

July 18, 2017

Dear Board of Adjustments Members,

We are writing to request two variances related to setback requirements as the residents of 2555 Regatta Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33140. We recently completed a remodel to our home to add a second story. We lived in the house for four years prior to the remodel and during that time, we continuously had problems maintaining the grass in the front and rear yards. The grass in the front yard between our house and hedge was shaded the majority of the day, and had a fungus that we could not get rid of despite repeated fungicide treatments. The grass in the side yard was either always shaded in the area between our hedge and house and had a hard time growing, requiring weekly nutrient and chemical treatments, or received too much sun between the house and pool and would burn. Therefore, upon completion of construction, we replaced the grass damaged by construction with synthetic grass to solve for those problems. We researched synthetic grass with color variation (shades of green and brown) and chose a high-quality grass that offers the following added benefits: exceptional drainage (better than traditional dirt and sod), no watering necessary, no chemicals or pesticides required that leach into our water supply, no carbon dioxide emissions from lawn mowers, and no unsightly brown patches. The synthetic grass also includes something called Hydrocool that absorbs water or dew and slowly releases the water particles to self-cool during the day, which reduces the heat factor.

Additionally, we intend to install a playground on top of the synthetic grass. When we moved into our house in 2010 there was a playground in the rear yard on top of dirt, as no grass would grow due to the constant shade. The synthetic grass will allow us to have a plush grassy covering, rather than dirt, on which our kids will be able to run and play.

As the City of Miami Beach does not consider synthetic grass to be "sodded or landscaped pervious open space", we are requesting the variances with respect to 142-106(1)d and 142-106(3), as it relates to "at least 70 percent of the required rear yard shall be sodded or landscaped pervious open space, to permit the use of synthetic grass in our rear and front yard areas. We installed the grass to provide a pesticide and fungicide free grassy area for our children to play outside, and we were unaware of the City's interpretation of the Code to exclude synthetic grass as sodded or landscape material. We did not materially increase the footprint of our house in the remodel and are seeking to replace the grass that previously existed with a grass material that is able to withstand the conditions on our lot (too much shade in parts and too much sun in others) so that we have grassy open areas for our children to play.

We presented the planned variance to our neighbors and received approvals from all. Additionally, the synthetic grass in the front yard sits behind a 12-foot high hedge that blocks the view from the street. We also plan to add two more ficus plants to close the gap between the driveway and the existing hedge, so that the entire view of the synthetic grass in the front yard is blocked from the street.

We truly appreciate your time and consideration. This variance will make a huge difference in the use of our yard area, permitting us to maintain usable grass free of chemicals and pesticides for our children to play on for decades.

Sincerely,



Bram and Lara Hechtkopf