Pete Foster Residential Design, LLC
685 Montrose Avenue
Bexley, Ohio 43209

April 19, 2020

City of Bexley
Department of Building and Zoning
Attn: Ms. K. Rose - Director of Building and Zoning
2242 East Main Street
Bexley, Ohio 43209

Kathy,
This correspondence is a response to an email that I received from you regarding the design of a new accessory structure that I have done at 69 South Cassingham Road.

In the email you expressed that you would like to send this design to the BZAP for clarification because, as you write, you are "of the impression that this is a 2-story structure and if the Board finds these types of structures appropriate, I need to know".

First, I would like to thank you for your timely response as we all seem to be a little more under the gun with the current working scenario and the inefficiencies that exist for the time being.

The design of this garage is smaller than the allowable square feet that garages are allowed to be and it meets ALL of the zoning code requirements as well as the intent of the ordinances that deal with accessory structures in the R-6 zoning district. Yet, I am being directed to go to BZAP for review without the need for any variances. I am confused by this.

I feel as if this project, which is completely different from the previous tabled solution that you had viable concerns with, is being used by the building department as a means to gain more clarity about their own ordinances regarding accessory structures at the expense of my client's schedule and my professional fee.

The unnecessary time and dollars that this review process is taking at such a critical time for everyone is very frustrating to me and my client. I have designed a project that meets all of the zoning requirements and that compliments the architecture and the details of the primary structure on this property but I am still required to go in front of the BZAP because you feel this is a "2-story structure". This leads me to wonder how design professionals, like myself, are supposed to structure their fees and communicate the Bexley process to their clients when such a subjective position can be taken.

It was such a great idea when the powers to be finally decided to allow for smaller projects (garages included) that meet the zoning requirements and are in line with the intent of the approved ordinances that deal with such projects to be reviewed by Staff. This allowed projects, while perhaps small in size but not in impact, to be reviewed by Karen Bokor and you so that good architecture and planning could be viewed from an educated perspective. This change in the process also seemed to ensure that "good" architecture and proper site planning would be monitored so that all of the residents of Bexley as well as the contractors involved could benefit in a timely manner. In this case, I am having a hard time understanding why this project requires review beyond Staff.

After receiving your short email, following our various discussions, I went out to drive each street and alley in south, central and north Bexley to take an accurate inventory of garages past, recent and

currently being built. I did this to shed some light on the aspects of height, volume and roof lines, which you have mentioned numerous times during our discussions, of accessory structures in our community.

In an effort to clarify my approach to this design to you, due to your unease about this project, I have broken this response into specific sections as it pertains to my design; site placement/ volume/ height/ and dormers.

I am well aware that one of the reasons the code dictates both height and volume when it comes to accessory buildings is to alleviate the 2-story garages that were designed essentially as two story vertical walls and then a rake board slapped on to each end in hopes of disguising the true two story structure as something of a smaller scale. (I have included photos of these structures that we have in Bexley as part of my application upload.) If I am correct, this is what you are comparing my design to when you state that it is a "2-story structure".

<u>Site placement</u>
Time has been spent during my design process to be sensitive to the new buildings scale and placement on the site so that this proposed structure relates well with the location of the neighboring garage to the north and at the same time creates both "edges" and a vibrant, useable green space to this urban yard that the homeowner has spent a lot of time, dollars and care cultivating. In the past, the rear yard of this property has been enhanced by the planting of a line of hornbeams down the south property line to create a natural and substantial separation between the neighboring property while providing privacy for both parties. This proposed garage intends to add to the property's "edges" by creating a buffer from the alley along the west property line and to block views of the neighbor's garage and driveway to the north when sitting in the back garden.

<u>Volume</u>
As I have been working through this design and designs in the past, I have been cognizant of the code that states that the second story of an accessory structure may not exceed 66% of the volume of the story below. While I cannot find a definition for "volume" in our zoning code, I have gained some clarity, through our discussions, as to how you determine "volume". I find it odd that when dealing with a structure that has a "second story" your calculations are based on any space that is under roof, whether it has living space within it or not. I am not clear as to why this is the case. You had mentioned to me that this approach gave you a tool to control massing of the structure. If I understand correctly, this volume calculation is only considered when there is a permanent stair leading to a "second story". This would mean that an accessory structure that doesn't have a "second story" by definition could have an unregulated volume under roof as long as it remained under 20 feet? I ask because my proposed design, while under the maximum 66% at 65%, would only be around 53% if the volume under the roof of the projecting east arm, which lacks second floor living space, were not part of your calculations.
I have included photos from my trip around town this afternoon of several recently constructed garages that have "second stories". As you can see in the photos, there is no way that if the volume is calculated as being all of the space under roof they can be less than 66% of the volume of the floor below. Perhaps variances were granted in all of these situations?

<u>Height</u>
I have also become more aware of the code that states that no "story" of an accessory structure can exceed 10 feet in height. (Though while on my garage research escapade, I measured the height of several of the new garages shown in the attached photos and several of them have soffits exceeding 10 feet. One even measured 11 feet!) As we both seemed to learn during a recent phone call with each other, a story is defined in part, as the height from the finished floor to the finished floor of the story

above. This would then include the floor structure of the story above in the allowable 10 feet of height. This presents an issue with todays desired garage doors due to the size of current day SUV and minivans and I feel that this requirement should be re-evaluated.
The typical garage door is 8 feet tall to allow for these vehicles (with and without rooftop racks) to enter into the garage. The days of the 7 foot tall garage doors are gone. When these 8 foot tall garage doors are paired with automatic garage door openers, the height from the top of the garage door to the bottom of the floor structure above needs to be between 16"-18" minimum to allow for the opener and the rails that the garage door travels on. That puts the bottom of the floor structure above at between 9'-4" and 9'-6" above the floor. This only leaves 8"to 6" for the second floor structure. That size structure is far below adequate to support the live loads involved with a living space. So, unless a homeowner has the funds to afford a special wall hung opener, an atypical second floor structure design and additional labor, the first story of a typical garage is incapable of staying below 10 feet. In some cases, the height of this floor may be camouflaged from the exterior with large overhangs, deep soffits or modified framing, but the height from floor to floor will still exceed 10 feet.
The structural design has been modified on my design to allow for the 8 foot tall doors and to still meet both the maximum 10 foot story requirement as well as the maximum 20 foot overall height for the structure. Again, no height variances are required with this design.

<u>Dormers</u>
My investigation of garages also included a study of dormer size, length and the placement of their exterior faces with regard to the exterior face of the first floor walls below. The attached photographs include garages that have recently been built and others that are still under construction. (some of them are even my own projects). Particular attention should be given, and has been given in my design, to the dimension of the overhangs at the soffits and the size of exposed roofing material that occurs in front of the second floor exterior wall. The more roofing material that is present, the more the second floor dormer is "softened". (If you look again at the older true 2-story garages, you can see that the second floor soffit/ gutter line is absent exploiting the second floor of these structures.) It often helps when creating a dormer, as I have done, to also set the face of the second floor wall back from the exterior face of the floor below by some distance. This isn't always possible and can often times create a structural dilemma, but when it is executed well it too minimizes the impact of the second floor soffit.

I would now like to address the size and length of the dormers involved in this design. The dormer on the east elevation extends less than ¾ of the length of the roof, while the west facing dormer has been designed so that both the north and south ends of the dormer retreat back from the center portion that has windows placed within it. While this design move is not always possible, it has in this case, prevented a long continuous second floor wall. In comparison, some of the previously approved and constructed garages shown in my attached photos, again some of them mine, do not have any relief in the dormer wall and in a few cases have a dormer wall that sits directly above the wall below creating a more prominent second floor. Perhaps, these examples lean more in the direction of your "2-story impression"?
It should also be understood, that the bearing height of my proposed dormer(s) has been reduced to 7 feet above the second floor and not the traditional 8 foot ceiling height. I have designed it like this to allow for a more minimal exterior exposure of the second floor wall height which also results in a 3/12 roof pitch on the dormer. This is a historically common roof pitch seen on dormers and porch roofs of both hundreds of older homes and accessory structures here in Bexley as well as thoughtfully designed new structures in other communities. This attention to roof slope successfully minimizes the scale of the second floor dormer while at the same time often blends the dormer roof with the main roof in a pleasing way.

I have done residential architecture in this community for 23 years now and I have been involved in over 300 Bexley homes. Over the years, I have also been a part of 30+ accessory structures in Bexley alone; from garages to pool houses to garden pavilions, some of which have occurred since the more efficient

review process has been in effect. In doing so, I have a become very familiar with the design/ zoning criteria that is expected with these ancillary structures. However, this is the first time, even though I have checked all the boxes, a project has to clarified beyond the Staff review and I don't understand why.

I am not looking to be involved in a project that negatively impacts a property or a neighboring property. I take a lot of pride in the sensitive placement and attention to detail on all of my projects. I strive hard to solve the various residential "puzzles" that I encounter in a way that doesn't require a variance. Clients do not always agree with my desire to be reluctant to ask for a variance, but at the end of the day I have to remember that all I can do is offer advice. It is their home and not mine.

I will be submitting this letter and my drawings, paying the required fee and presenting to the Board as requested so that my clients project can move along. Hopefully, I will receive approval for this project and we can then get on with building this pleasant structure that will not only add to the value to my client's property and provide their family with an amenity that is necessary to their lifestyle, but it will also be a positive addition to the urban fabric of our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Pete Foster
Pete Foster Residential Design, LLC