

From: Gillian Feeley-Harnik
Sent: Saturday, September 24, 2016 4:47 PM
To: Barrett, Jon
Cc: Westphal, Kirk; Taylor, Christopher (Mayor); Alan Harnik
Subject: ZBA 16-022: 19 Ridgeway St. Samberg request. Zoning Board Mtg Wed/Sept 28

Mr. Jon Barrett, Zoning Coordinator
Zoning Board of Appeals
City of Ann Arbor
Larcom City Hall – 301 East Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

24 September 2016

RE: ZBA 16-022: 19 Ridgeway St. Owner Warren Samberg's request for a variance reducing the 40 foot front setback on the west side by roughly half (to 22 feet 1 inch).

Dear Mr. Barrett,

We live at 4 Ridgeway St. We live just outside the 300-foot radius around 19 Ridgeway that our municipal laws presume to contain the only parties who would be affected by Mr. Samberg's request. We live two houses up from 10 and 12 Ridgeway directly west of Mr. Samberg's property. However we **are** involved in this matter as (1) property owners in this small neighborhood and (2) residents who cherish its unique qualities. We are out of town on Wednesday, September 28th, when the Zoning Board of Appeals meets on this matter, whence this letter. We are **WHOLLY OPPOSED** to Mr. Samberg's request for the following reasons.

As property owners

Mr. Samberg's request, if granted, would create a precedent that owners could invoke to make similar changes to other properties in this neighborhood in the future. The consequences would be as bad for us as they will be for our neighbors now west of Mr. Samberg's lot. At 4 Ridgeway we look across to 3 Ridgeway, a double-lot on the ridge above us. We have excellent relations with the owner of 3 Ridgeway. But if that double-lot were ever sold, and if the new owner could draw on a precedent in the Samberg case to build closer to the road, such a structure – or structures on both lots – would have the same **very adverse** effects that Mr. Samberg's request will have on his neighbors: (a) it would block our sunlight from the east; (b) block our now open views to the east; and (c) destroy our privacy on that side of our house. The houses on the ridge in the middle of Ridgeway are much higher than those like our house lower down the ridge on the opposite side of the road. Currently we are all – up and down the ridge – sheltered by bands of trees and bushes. If properties on the ridge were built closer to the road, only a high band of evergreens could shelter our house. Our neighbors now confronting Mr. Samberg's property don't have even that option because their houses are situated on a steeper narrower section of the ridge with no leeway between the road and their housefronts.

As residents

* If Kirk Westphal, one of our two representatives of Ward 2 on the City Council and a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, is at the meeting on September 28/Wednesday, then he can describe the special qualities of our neighborhood at first hand. In case, he is not there:

* Ridgeway – the narrow street is a cul de sac curving north-south around a ridge from Geddes back to Geddes – is a distinctive neighborhood because most of the houses back onto the University of Michigan’s Arboretum, and they are also well separated from one another by large blocks of foliage, providing beauty and privacy. We moved into this neighborhood in 1998 because it is such a beautiful bit of countryside right close to the University and University Hospital (workplaces for many in the neighborhood, including one of us). We chose to live here

– as opposed to the many other neighborhoods near the University – because those other neighborhoods were filled with huge houses crowded next to one another on small lots, perhaps as a result of such a variance as is being considered here.

* Owing to the distinctiveness of the neighborhood, we are all long-term residents. We’ve lived at 4 Ridgeway (built in 1941) almost twenty years; our predecessors lived in the same house for at least forty years, and there was only one other owner before them. The Selo-Shevel family, who sold 19 Ridgeway to Mr. Samberg, had occupied their property (a double lot with 11 Ridgeway) for at least forty years before they moved to California last year. It might be noted that their realtor’s description of their house/lot (at # 11) was: “Situated on a hill, this home has treetop views of the surrounding area, including the Arboretum, while giving you total privacy” (http://www.zillow.com/homedetails/11-Ridgeway-St-Ann-Arbor-MI-48104/24700500_zpid/, accessed 23 September 2016), privacy and beauty that Mr. Samberg’s request will destroy for his neighbors.

Like our neighbors, we cherish our neighborhood for its distinctive qualities – and we value our good and thoughtful neighbors for caring too. We urge you to hear why – based on all the reasons outlined above – we are **COMPLETELY OPPOSED** to Mr. Samberg’s request for a variance, and we urge you to preserve the zoning laws that have helped to maintain our neighborhood, now his too, and not wear it down with variances.

Sincerely,

Gillian Feeley-Harnik
Professor Emerita, Anthropology
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor

Alan Harnik
President
Notes and Queries Fine Stationary

cc. Kirk Westphal, Council Member for Ward 2, Ann Arbor
Christopher Taylor, Mayor, Ann Arbor