

Christopher Ryan
Director of Planning and Building
Town of Belmont

Re: Tree Protection - McLean Zone 4 Application for Design and Site Plan Approval , Case 2503

Dear Mr. Ryan and Planning Board Members,

The purpose of this letter is to bring the issue of tree protection to the Planning Board's and McLean's attention with the hope of protecting significant trees that the current plans inadequately protect, but with some added modest care in the planning phase could be saved.

Pictured below are two 100+ year-old oak trees that are the subject of concern. The trees are found to the southeast of the proposed parking garage. Importantly, the precise location of these trees is not shown on the Existing Conditions Plan nor the Tree Protection Plan LG003. If the two trees were accurately located on the plans, modest design changes could be taken to protect them. However, since they are not accurately located on the survey, the design cannot be tailored (and is not tailored) to save them. If the locations of these trees are not established now, and the design adjusted accordingly, it is highly possible that they will be removed for no good reason. The result will be a loss of two remarkable historic trees and a lowering of the quality of the project.



Figure 1 - Historic Black Oak and White Oak trees found southeast of the parking garage. The White Oak (right) is a particularly healthy and beautiful specimen. If saved, these trees could offset the massiveness of the proposed buildings and contribute significantly to the landscape character of the proposed project.

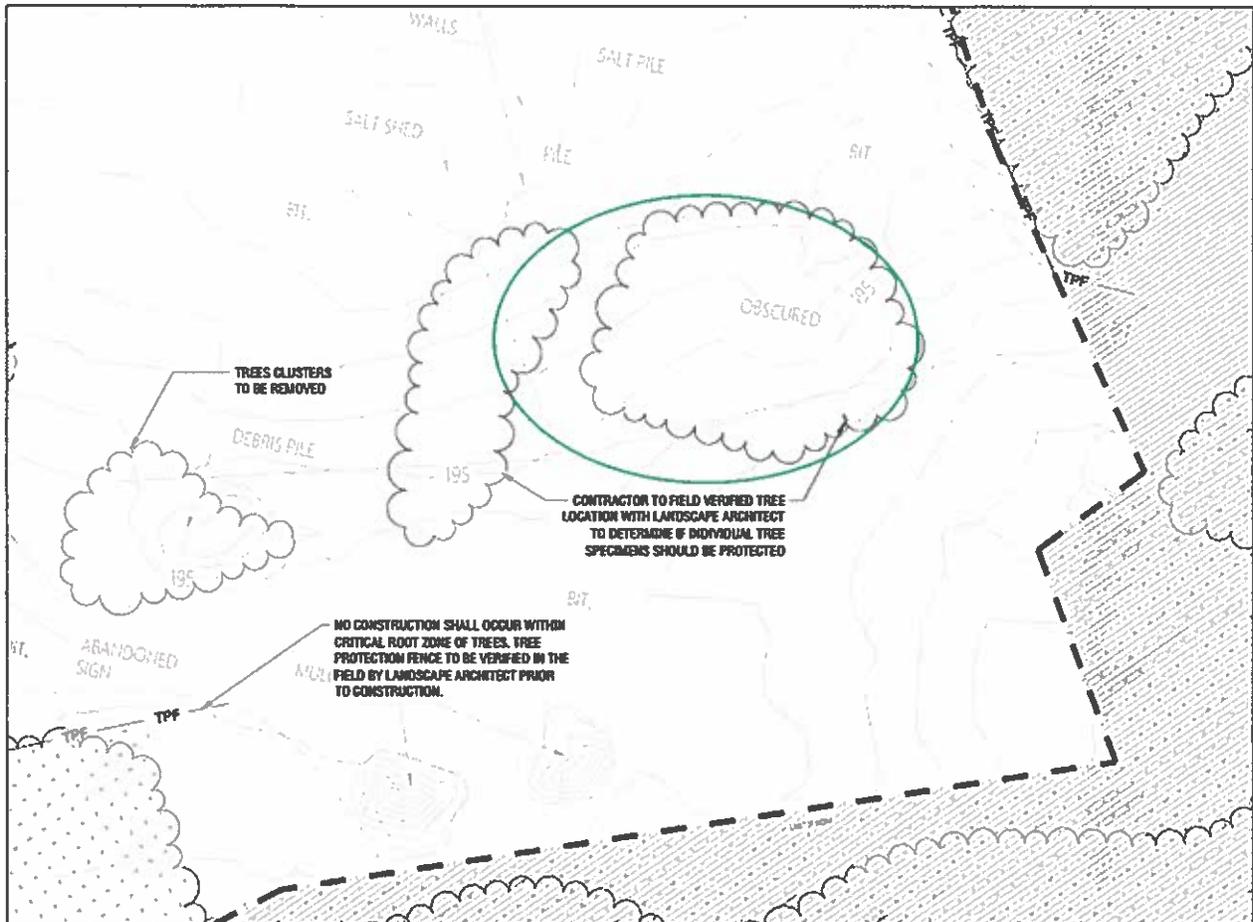


Figure 2 - Tree Protection Plan LG003 . The green circle shows the location of two historic trees. The specific trunk locations of the trees area not shown; therefore, the proposed site grading and infrastructure layout has not taken them into account in the site design.

It is evident that the Tree Protection Plan, Grading and Drainage Plan, the Utilities Plan, and the Erosion Control Plan were developed without knowledge of the specific location of the two historic trees. It is suggested that the applicant take the following modest steps:

1. Survey the precise locations of the two subject trees and add them to the plans.
2. Adjust the proposed grading on the Grading and Drainage Plan to minimize root zone disturbance for the two trees
3. Adjust the locations of proposed drainage lines and structures on the Grading and Drainage Plan to minimize root zone disturbance for the two trees
4. Adjust the location of a proposed fire hydrant on the Utilities Plan to minimize root zone disturbance for the two trees.
5. Modify the Tree Protection Plan to indicate tree protection for the two trees.

The applicant may argue that the Tree Protection Plan already provides for the protection of the subject trees and that the suggested changes are unnecessary. They may argue that the note on

the drawing LG003 addresses the issue. The note reads: *“Contractor to field verified (sic) tree location with landscape architect to determine if individual tree specimens should be protected.”* Notes on the Tree Protection Plan indicate that a certified arborist will also be part of the decision making in a pre-construction meeting.

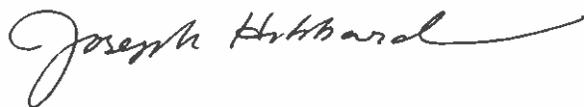
In essence, the Tree Protection plan indicates that the determination to protect these trees will be postponed until a pre-construction meeting just before construction starts. Providing protection just before construction starts will likely result in change orders and added cost.

Postponing tree protection decisions until just before the start of construction does not allow for the simple changes to the grading and layout of the project that could easily protect these trees if made now in the design phase of the project. If the applicant can save one of the trees by moving the nearby fire hydrant a few feet, it will be much easier and less costly to do that now in the design phase than later when documents are complete, bids are in, contractors have been selected, and the project is about to break ground.

Locating these oak trees and adding tree protection fencing prior to release of construction documents for bid would clearly communicate the applicant’s intent to protect these valuable trees and ensure that their protection is factored into the project pricing.

I am a Belmont resident. I am a landscape architect, planner, and an emeritus principal at Sasaki Associates of Boston. I would be happy to meet with you to share my observations and suggested actions in greater detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Hibbard". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

Joseph Hibbard FASLA

Cc Michael Macht Greenberg

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