

Attn: Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment
DC Office of Zoning
441 4th Street NW Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

February 21, 2018

Re: BZA Case #19629 (Lawrence)

Dear Chairman Hill and Members of the Board,

Due to my service to our country, unfortunately I am obligated to be out of the country and cannot attend my public hearing today. Having said that, I wanted to convey in simple terms the causal factors that prompt us to seek the necessary zoning relief to construct a one-story garage on an alley lot.

My wife Charlotte and I bought the house at 1665 Harvard Street NW in 2006. I was pleased to find that the alley lot in the back conveyed as well, which I naturally assumed could be used for parking. This belief was further justified by the many lots on this same alley that have brick garages.

In 2008, we appeared before this body requesting relief to construct a garage under similar circumstances. Our architect, Joel Heisey, represented our interests to the best of his ability. However, we did not have legal counsel and did not make the necessary legal arguments. Therefore, unfortunately our request was denied, despite a favorable recommendation by the Office of Planning.

Nearly a decade later, we were excited to learn that the new zoning regulations of 2016 were approved and adopted. My understanding at the time was that they provided for more flexibility regarding alley lot development.¹ However, along the way we learned

¹ See *Washington Post*, "Once Dreaded, D.C. Alleys Become Fun, Even Chic." https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/in-darkness-of-dc-alleys-a-new-slice-of-life/2014/09/02/c78e5998-2cf3-11e4-9b98-848790384093_story.html?utm_term=.f00ef4bf1881

that in many ways alley lot development was interpreted in a more-restrictive fashion. The details of alley lot development requirements are well-documented by my attorney and will be presented to you at the public hearing. My impression is that they are unintentionally arcane, unclear and draconian. We are simply appealing to build a garage structure in keeping with the many garages on the same alley.

The lot's location next to a pedestrian alley impacts our ability to assume the alley lot into our street lot. Furthermore, because it is next to a public walkway, there are legitimate safety and security reasons to build a closed garage. During the time we lived there, twice we had our car windows broken and items stolen. On other occasions - one being the day after the Historical Board voted their support for our garage request - we had all four tires of our car slashed while parked in our lot. Also, one of the tenants reported an attack in the alley as well. So, it is not an unreasonable request to build a closed garage on this lot. An open parking pad creates practical difficulty from a maintenance perspective, increased trespass, constant trash dumping, and lack of weathered storage. There is plenty of precedent and support for this type of request, to include granting variances.

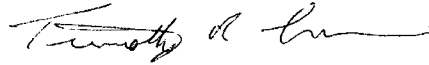
One way or another we want to improve this lot. We would much prefer to provide an attractive structure that fits the aesthetic of our beautiful neighborhood and not be forced to erect an unsightly fence around the perimeter of the lot. We hope our willingness to reduce the project from a dwelling to a garage shows our ability to compromise.

District Alley Dwellers Alliance Manifesto. H Street NE Alley Tour- Walking Town DC/Cultural Tourism DC. See page 5. http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/16542886/2118089279/name/alley_tour_h_street.pdf.

Notwithstanding the legal arguments that my counsel will impress upon you, at the end of the day we are simply asking to have a modest garage on the alley, like so many of our neighbors have.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Timothy D. Lawrence".

Tim Lawrence