

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS – ITEM #11.-1

From: [mesigh.bing](#)
To: [Robinson, Patricia](#)
Subject: Letter on behalf of Matt Merritt
Date: Friday, December 18, 2020 9:40:04 PM

Hello,

Below is a letter I wrote on behalf of Matt Merritt and his request for variance allowing him to rebuild his garage to 1900 sq ft. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Bethany Mesigh

To whom it may concern:

I'm the live-in girlfriend of Matt Merritt, and am writing to you today in hopes of pleading my/our case for why it is so important for us to be able to rebuild the burned garage at 8631 Baltimore ST NE with a larger footprint. I have known Matt for two years, and have been privy to the tasks associated with his yard even before I moved in.

In the fall of 2019 I threw my back out helping him rake up leaves and maintain a tidy yard. This was financially detrimental since part of my income is Massage Therapy. Last winter I spent hours with him shoveling, and reallocating the snow to other areas of the yard. These are just the hours I was visiting. Even though I was already aware that he has enormous trees in his yard and that he has almost a full acre to manage when it snows, I didn't have a full understanding of how much work this was until I moved in and became equally responsible for yard maintenance. It made me long for the ease of apartment life. Matt bought more equipment to help with the chores in part to my persistence that this was too much time consumption on top of full time jobs and volunteering three nights a week. It was either buy bigger, brawnier equipment or stop volunteering. I work a full time job and a part time job just paydown my student loans, so I didn't have the time to make up the difference.

We have a beautiful home with an amazing yard, but it takes work to keep it this way. Since the fire last February, it's been a nonstop game of Tetris trying to figure out where we can put things. I got rid of over half of my possessions because there was simply no where to put them. The American household has changed a lot since 1947 and our wardrobes are much larger than the closets in this house were designed to hold, not to mention a complete lack of a basement. Even after drastically cutting back on books, clothes, DVDs, CDs, knick knacks, and heirlooms, there is still a very noticeable lack of storage. Matt's garage before the fire didn't actually have enough storage for him to keep all things "garage related" in the garage. Since the fire it has been a housekeeping nightmare to keep all the automotive and replacement tools organized and put away. Matt works on our daily commute vehicles as well as his classic cars that he is restoring, so we are constantly in flux with automotive parts/packages, which are currently taking up the mudroom and part of the kitchen. This is a small house; it does not take much for things to feel out of place. It's getting more complicated now that Matt is working from home and I too will be working from home. We need more space. Since finding out that the shed behind the garage (which was referred to as a carport in the planning meeting) has to be taken down, we have an even larger quandary for lawn equipment storage. We were using that shed before and having storage issues; moving forward we won't have that space available. Even with the

conditional use of 1200 sq ft we are basically back to inadequate storage and workspace.

I also wanted to address something that was mentioned during the city planning meeting. It was stated that we are using the lawn as a secondary driveway. We only drive on the lawn when absolutely necessary. Given the strange layout of the garage and existing driveway, it's sometimes necessary to drive around in order to access the southern stall. Matt puts a lot of work in fertilizing, dethatching, and weeding his lawn. His lawn looked like a golf course when his garage was functional. He longs to get it back to that condition again.

Sincerely,
Bethany Mesigh Bingamon

12-18-20

TO: City of Blaine

RE: Matt Merritt

I drive past Matt's house on my way home from work. I don't think a larger garage would change the aesthetics of the neighborhood. I am also aware that he needs additional space for his yard and automotive tools.

Thank you

Rabin Gregerson

8830 Davenport St NE

Blaine, MN 55449

From: [Elaine Boyer](#)
To: [Robinson, Patricia](#)
Cc: [Matt Merritt](#)
Subject: Matt Merritt's request to build on his property at 8631 Baltimore St. NE, Blaine
Date: Saturday, December 19, 2020 1:14:29 PM

TO: Patricia Robinson
FROM: Elaine Boyer-Haymond, 1470 87th Ave. NE, Blaine, MN 55449

I am writing at Matt Merritt's request to offer my support for his proposal to build a 1900 square foot structure on his property. I understood from him that he would need to display some type of hardship in order to justify this request. I'm not sure I understand what a hardship might have to do with it. I can say that Matt works hard. I believe his property is larger than anyone else's in the vicinity and he keeps it up meticulously. This is no small job. The lawn needs regular mowing, the trees are mature and then there is snow removal. My mother has lived on the corner of 87th and Baltimore for 69 years and I am responsible for her lawn care, leaf clean-up and snow removal and know the work involved.

Matt tells me that he plans to build the structure in order to house his stuff. I am all for neatness and think that putting stuff in a building versus sitting next to a building makes sense and would be more aesthetically pleasing. He also says that he will build so that the building runs the depth of his property which means it likely would be no more visible from the street than the current structure. I appreciate this because I like the green space next to his house, which has a calming effect as I look at his trees and grassy space walking by with my dogs.

I think that Matt's interest in doing this means that he plans on staying in the neighborhood. I'm all for anything that promotes the stability of the people who live nearby. As is probably well understood, the more turnover of property the less well kept a neighborhood becomes so I appreciate that Matt wants to stay. He's been a good neighbor. I hope you will consider his request.

From: [Angel Swartz](#)
To: [Robinson, Patricia](#)
Subject: Matt Merritt Garage
Date: Saturday, December 19, 2020 10:58:16 PM

Hello,

I'm writing in support of Matt Merritt and his garage building project on Baltimore Street in Blaine.

I live at 8620 Baltimore St NE which is almost directly across from Matt. I don't think the garage he wants to build will change the aesthetic of the neighborhood in a negative way.

Matt has a ton of mature trees on his property which require a lot of maintenance in the fall and he has a riding mower with attachment and tractor to help with upkeep it would be nice if he had a garage with ample storage to keep them in. In my opinion the garage would make the aesthetic better than the lawn equipment sitting out all the time.

He is a guy that spends a lot of time in his garage tinkering with things and repairing things. He also uses his time to help repair the occasional broken thing for his neighbors, so when his garage is functional, it benefits us as well!

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

Angel Swartz

From: [Bob Payment](#)
To: [Robinson, Patricia](#)
Subject: 8631 Baltimore St. NE. Case 20-0041
Date: Sunday, December 20, 2020 12:15:29 PM

Patricia,

The property owner at 8631 Baltimore St. NE, has requested a variance for an oversized garage, to provide storage of his personal vehicles, snowmobiles, lawn equipment, etc.

We are in favor of the property owner obtaining this variance for this structure, providing that the conditions of no other vehicle, equipment, etc. shall be in the yard or outside of said building.

As a property owner in the area for 40 plus years, we have a vested interest in the area's appearance. We already have a property owner in the area of 8800 Baltimore that has an oversized garage with numerous vehicles parked in the yard making it an eye sore. We don't need another.

Thank you.

Bob and Pat Payment
1516 - 87th Avenue NE
Blaine, MN 55449

Sent from my iPad

From: [Adam](#)
To: [Robinson, Patricia](#)
Cc: kayla.zechmann@gmail.com
Subject: Matt Merritt Garage Request
Date: Sunday, December 20, 2020 9:13:38 PM

Hello,

We're writing today in support of Matt Merritt of 8631 Baltimore St NE Blaine, MN 55449. My wife Kayla and I live at 11649 Jefferson St NE Blaine, MN 55434. We have lived here since fall 2008. Our home sits on a 0.25 acre lot and we are fortunate to have a 1,200 square foot four-car attached garage. As automotive enthusiasts, the large garage was one of the main reasons we chose to purchase this home. My 1989 Ford Mustang and my wife's 1969 Chevy Camaro are occasionally driven to car shows and other events during the summer months but we each have daily driven vehicles we use for commuting to work and other general use. Like many other Blaine residents, our garage serves as not only storage for our vehicles but also as a storage space for our yard equipment. Our garage blends seamlessly with the look of our house as the siding, shingles, rain gutters and lighting fixtures all match the house. With a 0.25 acre lot we can get away with just a push mower; however, Matt has nearly 4 times the yard that we do and many more trees. If you haven't seen the trees on Matt's property you might not realize the size and scale of the work needed to maintain his property. Matt's trees are huge- probably 100 feet tall or so. Matt spends a significant amount of time maintaining his yard compared to a typical Blaine property owner. In order to properly maintain his yard Matt has invested in more equipment such as riding lawn tractors, lawn sweepers, fertilizer spreaders, snow removal equipment, etc. and requires more space to store and maintain that equipment. Matt is also a fellow car enthusiast and has summer "fun cars" in addition to his general-purpose vehicles. If Matt were limited to the same size garage that we have on our 0.25 acre lot he would be forced to park his vehicles in his driveway or on the street. The city of Blaine has a variety of lot sizes and configurations, and we believe that a one-size-fits-all approach to garage size doesn't make sense in Matt's case. We believe that given the size and layout of his property and the maintenance needs that go along with that, his requested variance should be approved.

Respectfully,

Adam & Kayla Zechmann
11649 Jefferson St NE
Blaine, MN 55434

From: [Amazon Prime account](#)
To: [Robinson, Patricia](#)
Subject: Case 20-0041--Matthew Merritt Garage Variance
Date: Monday, December 21, 2020 12:47:23 AM

Ms Robinson,

I am offering my support in granting the variance that Mr. Merritt has requested for a larger garage (1,900 square feet). My property is located just south of Mr. Merritt's.

Mr. Merritt is very conscientious about keeping his property neat and clean. In the summer, I always see him out maintaining his yard often late into the evening. Our yards have quite a few mature cottonwood trees, which drop an enormous amount of leaves in the fall. Raking is a never ending task. He is very diligent about picking up leaves not only from his yard but also helping out other neighbors. This definitely prevents many leaves from blowing around and into the street and possibly getting into the storm sewer. I request that you will grant him the variance for the additional square footage so that he can properly store any yard and snow removal equipment safely inside the garage and out of sight.

Also, I don't believe that having a larger garage will detract from the aesthetics of the neighborhood.

Mr. Merritt cares about our neighborhood and I'd hate to see him leave. Thank you for your consideration.

I hope to be able join the zoom meeting on 21 December.

Julianne Backhaus
8617 Baltimore St NE
Blaine, MN
(763) 784-7127

From: [Tait Turnquist](#)
To: [Robinson, Patricia](#)
Subject: Matt Merritt - 8631 Baltimore St NE - New Garage on Property
Date: Monday, December 21, 2020 9:40:49 AM

Good Morning Patricia,

My name is Tait Turnquist, I live at 8515 Baltimore St NE, I am a neighbor of Matt. I am writing to you about Matt Merritt's request to build a large garage on his property. Matt's home is unique as is my home. They have been around since the 1940's. Being one of the older neighborhoods in Blaine, we enjoy the history that goes with our southside neighborhood. Matt, like many of us, take pride in our homes and yards. His lot is very large and does a great job of keeping it kept up. It would be easy for him to just manage what he would need to with the large cottonwood trees and all the leaves. But he does do a good job of keeping it clean. It is easy for him to manage the snow also, he basically shares drive with his neighbors to the north and pushing snow to one side is difficult, so he invested in a large tractor to move it.

The request to build a large garage would not bother the aesthetic of the neighborhood, each of our homes are different in their own way.

I have no issue and am in favor of Matt's request to build an outbuilding on his property.

I look forward to hearing the results of the council meeting this evening,

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tait Turnquist
8515 Balitomre St NE Blaine MN 55449
763-233-9427

From: [Soren Barr](#)
To: [Robinson, Patricia](#)
Subject: 8631 BALTIMORE STREET NE
Date: Monday, December 21, 2020 9:53:46 AM

I'm not sure if a decision has been made on the garage variance at this address requested by Matt Merritt, but I wanted to express my support for issuing the variance. I live two doors away and have been here for more than a decade. I would like to make it clear that neither the conditional use or variance requested are of any concern to me and I support the city issuing the variance. This neighborhood is full of smaller houses with large garages and the huge lot sizes. It's often hard to even see that garages often equal or exceed the house size.

I understand that the garage size requested is not inline with Blaine's current zoning laws, but the lot size in our neighborhood are much larger than the current standard and that all of these lots back up to significant tree cover between lots that back into each other. This means that, while in modern lots, a large garage would be very noticeable, that is not the case in our neighborhood. It also means that total structure size, even with a large garage, is not any larger than a typical, large, newer Blaine house.

I do not believe that allowing this variance will create any issues for the neighborhood or the city and so I support it.

Soren Barr
8605 Baltimore St NE