



CHESTNUT HILL
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Frank DiCicco
Chair, Zoning Board of Adjustment, City of Philadelphia
One Parkway Building, 1515 Arch St., 18th Floor
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

July 29, 2021

RE: RCO Meeting Summary for Meeting ID: MI-2021-001487
Appeal # ZP-2020-009675
Applicant: Vern Anastasio, DBA Law Offices of Vernon Anastasio
Address: 540 W. Moreland Avenue
Hearing Date: August 4, 2021, 9:30 AM

Dear Mr. DiCicco:

This property is part of an estate known as Keewaydin, built in the late 1800s, and romantically named after the northwest wind in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Song of Hiawatha." The main house and its two attached wings, form a U-shaped complex spanning three legal parcels at 7709 Cherokee Street, 540 W. Moreland Avenue, and 545 W. Mermaid Lane [aka 605 and 615 W. Mermaid Lane in some registers] These three structures together received historic designation in February 2020. Included in the designation is the viewshed from all three streets.

On June 15th, the Chestnut Hill Community Association's Development Review Committee (DRC) conducted an RCO meeting with Vern Anastasio, counsel for the owner of this property. This was the fourth public meeting to review the proposed subdivision of this historically designated property. We confirmed that the 29 near neighbors were notified and many were in attendance at the meetings. Several neighbors spoke in opposition to granting this variance, and none voiced support. At the conclusion of the June 15th meeting, the DRC voted to oppose this variance. This vote passed unanimously as the recommendation to the board of the CHCA.

On June 23rd, the CHCA board conducted its monthly public meeting, where 27 community members attended. All who wished were able to speak; there was no support. The CHCA board voted unanimously to **OPPOSE** this variance. The motion upon which they voted is attached to this letter.

Anne McNiff
Executive Director

cc: Vernon Anastasio
Ian Toner, Architect
Walter Sommers, Neighbor representative
Honorable Councilwoman Cindy Bass
Ian Hegarty and RCO Notification, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Lori Salganicoff/ Executive Director, Chestnut Hill Conservancy
Kathi Clayton/ President, CHCA

Attachment: Motion approved by the CHCA, June 23rd, 2021



CHESTNUT HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Motion approved by the Chestnut Hill Community Association, June 23rd, 2021 regarding
540 W. Moreland Avenue - ZBA Hearing Date: August 4, 2021, 9:30 AM

The CHCA opposes the granting of this variance for the following reasons:

1. Despite repeated requests, the applicant has been unwilling to provide any information as to how the newly-created lot will be used, or how any new structures will be located on the lot. This makes it impossible to assess the potential impacts of subsequent new development on the existing historic structure and viewshed, adjacent properties, the neighborhood, or the Chestnut Hill community.
2. Despite repeated requests, the applicant has been unwilling to provide information or assurances as to how the existing historically-designated structure will be reused or maintained in good condition until it can be reused.
3. Despite repeated requests, the applicant has been unwilling to address the concerns of adjacent and near neighbors as to how the proposed subdivision (and subsequent development) will physically or materially affect their properties.
4. The applicant has not responded to questions and concerns raised about how the proposed subdivision and subsequent development might adversely affect views of the historic property, potentially reducing its value.
5. The applicant has been unable to provide any documentation as to how the current property configuration and ownership form creates a physical or financial hardship; or how their proposal meets the "minimum necessary alteration" prerequisite for granting a variance.

These deficiencies notwithstanding, if and when the applicant can provide the necessary information, the CHCA would welcome further discussions between the applicant and the neighbors as to how the current property can be preserved and enhanced.