and the wood ties will be stained to match the color of the house.

The owner intends to relandscape the yards facing both Colonial Avenue and Southlawn Avenue. The current material includes invasive material that is overgrown and interferes with safe visibility at the corner for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.

Since two of the walls are located in the Village's right-of-way, the Board of Trustees has to determine whether this location is acceptable or whether the walls need to be relocated. At the August 11, 2020 Board of Trustees meeting, this matter was referred to the Planning Board and the Architectural and Historic Review Board for their recommendations on these walls.

This letter is to request that this matter be placed on the agenda of your September 3, 2020 meeting for the purpose of getting your recommendation that the Board of Trustees grant permission to build this new wall and leave the other wall that has already been built to replace the failing wall in its current location. Attached please find a Site Plan dated as submitted to the Planning Board August 13, 2020.

We understand that all obligations and responsibilities for this wall would remain with the Brays and permission to build this wall would be subject to the Village's right to remove these wall at any time in the future, if that becomes necessary to public interests. If the Village Board so desires, an Agreement can be prepared for the Brays to sign confirming that permission to build this retaining wall would not entitle them to any rights or guarantees that it will be maintained, protected, or retained by the Village. The Board of Trustees is seeking the Planning Board's opinion on the design and location of these retaining walls.

Building permits have already been issued for other work on this property, which is nearing completion. The repaired and proposed retaining walls do not affect the work that has already been permitted.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Padriac Steinschneider
As Owner's Representative for Chelsea Greene and Chris Bray