

BRIEFING NOTE FOR DECISION

PREPARED FOR: City of Prince George Mayor and Council

PREPARED BY: Nini and Eric Long (property owners)

ISSUE: Detached garage was permitted and developed prior to the City's Carriage House Bylaw being enacted; as such, the building offsets were designed as per accessory building standards. However, we wish to characterize the structure as a carriage house and therefore require a retroactive variance in order for the structure to meet the associated sideyard offset.

BACKGROUND:

- We met with the City's planning department in 2016 to discuss our proposal to build a 2 storey garage on our steep-slope property, located in the Millar Addition
- To address the topography, the garage parking would be at street level and the lower level of the structure would form the foundation for the garage and would also be designed as liveable space
- Due to the 2 storey nature of the building and the associated additional floor space, we were advised that we would need to seek a variance through Council
- We prepared the variance proposal and the variance was granted by Council
- We proceeded with an engineered design that met all requirements for an accessory building, as provided by the planning department
- The planning department did indicate that they were developing a carriage house bylaw but it would take time for it to reach resolution
- Despite the fact that the planning department was aware that the lower level was intended to be used as livable space, they never advised that the offsets for an accessory building would not meet the offsets for a carriage house
- As such, the minimum sideyard offset for the garage is currently 1.22m, the average is 1.26m and the requirement for a carriage house is 1.5m
- This structure is particularly unique, as shown in the attached photos, as the carriage housing portion sits below the garage and actually has an offset of 3.3m from the sideyard, which exceeds the requirements as written in the bylaw; however, the City has not accepted this argument and is requiring us to seek a retroactive variance for the entire structure

DISCUSSION:

- Despite presenting a fully engineered structure, it took 2 years to receive a building permit (2016 and 2017)
- Construction of the structure was initiated in 2018 and completed in 2019
- All final reports from the engineer of record were submitted in 2019 and nothing further was requested from the City at that time
- Late in 2022, 3 years after construction was completed, we were contacted by the City's planning department and informed that the building's sideyard offset only met accessory

building standards but not carriage house standards, which were developed after this building was under construction

- As such, a retroactive variance would be required to bring the building into compliance with carriage house standards
- As stated above, the living space sits below the garage with a horizontal offset from the side yard of 3.3 metres and is not visible from the street or to the neighbouring property; and there is no residential lot adjacent to the rear property line
- The intention behind the increased offset for carriage houses has been met in the design of this structure, as the impact to the neighbouring property is negligible.

CONCLUSION:

We designed this accessory building to meet the standards that were available at the time of construction. We also made the best use of the topography with an innovative and highly engineered design. We hope that Mayor and Council will recognize that this project meets the City's mandate of supporting infill housing developments that are affordable and well designed.

We are hopeful that this retroactive variance will be granted, and this file can reach a final resolution, after 7 years.

Attachment: Photos of Garage/Carriage House

Garage and Carriage Housing at 108 Bedford Place



South side of garage – Neighbouring property is to the left of the fence line; main house on the right



North side – carriage housing is below garage and is inset from western property boundary, with an offset of 3.3 metres; main house is to the left and neighbouring property is to the right of the fence line



East Side – this side of the building is adjacent to the main house; access to the carriage housing is from this side and does not impact neighbouring property



West Side – adjacent to neighbouring property; only garage portion is visible from adjacent property