

11
9-12-20

Elizabeth Jardim for City Council
September 12, 2020

DOCKET ITEM #11
Vacation #2019-00002
2 East Mason Avenue

Good afternoon Mr. Mayor and members of the City Council. Thank you for your attention.

My name is Elizabeth Jardim, I live at 2 E Mason Avenue in Alexandria, VA. I am here to request permission to purchase 177 square feet of land from the city that runs along our property.

My husband and I purchased our home in July 2016. At that point, there was an existing white picket fence that ran along the perimeter of our yard. Based on archived GoogleMaps images, the fence was standing in 2009, though likely it was installed many years earlier than that.

In the summer of 2019 we decided to replace part of the white fence with a 6 foot "good neighbor" fence to give our family more privacy on a very busy corner with lots of foot traffic.

We worked with a highly recommended local company who has built many fences in Del Ray. He had no concerns about us building a 6 foot fence in our side yard, up to the sidewalk's edge, as he had done this for other local clients, without any issues, and our plans were in character with the neighborhood. We built the new fence right on top of where the previous white fence had been, unaware that any part of the previous white fence was not on our legal property.

We hope to retain the 6 foot fence as it is, with special exception from the Board of Zoning Appeals. Before we can make that request, we ask that the City Council consider our vacation request, rather than encroachment.

We know from previous hearings that both Mayor Wilson and City Council have shown support for vacations, when there is no planned use for the area, as they provide a monetary benefit to the city. For example, in April 2019, City Council voted unanimously to approve a request for vacation on a corner lot in Del Ray, at 100 E Luray Ave.

Additionally, our request fulfills all FIVE policy criteria for vacation requests. I'd like to take a moment to discuss policy criteria 1 and 2.

1. **There is no existing public use for the area in question** that would be impeded by a vacation, including sidewalk maintenance. As I mentioned earlier, a fence has stood in the exact location since before 2009, and it has never interfered with the city's ability to do sidewalk maintenance in the past.

2. **Regarding “reasonable future use”**, of widening the sidewalk by one foot, I have not seen any language within the “Complete Streets” guidelines that specifically calls for 5 feet wide sidewalks, and there are no plans underway to do so on Commonwealth or Mason streets. If this changes, the sidewalk could easily be widened into the public space on the west side of the sidewalk.

Additionally, the sidewalk on our corner was replaced within the last 2 years to make it more ADA compliant. I do not realistically expect the city to replace this sidewalk again in the nearterm, after just investing in a significant improvement project.

We respectfully request to purchase this land from the city. A direct purchase of this land is cleaner for us and the city, and provides the city with a monetary benefit. We are happy to pay the fair market value to the city for this land, and meet the other conditions proposed by city staff.

I am happy to address any questions you have. Thank you for your time.