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November 29, 2023

City of Portsmouth
Zoning Board of Adjustment
c/o Planning Department
1 Junkins Avenue, 3rd Floor
Portsmouth, NH 03801

RE: Variance Application for Paula J. Reid, Trustee of the Paula J. Reid 2003 Revocable Trust 410 Richards Avenue
Tax Map 112, Lot 10
General Residence A ("GRA") zone

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment (and Planning Dept. staff):

This office represents Paula J. Reid, Trustee of the Paula J. Reid Revocable Trust. This letter supplements the online Land Use Application form submitted by the undersigned on Paula's behalf. It first identifies submitted exhibits, then the specific zoning ordinance sections for which variances are requested, then explains (with reference to exhibits) Paula's garage and site redevelopment proposal and facts relevant to variance criteria to be met.

The variances are requested to facilitate Paula's demolition of her existing dilapidated garage to accommodate additional excavation and site work to address the serious stormwater drainage problems on her downward sloping lot, and then building a modestly enlarged replacement garage of similar scale. Paula's proposed work is reasonable. No fair and substantial relationship exists between the purposes of the dimensional requirements from which relief is sought, and their application to Paula's property with respect to her reasonable proposed work. The facts demonstrated by this application meet all the variance criteria set out in Portsmouth's Zoning Ordinance and N.H. statutory and common law.

Submitted Exhibits

Submitted exhibits are numbered/lettered and summarily identified below. The numbering/lettering facilitates reference to the exhibits in the explanatory text that follows.

1. Landowner Letter of Authorization

- Existing Conditions Plan (boundary survey by McEneaney Survey Associates dated 10/25/2022)
- 3. New garage proposal plan (prepared by ASB Architecture with overlay to Existing Conditions Plan)
- 3A. Enlargement of Exhibit 3's overlay on Existing Conditions Plan
- 3B. Enlargement of Exhibit 3's Notes with existing/proposed dimensional calculations
- 4. October 1898 Rockingham County Registry recorded plan (original layout of lots)
- 5A. City Tax Map print of subject lot
- 5B. City Tax Map print/aerial view (arrow points to subject lot)
- 6. Two pictures of lot's street view and driveway showing lot's sloping topography to back yard
- 7. Three pictures of house showing anticipated gutter locations (recommended gutters to be confirmed by an installer not yet consulted)
- 8. Three pictures showing areas that flood with stormwater drainage
- 9. Three pictures of existing garage showing existing/abutting lot topography differences and screening/privacy fences
- 10. Ten pictures of neighborhood garages on Richards Avenue and Miller Avenue (in the vicinity of the subject lot)

Specific Variance Requests

The existing garage located per Exhibit 2 and pictured in Exhibits 6, 8 and 9 is a conforming use on a non-conforming lot. Explained in more detail below, Paula proposes to remove this substandard structure to accommodate site drainage work to collect and naturally absorb/treat (by rain garden) substantial on-site stormwater drainage, then reconstruct the replacement garage depicted on Exhibit 3. Because of the proposed garage new construction and proposed lengthening by five (5) feet, variances from the following Zoning Ordinance sections are requested:

1. Section 10.321 to accommodate the modest enlargement of a lawful non-conforming structure by demolition/new construction replacement not conforming to the below dimensional requirements of the GRA zone.

2. Section 10.521 Table of Dimensional Standards:

- (a) Side yard setback relief to accommodate a five (5) foot lengthening of the existing garage's footprint by new construction located 3.5 feet from the property sideline where a 10 foot side yard setback is required in the GRA zone (existing garage is 3.5 feet from side yard property line)
- (b) Building coverage relief to allow the above which increases existing 28.3% building coverage to 29.7% where maximum building coverage of 25% is required for the GRA zone.

Development Proposal Explained/Facts Relevant to Requested Variances

Paula's existing garage is in a state of disrepair. Renovation consistent with current building best practices is impractical. The overhead door is difficult to open. The existing garage's height and width do not accommodate replacement with new overhead garage doors, certainly not without overhead opening equipment. Its low slanted roof allows little headroom and does not best accommodate snow loading. Replacement by new construction is warranted and reasonable.

Paula's architect, Aimee Bentley, did not conduct any boring testing to verify existing foundation or footings, but slab construction is suspected. New construction could accommodate appropriate frost walls and flooring and also accommodate below described site drainage work.

The requested lengthening by five (5) feet will accommodate longer cars of present day popularity, as well as modest indoor storage (eliminating the need for an additional exterior accessory storage shed or structure).

The topography of the lot slopes from Richards Avenue downwards to the back yard. The main roof of the house pitches from the midline forward towards Richards Avenue (where drainage can be absorbed by the front yard and landscaped plantings), and toward the back yard. Dormered roofing on the driveway side and back of the house pitches much of the rear roof's rain runoff, together with runoff from the driveway and (back yard side of) garage, all into the back driveway side door entry and walkway along the existing driveway. See pictures at Exhibits 7 and 8. In rainstorms, this driveway area in front of the garage and the walkway to the house's side entry and along the side of the garage pools with water and pours into the rear yard with no good drainage absorption.

New construction will allow machinery excavation both for the new garage's foundation and underground drainage to accommodate driveway runoff and water collected from the roof by gutters on the house (see Exhibit 7 pictures) and new garage (see Exhibit 3). That collected water will funnel into underground drainage pipe(s) to a rain garden properly designed, developed and planted in the back yard corner behind the garage. This improvement cannot be

made by keeping the existing structure. Excavation for drainage and the rain garden cannot be practically done by hand. Larger machinery can't be otherwise brought into the back yard without existing garage demolition.

Continued use of the existing structure can't reasonably facilitate storm water drainage problem solutions. Continued use of the present garage isn't reasonable for present day conditions. The proposed modest lengthening is reasonable. Cars have gotten larger. Standard garages are not designed less than 24 feet (the existing is 22 feet). The slight widening (by less than one foot into back yard side) and heightening (by less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet per zoning defined height) accommodates current building and roof trussing to meet code and typical New England snow load requirements.

Paula anticipates her new construction demolition, site improvements (foundation, drainage and rain garden), and garage construction to be in the vicinity of \$100,000.00.

Variance Criteria Addressed

Portsmouth Zoning (Section 10.233.20 and its subparts) and 10.233.31 restate the N.H. RSA 674:33, I variance criteria. N.H. case law provides further interpretive guidance. It is reasonable to grant the requested variances.

1. Granting the variance is not contrary to the public interest.

Under N.H. law, Applicants do not have an affirmative duty to show that granting the requested variance furthers the public interest. Rather, the burden is simply to show that granting it will not be contrary to the public interest. That this distinction suggests a relatively low standard was acknowledged by the N.H. Supreme Court's decision in Chester Rod and Gun Club, Inc. v Town of Chester, 152 N. H. 577 (2005). In considering this criteria, the Court recommends the ZBA consider whether the requested variance(s) would "unduly and to a marked degree" conflict with the basic premises of the Zoning Ordinance, or alter the essential character of the locality, or threaten the public health, safety or welfare. Id. at 508.

The proposed garage replacement will not alter the essential character of the locality. Tax Map prints (Exhibits 5A & B) and the pictures at Exhibit 10 show lots in the immediate vicinity of 410 Richards Avenue that have older as well as new replacement (some larger) garages in close proximity to lot lines and neighboring homes. The less than 1 foot widening (towards the middle of the lot) and modest 5 foot lengthening (for which variance relief is sought) will hardly be noticed as to size, placement and lot coverage. If anything will be noticed at all, it will be an attractive, new, functional garage, having replaced (for anyone who remembers) an old, in need of repair garage not used by the property's owner for parking a car.

The modest proposed redevelopment shown by Exhibit 3, does not threaten the public's health, safety or welfare. Demolition of the existing structure to excavate for drainage work and

an appropriate rain garden in the corner of the yard to accommodate collected stormwater drainage, improves the public health, safety and welfare. It certainly improves the subject lot. Appropriate accommodation of stormwater drainage on site helps prevent runoff to abutting properties.

2. The spirit of the ordinance is observed by granting the requested setback variances.

In considering this criteria, Courts have suggested it to be interdependent with and should be construed together with the "not contrary to the public interest" criteria. <u>Chester Rod and Gun Club</u> at 580. The points made above are equally relevant to this variance test.

Many lots in the GRA zone near Paula's were originally laid out having only 50 feet of frontage and are thus non-conforming as to frontage (many as to lot size also). See Exhibit 4 (2 pages). Over time, some of these narrow lots have been combined in whole or in part to form wider lots. See Exhibits 5A & 5B. Many narrow lots non-conforming as to size and frontage still exist, and have been developed with garages, new and old. See Exhibit 10 pictures.

Portsmouth's Zoning Ordinance 10.233.50 states that abutting properties' dimensional requirement violations cannot be considered as factors in determining whether the spirit of the ordinance would be observed by granting an applicant's requested variances. The spirit of the ordinance does, however, contemplate reasonable development on non-conforming lots.

For one example, Section 10.312, specifically 10.312.10, considers lots with insufficient frontage as conforming if the lot is shown on a Registry of Deeds recorded plan prior to March 21, 1966, and contains minimum zone required square footage. Paula's lot was first shown/created by the 1898 plan recorded as Rockingham Registry of Deeds Plan #00125. Exhibit 4. It has less than GRA zone required frontage. It does not meet the zone's required minimum lot size. However, as to size, Exhibit 3, see specifically 3B, shows how the proposed construction modestly increases the lot's building coverage by only 1.4%.

The spirit of the GRA zone dimensional requirement ordinance provisions also contemplate a reasonable width for lot development. This zone requires lots to be 100 feet wide. Subtracting both side yard 10 foot setbacks leaves at least an intended 80 feet of developable land area conforming to the ordinance. Exhibit 4 shows lots long ago created in the GRA zone not sized by this present day standard. Paula's 50 foot lot less both 10 foot side yard setbacks leaves only 30 feet to work with for reasonable development. The spirit of the ordinance contemplates development on non-conforming lots, but again the specific dimensioning of Paula's lot doesn't allow her reasonable proposal to conform to stated dimensional requirements. It is reasonable to grant the requested variances to facilitate Paula's reasonable site improvements.

The overall spirit of the ordinance encourages development appropriate for the public's health, safety and welfare. Demolition of the existing garage doesn't just promote new code appropriate construction facilitating reasonable use, but facilitates onsite machinery excavation to develop storm water drainage solutions consistent with present best practices. To insist that the existing structure stay put and used as best it can, essentially a storage shed, is inconsistent with the ordinance's spirit promoting safe and appropriate and usable development appropriate not just for present but future owners.

3. Granting the requested setback variance would do substantial justice.

This criteria requires consideration of all the facts relevant to the application, and a balancing of the public's and the Applicant's interests. One way to consider whether "substantial justice" would be done is to determine whether there is any gain to the public that is greater than the loss suffered by the Applicant if the variance is not granted. See, Farrar v City of Keene, 158 N. H. 684, 692 (2009). To apply this legal standard, the ZBA should imagine a scale, and on it weigh the loss suffered to Paula Reid as landowner/applicant on one side, against (on the other side of the scale) the public benefit to be gained by strict adherence to the Zoning Ordinance's dimensional requirements by denying the requested relief

Denying the variances simply because the proposed new construction modestly exceeds dimensional requirements makes no sense. Paula Reid would lose the opportunity to address the stormwater drainage problems that plague the side and back yards. Denial would preclude the opportunity to replace a worn out structure with one of up to date construction and more reasonably sized for use given today's automobile sizes and modest garage storage needs. The value of the improvement will enhance the property's assessment and thus the City's property tax revenue without increasing City service needs, school population, etc. It is hard to articulate any gain to the public, including immediate abutters, in denying the variance.

The proposed development is reasonable. It's in keeping with the neighborhood. As such, the scale tips in favor of Paula Reid.

4. Values of surrounding properties are not diminished by granting these requested setback relief.

ZBA Board members are legally permitted to rely upon their general knowledge and awareness of our area's rapidly appreciating real estate values and competitive real estate market. It is hard to imagine a good faith claim that Paula's reasonable proposal will have an adverse effect on surrounding property values. Property values in Portsmouth's desirable and high demand market continue to escalate. Property values in this general neighborhood will continue to rise after 410 Richards Avenue is improved as proposed.

5. Literal enforcement of the setback requirement from which relief is requested would result in unnecessary hardship because special conditions of the property distinguish it from others in the area, and no fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purposes of the express setback, lot coverage, and new construction limitations and their specific application to this property.

Special conditions of the subject property do distinguish it from others in the GRA zone. The property's significant drainage problems are addressed above. Literal enforcement of the dimensional requirements and new construction prohibition creates the hardship of being unable to reasonably cure this property's drainage problem special conditions. The purpose of the ordinance sections from which relief is requested is to promote safe and orderly development in the zone. Everything addressed above evidences that literal enforcement (variance application denial) fails that general purpose. Granting the variances instead will allow these special conditions to be addressed to eliminate the drainage hardship the property now endures, and will allow a replacement structure of similar scale, but very modest enlargement, reasonable and appropriate for today's standards of garage use.

Additional special conditions on the site relevant to the application are these. The neighboring lot immediately abutting the existing and proposed garage is at a higher elevation. Both properties have privacy fences screening each site's structures and back yards from the other. See Exhibit 9 pictures. The modest lengthening of a new garage by 5 feet will hardly be seen on account of both fences and their differing heights, especially given the neighbor's fence being taller and at a higher elevation.

Conclusion

All of the above evidence's Paula meeting all of the criteria required to grant the requested variances. Her proposed development will not threaten the public health, safety and welfare which is the general purpose of Portsmouth's Zoning Ordinance. The request variances are reasonable and should be granted.

Sincerely 15 / 15

Christopher A. Wyskiel

CAW/lew Enclosures

cc: Paula J. Reid

City of Portsmouth
Zoning Board of Adjustment
1 Junkins Avenue, 3rd Floor
Portsmouth, NH 03801

LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION

Re: Variance - 410 Richards Avenue, Portsmouth, NH

Owners: Paula J. Reid, Trustee of the Paula J. Reid 2003 Revocable Trust

Dear Sir/Madam:

Paula J. Reid, individually and as Trustee of the Paula J. Reid 2003 Revocable Trust, authorize my attorney, Christopher A. Wyskiel of Wyskiel, Boc, Tillinghast & Bolduc, P.A. to represent me, individually and in my landowning trustee capacity, before the Zoning Board of Adjustment regarding variance requests for the above referenced property.

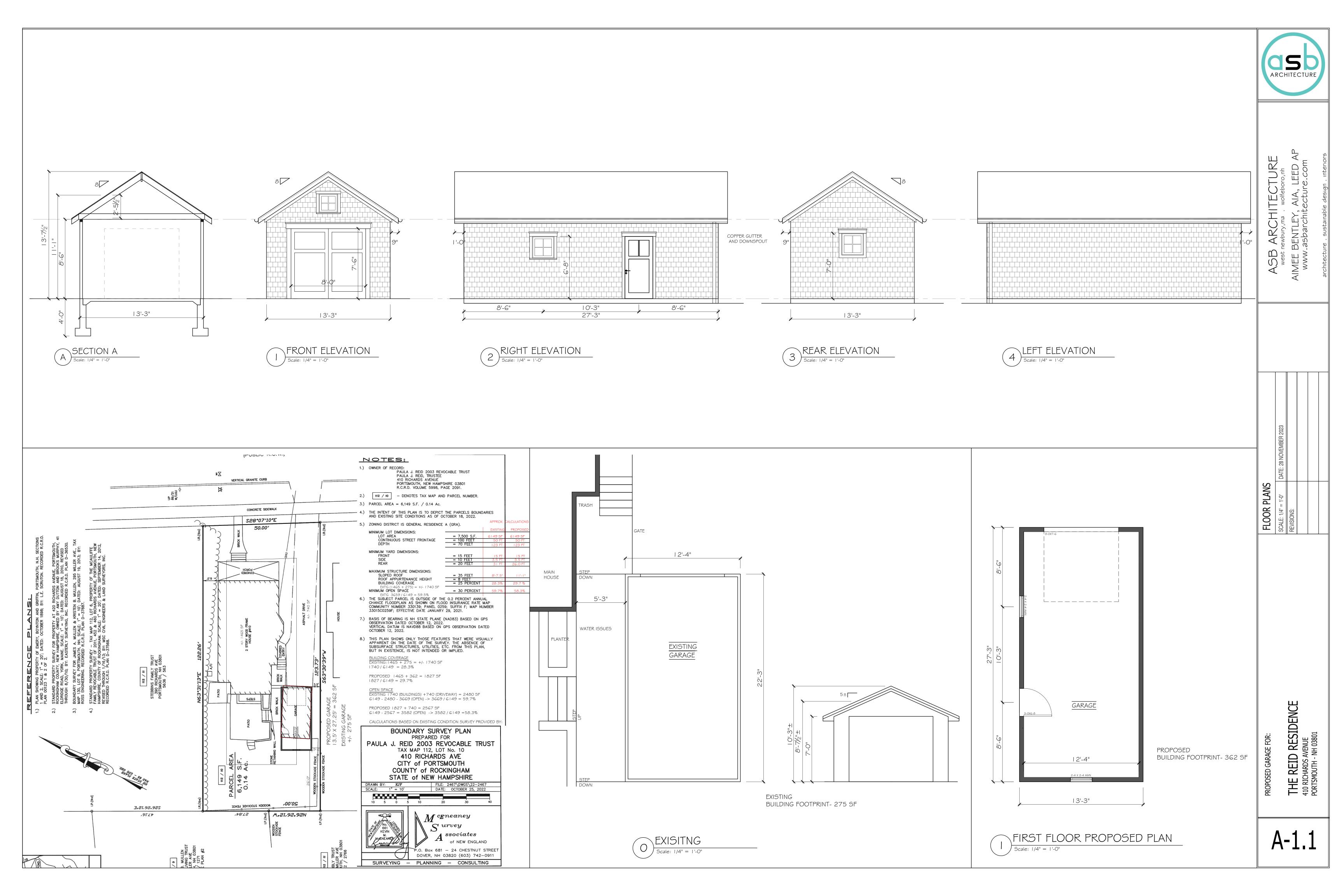
Sincerely,

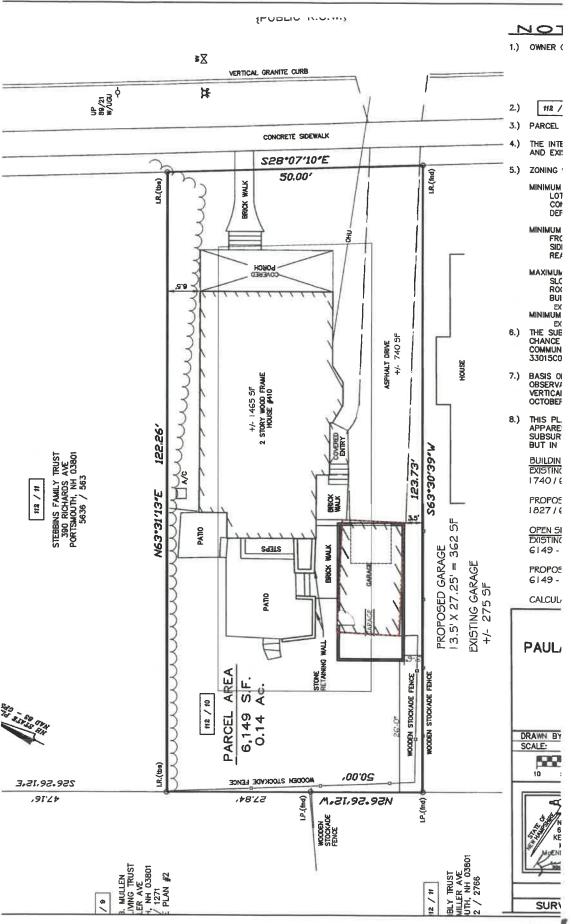
Dated: November 27, 2023

Paula J. Reid, Individually and as Trustee of the Paula J. Reid 2003 Revocable Trust

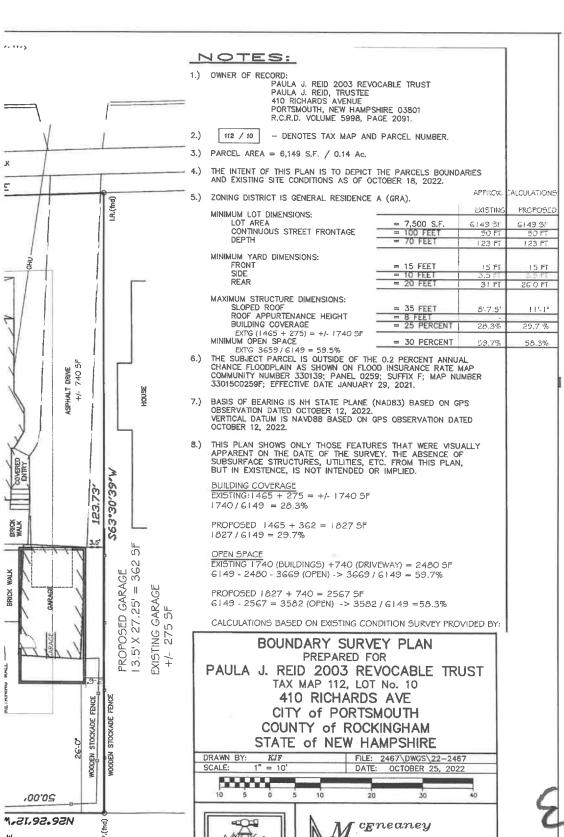
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REFERENCE PLANS:





Exh.3A



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ssociates

Exh133

(Sheet 2 of 2)
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Exh. 4 (p.192)

(Sheet 1 of 2)
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Micofilm Plan # 125

Exh. 4 (12.fz)

410 Richards Avenue 112 11 (<u>14</u>) 1" = 75.30551676083519 ft Print map scale is approximate. Critical layout or measurement activities should not be done using this resource. MAP FOR REFERENCE ONLY NOT A LEGAL DOCUMENT City of Portsmouth, NH makes no claims and no warranties, expressed or implied, concerning the validity or accuracy of the GIS data presented on this map. Geometry updated 08/24/2023 Data updated 3/9/2022

Exh. SA

2023 Aerial View





MAP FOR REFERENCE ONLY NOT A LEGAL DOCUMENT

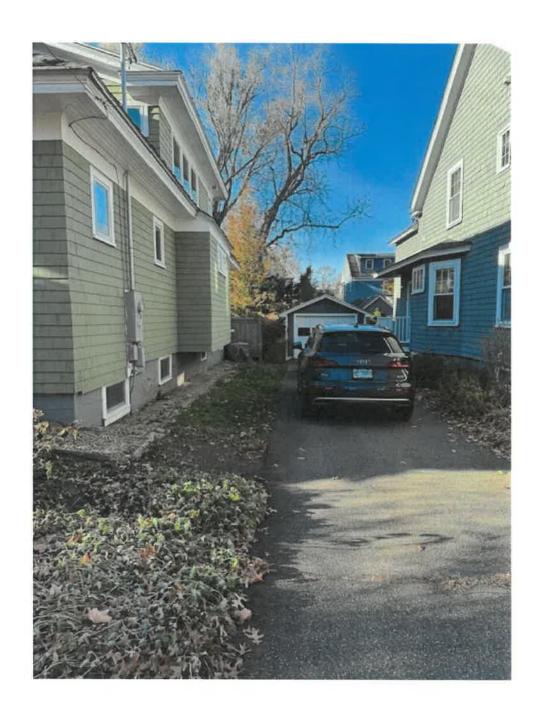
City of Portsmouth, NH makes no claims and no warranties, expressed or implied, concerning the validity or accuracy of the GIS data presented on this map.

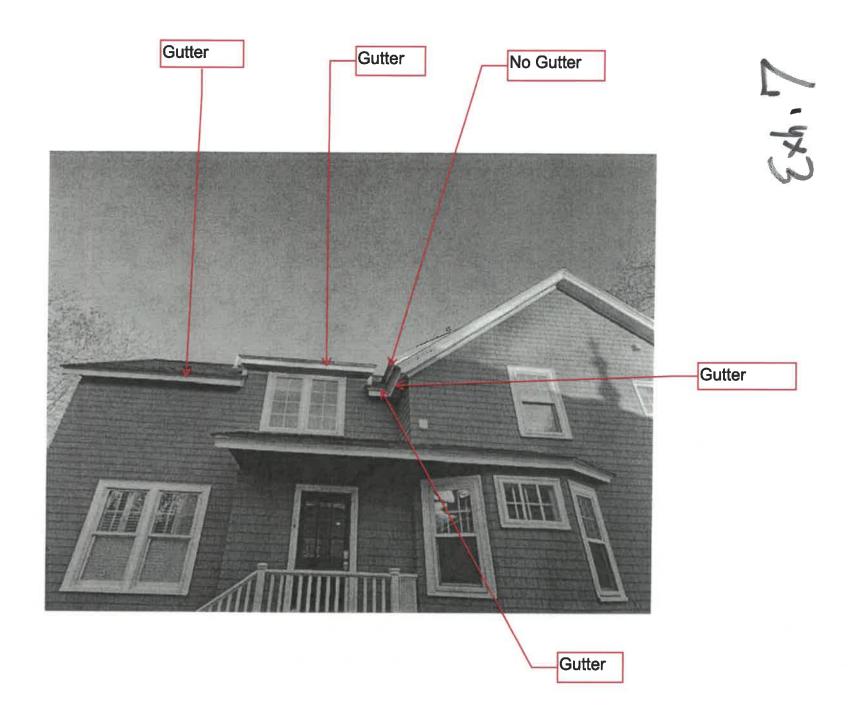
Geometry updated 06/21/2023 Data updated 3/9/2022 Print map scale is approximate.
Critical layout or measurement activities should not be done using this resource.

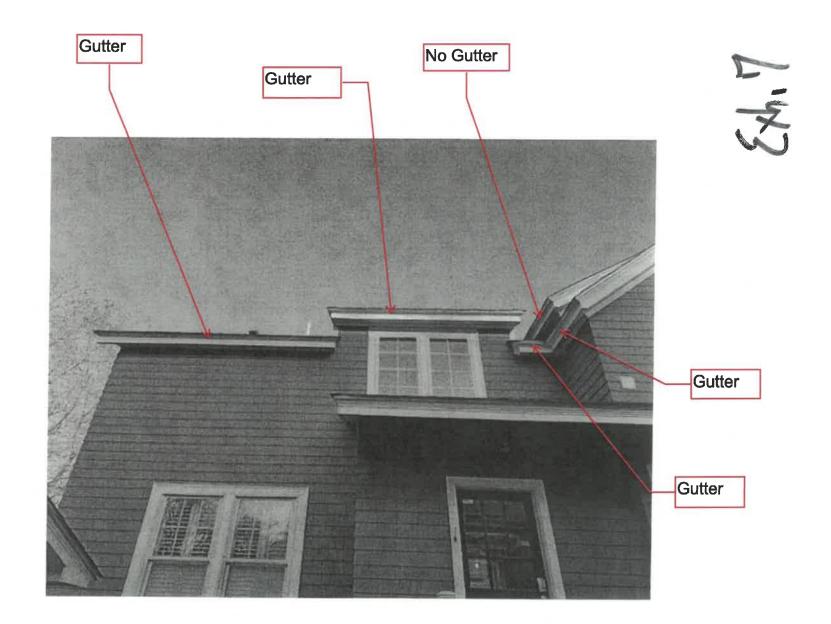


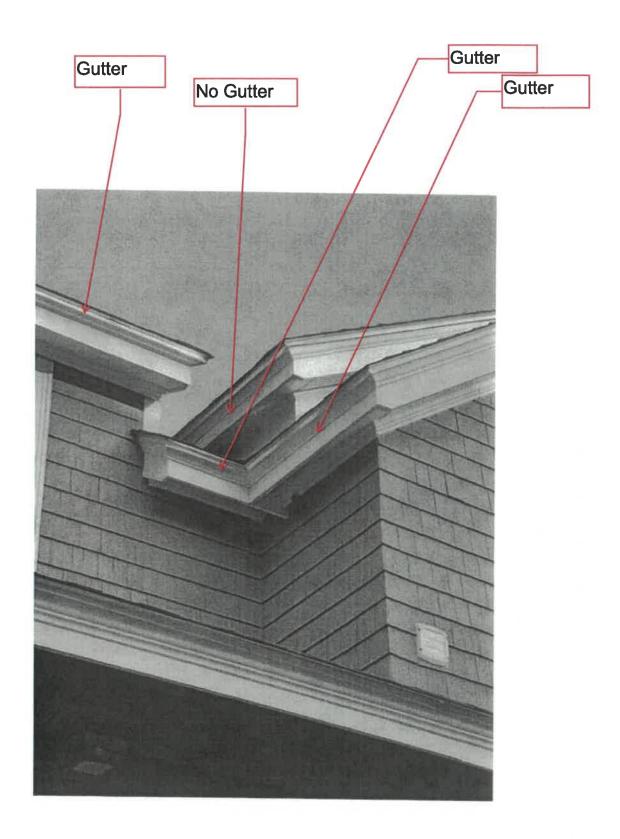


410 Richards Ave





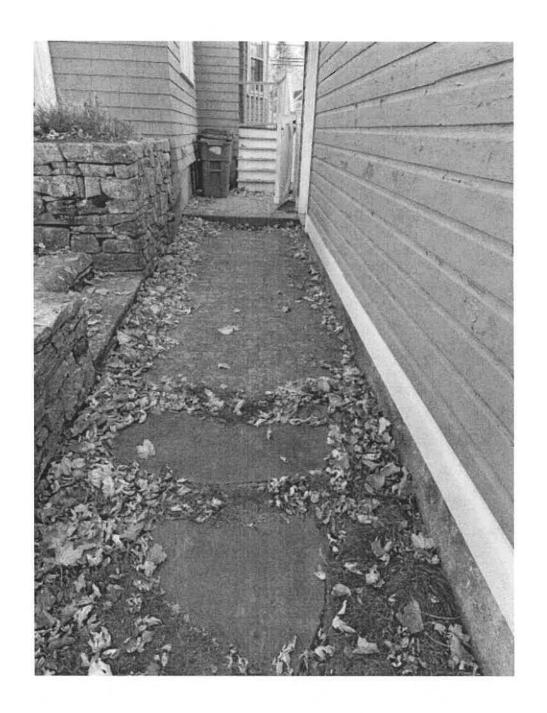




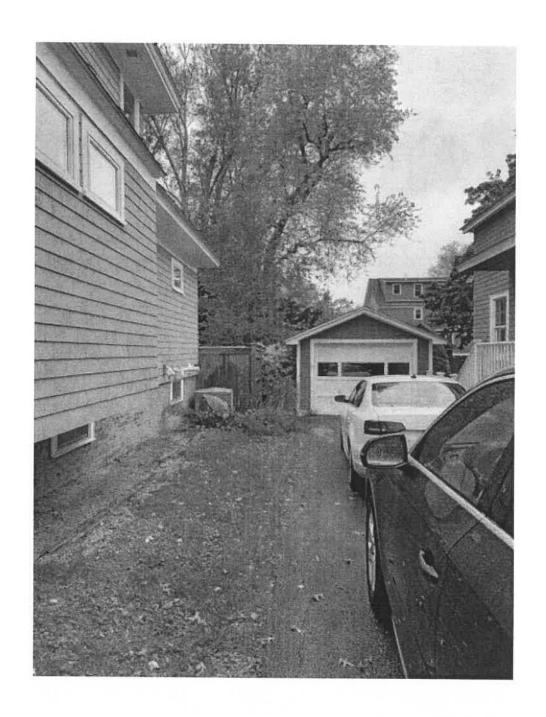


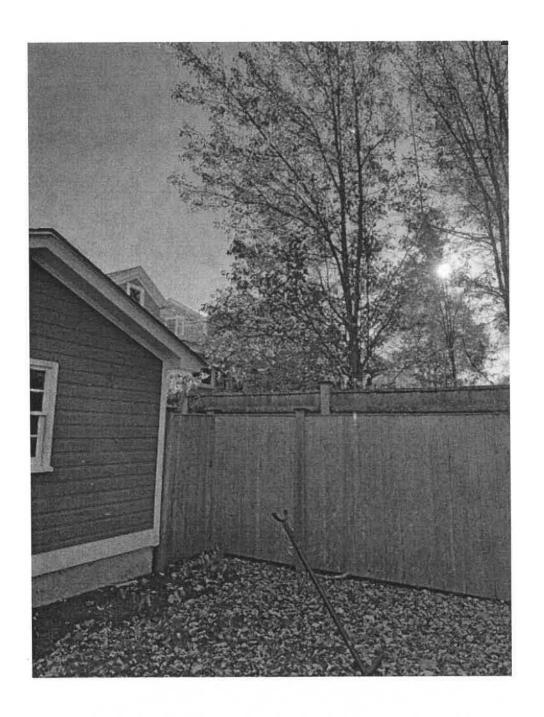


Exh,8



Sxh. 8

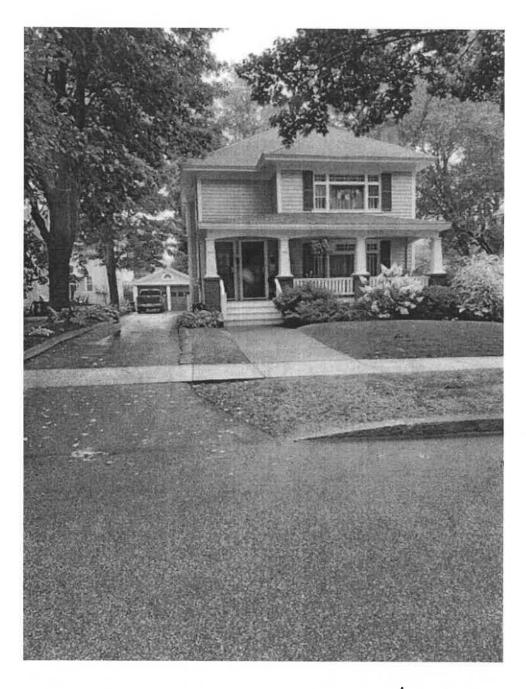




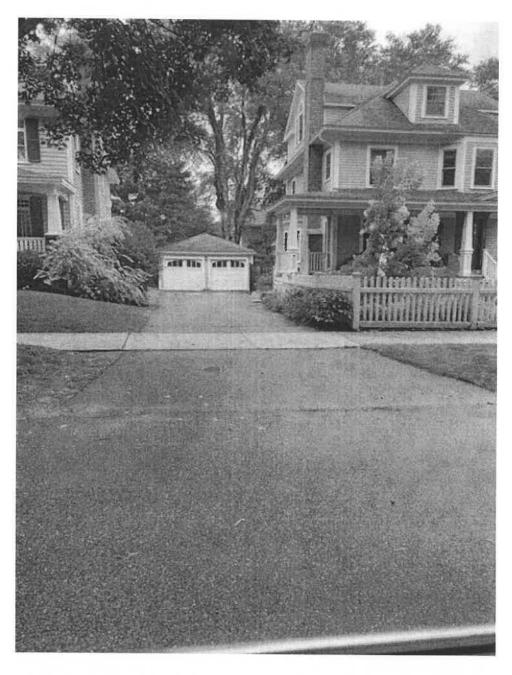




Richards Ave.



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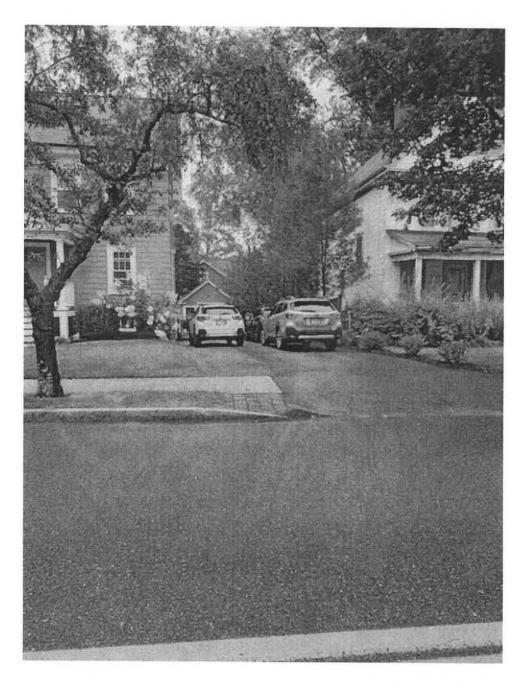
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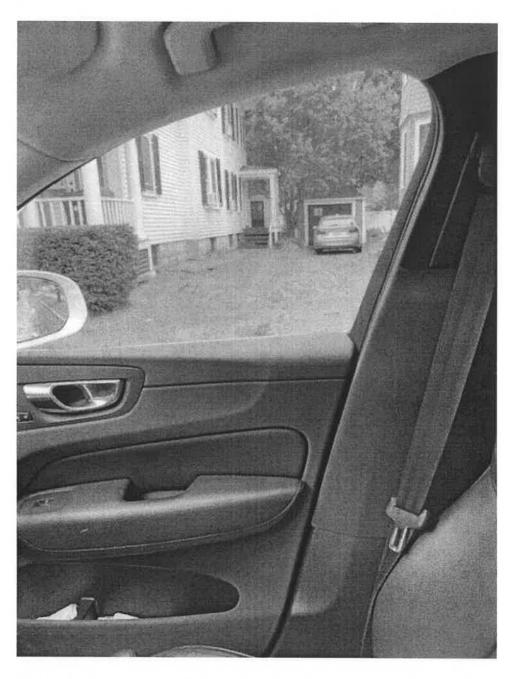
Richard Ave.



Richards Are.



Miller Ave.



Miller Ave.

LIST OF ABUTTERS

Applicant: Paula J. Reid, Trustee of the Paula J. Reid 2003 Revocable Trust 410 Richards Avenue, Portsmouth, NH Tax Map 112, Lot 10

Property Address	Tax Map/Lot No.	Owner(s)	RCRD Deed Ref.
420 Richards Avenue	Map 112, Lot 9	Amy E. Dutton Rev. Trust of 2003, Amy E. Dutton Murphy, Trustee	5225/39
390 Richards Avenue	Map 112, Lot 11	Stebbins Family Trust, John R. & Bridget M. Stebbins, Trustees	5636/563
399 Richards Avenue	Map 112, Lot 18	Barbara E. Collier Rev. Trust, Barbara E. Collier, Trustee	6315/246
409 Richards Avenue	Map 112, Lot 19	Stephen C. Buzzell Rev. Trust, Stephen C. Buzzell, Trustee, and and Jody E. Buzzell Rev. Trust, Jody E. Buzzell, Trustee	6035/840
419 Richards Avenue	Map 112, Lot 20	Thomas A. Nies Rev. Trust of 2010 and Denise M. Nies Rev. Trust of 2010, Thomas A. & Denise M. Nies, Trustees	5192/1225
295 Miller Avenue	Map 130, Lot 9	Kristen B. Mullen Rev. Living Trust, Kristen B. Mullen, Trustee	5699/1271
303 Miller Avenue	Map 130, Lot 10	The Twombly Trust, Dorothy C. Twombly, Trustee	2762/2766

Engineer/Surveyor:

Kevin M. McEneaney

McEneaney Survey Associates of New England

P. O. Box 681

Dover, NH 03821

Architect:

Aimee Bentley

ASB Architecture

260 Main Street

West Newbury, MA 01985

Attorney:

Christopher A. Wyskiel Wyskiel, Boc, Tillinghast & Bolduc, P. A. 561 Central Avenue Dover, NH 03820

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