

July 2023

To: Reading Conservation Commission
ATTN: Charles Tirone, Conservation Administrator
Reading Town Hall
16 Lowell Street
Reading, MA 01867

RE: WETLAND PROTECTION REGULATIONS – REQUESTED VARIANCE
PROPOSED DETACHED GARAGE, REGRADING AND DECK
16 BEVERLY ROAD
READING MA, 01867

Mr. Tirone,

The following presents a request for variance from the Town of Reading Wetlands Protection Regulations as defined in Section 2E relating to the Notice of Intent (NOI) submitted for a proposed detached garage, regrading, retaining wall and deck at the above referenced residence. **A secondary retaining wall exists on the property within the 25 ft buffer that was not previously permitted.** This request for variance is subject to approval from the conversation commission due to proposed work within the 100' buffer zone, and 25 ft buffer zone of bordering vegetated wetlands.

A. Alternatives:

All of the parcel in consideration is within the 100 ft buffer so alternatives to the proposed project could be considered that would not be within the jurisdiction of the Wetlands Projection Regulations. During the development of the NOI, several alternatives were considered to allow for the proposed construction to remain outside of the 25 ft buffer. They are noted below.

- Shift garage structure south toward Beverly Road (southeast)
 - There is an existing mature oak tree at the front of the property, near the proposed project area. It is desirable to maintain the tree. It is preferable to keep the proposed excavation as far from the extents of the crown as possible to maintain stability and overall health,
 - *Note: The proposed structure has been located at the required 20 ft setback from the roadway, anything closer will require a zoning variance.*
- Shift garage structure west toward adjacent neighbor (southwest)
 - An existing mature hedge row of maintained hemlock trees exists that encroaches up to 10 ft on to this subject property. It is desirable to maintain the hedgerow. The hedge limits the proximity of the garage to the property line.
 - *Note: The garage structure has been located at the required 15 ft setback from the property line, anything closer will require a zoning variance.*

- Shift garage structure toward existing single-family dwelling (northeast)
 - Shifting the structure directly toward the existing house will result in additional encroachment into the 25 ft buffer. It would have to be also shifted south toward Beverly Road. Again, this would have a greater impact on the existing oak tree.
 - The existing dwelling is sited below the elevation of Beverly Road. Runoff from the roadway enters the driveway and runs beside the house to the existing retaining wall. A proposed garage will need to be at a higher grade than the house to limit run off entering the structure. If the garage were closer to or attached to the house the drainage would be difficult. Additionally, it is typical for attached garages to have floors level with or below the floor of the adjacent house for a variety of drainage and safety reasons.

There is inadequate space for the garage to be placed on another part of the property considering proximity to wetlands and property lines. Based on the available locations, the proposed location appears to have no significant impact on the BVW, the least impact on the existing upland vegetation and is most desirable from a drainage perspective.

Alternative pavements including permeable pavements were considered to promote water infiltration. The site is largely permeable, and no catch basins are located on the property or adjacent street that would direct runoff off the site. Any runoff that collects on impermeable surfaces would run to areas on the site that would allow infiltration. Areas adjacent to impermeable areas will be landscaped to collect run off. Alternative pavements were not considered beneficial in this instance.

Alternatives to lessen the overall area of pavement were considered however limited options are available if the existing oak tree is maintained. Also consider the references to the Reading Zone Bylaws included in the following regarding minimum parking.

B. Wetland Impact:

As discussed during the public meeting on May 10th, the existing single-family dwelling and retaining wall both encroach within the 25 ft buffer zone of the bordering vegetated wetland. However, the existing retaining wall creates a substantial barrier and creates a clear delineation between the wetland buffer and the upland area. The existing barrier will allow the project to be conditioned so as to have not further adverse impact on the wetland.

C. Public Interest / Mitigation:

This project is associated with improvements to a single-family house and does not have significant public interest, however as noted in Section 2Ec the following are proposed mitigation that are anticipated to improve the recourse area quality that would be in the public interest.

- Removal of Yard Waste: Yard waste has been previously dumped into the 25 ft buffer at the base of the existing retaining wall. The applicant proposes to remove the larger branches and excessive piles. Leaves and decomposed organic matter will remain as they appear to be supporting vegetation.

- Invasive Plants: During the wetland delineation several invasive species were identified including Glossy Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) and Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). Identified invasive species will be removed in the areas shown on the submitted plans by pulling them by hand over two growing seasons. Total area equals about 1400 square feet. Areas that are disturbed will be seeded with native mix as recommended by the Conservation Commission
- Plantings: As noted in the Proposed Plan and Section included within the NOI native plantings are proposed within the wetland area and within the 100 ft buffer.
 - Within the area at the base of the existing retaining wall has a tree canopy and significant ground cover (ferns). Four native shrubs will be planted in this area. Depending on availability they may include:
 - Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)
 - Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*)
 - Winter Berry (*Ilex verticillata*)
 - Cranberry Bush (*Viburnum trilobum*)
 - Pussy Willow (*Salix Discolor*)
 - The proposed planting areas in the upland areas will include at least ten native bushes and/or herbaceous plantings and/or Ornamental Grasses. Depending on availability they may include:
 - Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)
 - Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*)
 - Winter Berry (*Ilex verticillata*)
 - Red Chokeberry (*Photinia melanocarpa*)
 - Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus Sericea*)
 - Star Flower (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*)
 - Pink Coreopsis (*Coreopsis rosea*)
 - Switch Grass (*Panicum virgatum*)
 - Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex Pensylvanica*)
- Downspout runoff: One existing downspout directs roof runoff through the existing retaining wall. A rain barrel and downspout diverter will be installed to minimize the amount of water that is directed through the existing retaining wall. Runoff from the proposed garage structure will also be directed into rain barrels.
- Roadway Runoff: Run off from Beverly Road currently enters the proposed site and washes down toward the existing retaining wall. The proposed grading will redirect this run off further down Beverly Road where it can infiltrate in an area with a shallower grade, limiting the potential for sediment to enter the boarding vegetated wetland.

D. Zoning Bylaws

This project will also be subject to the regulations of the Town of Reading Zoning Bylaws. While this is not specifically a concern of the Conservation Commission, there are several requirements that have driven the layout proposed that I would like to highlight:

1. The property noted is within the S-15 Zoning District. Table 6.3 notes that the front yard setback is 20 ft, the side yard setback is 15 ft, and the rear yard setback is 20 ft.
2. Section 5.4.7.2 notes that, “*a detached accessory dwelling may not be located between any exterior wall of the principal single-family dwelling and any right-of-way*”. This is a secondary reason to site the proposed structure no closer to the roadway than the existing dwelling.
3. Section 5.4.7.3E *requires that all stairways leading to 2nd floor accessory apartments must be enclosed within the structure*. This has necessitated a minimum width and length of the structure, the small bump out of the back of the structure is to accommodate the proposed interior staircase.
4. Section 5.4.7.3G *requires that cars associated with the accessory apartment must be parked off the street in a designated driveway or garage*. This has driven the size of driveway and configuration to allow vehicles to independently enter, park and exit.

Please contact me if you have any further questions regarding this formal request for variance.

Sincerely, yours

Jeb Pittsinger