

Mai Vang

From: Walker Wilkins <wwilkins@hey.com>
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2026 4:54 PM
To: *CI-StPaul_LegislativeHearings
Cc: andreamariever@gmail.com
Subject: 1473 Fairmount Ave; Update; Request for Extension

Legislative Hearings,

We have been busy working to complete the order but we must request an extension to reach compliance.

Here is the inconvenient news first, between the unusually hot May and our silver maple dropping an unprecedented amount of spinners this year, serious work was slow to begin. While keeping things free of organic matter is an ideal that can be ignored for haste in most cases, a maple seedling taking root and growing out of the wall is a bit more serious. Proper cleaning before things were swinging again involved multiple passes of leaf blowers, vacuuming, and torching.

The better news is that progress here and elsewhere has been made and once this heat warning / advisory passes things are staged to continue progress on pace.

For ease of reading, I'll switch to a list:

- Survey: We had a survey performed to remove the guesswork that was delaying most work along the borders of the yard. We're committed to absolutely conforming to the surveyors work to avoid encroaching on adjacent properties and planning future improvements, such as privacy fencing and drainage/grading/planting projects.

- Boulevard: Since removing the stone from the boulevard, all work has moved to my property. We have since had the boulevard hydro-seeded and have kept up with the watering schedule. The invoice for the work and a current photo are attached.

- Retaining Wall: The back of the wall has been built up to the face using ~2-3 yards of 3/4 clear angular rock. Walls are normally built from the front and since I'm committed to staying off the boulevard, that was a bit of a puzzle. Now that the fill is nearer to the current top and the yard, I'm beginning to stage stone at the rear of the fill for placement into the wall. I've also made measurements of the wall heads and identified the blocks I prepared last year to bring the heads within leveling distance when the capping (final) course is laid. Moving and fitting the wall head blocks is within spitting distance but they are the heaviest blocks (one placed by hand last year weighted about #350) so the back-fill and the wall section must to be ready to receive them.

- Eastern Border Drain Tile: To prepare for an underway stone-faced "hill" that will use a significant portion of the bluestone veneers, I've excavated and placed a 12"x12" channel with a 4" perforated drain pipe along our properties border using the design from Easy Digging (photo attached). The pipe will exit to daylight at the eastern edge of the wall but for now it is socked and buried at the end since that can be done once I'm no longer under this order.

- Eastern Stone-faced "hill": This will consume a significant amount of the bluestone veneers and the street-facing portion can be completed very quickly. At the property border, there is a course of bluestone edging in the hope that it will be easier to manage the lawn on the other side. The hill's face will meet the back of the retaining wall excavation and take a turn into the property.

- Aesthetically Improved Material Placement: Particularly for gravel waiting on drainage placement, but wherever possible going forward, I'm using the bluestone veneers to hold materials instead of bulk bags. Visually, the appearance would roughly be that of a hasty stone-faced raised garden bed.

The following are unrelated to the order but show our good faith commitment to following through and beyond:

- Ailing Conifer Removal / Tree Care: After we were informed by the Jentz's that a tree trimming service told them a conifer from our back yard was suffering from rot, we had the tree removed as quickly as possible. To their credit, they offered to put what they expected to pay for trimming towards the removal but we handled it ourselves and instead requested they remove an encroachment they had placed between our garages so we can excavate there to review our garage's foundation and improve the drainage when we are able to do so. Recently, Ms. Fortune suggested our silver maple was going to "fall on her house" but we asked both tree services that reviewed the conifer to take a look and their suggestion was to give it water by running a hose for 20 minutes. We will do that in the short-term but the long-term plan is to correct the grade behind the wall and in front of the tree so the water saturates to the trees roots.

- Working Hours: While Saint Paul allows the use of power tools between 7AM and 10PM, most work is being completed between 1PM and 9PM without power tools. The infrequent use of angle grinders and hammer drills is generally between 2PM and 8PM.

- Friendly Attitude: The project has both passersby, driversby, and regulars who come with questions, compliments, or neighborly chat. I try my best to answer any question, accept any comment, and see these as opportunities for the breaks I'm not taking. There are 4 or 5 neighbors who stop by regularly and chat to their hearts content. 90% of anyone who comes by have good things to say about the work and the beauty of the stone. Rarely, it is one neighbor after the next and nearly nothing gets done. Perhaps to my ultimate detriment, I don't have it in me to tell these neighbors to grab a shovel or keep walking. If Saint Paul is interested in promoting socializing in the community with neighbors, I'm doing it for less than free here.

- Initial Planning for Backyard Improvements: Well before winter, we plan to remove the shed and trench around the garage so the concrete professionals recommended by a neighbor from the industry can offer some opinions on how to proceed. The garage is framed in a somewhat unique way, somewhat reminiscent of a barn, and we're fond of it. We are also planning to look into privacy fencing. We have hesitated because of our neighbor's raised bed but the lack of privacy has led to disuse followed by neglect and we would like to be able to enjoy our backyard without feeling surveilled.

- Other Backyard Improvements - Ground Cover: We've brought in and placed 5 yards of mulch to provide ground cover. As things progress, we will continue to remediate the work's damage to the ground cover using permeable, natural materials.

Sorry for writing such a long update, I wish I had written it sooner, though I can't say if it would be shorter. Writing this letter has taken no time at all in the context of what has gone into this work. I am also unsure of what you consider persuasive, so I've attempted to guess. If soliciting friendly passersby, acquaintances, and friends met during this project to write to you, I will happily do so up to the review hearing date. I understand I'm more likely to hear from supporters, you're more likely to hear from detractors, and that this is not a democratic process but imagining how one person might show more good faith commitment is difficult to imagine so I hope that while the results may be lacking the amount of effort is apparent.

Sincerely,
Walker Wilkins

attachments:



[after-hydroseeding.jpg 13.9 MB](#)



[1473-Fairmount-current-boulevard.jpg 11.7 MB](#)



[SkySURV-5141_1473_FairmountAve-V1 signed.png 110 KB](#)



[Hydroseed Job UPDATED Invoice.pdf 81.5 KB](#)



[conifer-removal-estimate.pdf 1020 KB](#)



[french_drain_picture-488x600.jpg 53 KB](#)