

Controversial North Vancouver home gets approval on tight lot

Stream setbacks constrict building options

BY TESSA HOLLOWAY, NORTH SHORE NEWS JULY 27, 2011

A new house planned for a vacant lot on Banbury Road in Deep Cove has been given a raft of variance permits by District of North Vancouver council, despite a recommendation from staff to wait for negotiations with neighbours.

The house's design had previously been amended on two occasions following meetings with neighbours, lowering the height by three metres and moving the house back to four feet from the front property line instead of two feet.

The sticking point for staff and some neighbours was the fact the house contained only one parking space on the property in a garage, while the cul-de-sac street, located at the end of Mount Seymour Parkway, was already covered with parked cars. Staff wanted two, but the owners said the tricky geometry of the lot made that almost impossible.

Staff recommended deferral to continue consultations with the neighbours, but architect Ross Graham of Kallweit Graham Architecture said the wait until the next council meeting, scheduled for late August, was untenable.

Since the undeveloped lot is owned by the neighbours, staff suggested a parking spot on their lot, but Graham said that wouldn't be accepted.

A stream and a sewage right-of-way both cut across the back end of the lot, requiring the house be pushed forward on the lot to almost the lot line due to the 15-metre setback required on the stream. The neighbouring house, built before those regulations came into effect, is built over top of the stream.

On a motion to defer from the July 11 council meeting, council split 3-3, with Couns. Roger Bassam, Mike Little and Robin Hicks supporting deferral, and Coun. Lisa Muri absent. But when that motion failed, Little switched his vote and supported going ahead.

"I think this is a bad precedent to set: that OK, we have a parking issue here, but let's go ahead anyway," said Bassam, but Coun. Alan Nixon argued to not support the variance would effectively make the lot undevelopable.

"This is an artificially created variance in order to protect the environment, the stream."

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