

Camp Bullis Fence summary blast #2

Several months ago, a non-binding opinion poll was conducted via blast email. (If you are a property owner in Crownridge and are not currently signed up to receive blast email, we strongly encourage you to do so.) Following are several questions and issues that were raised by homeowners. (Their exact wording is used to minimize misinterpretation.) The answers are provided by the contractor who will be constructing the wall.

Homeowner's comments/question: The cut limestone fence is our choice by far. However, if these fences ever do get approved, the grout that is used needs to be specified to be a kind that will not leech the grey grout color on to the lighter color limestone. The leeching grey staining from the grout will make a lovely limestone fence look poorly quickly. Someone may need to research to see what kind of grout was used in similar walls that have been put up that have not issue over time. I think that would be a very important detail to get right. (KLM)

Per Contractor: the grout will not be an issue. No gray mortar would be used. It will be a buff colored Lehig white masonry cement and buff colored sand. Most contractors do not use this because it is more expensive. Once it is cured (generally one day), it will not leach.

It could leech if it is wet and it rained while it was wet. Therefore, we do not work during rain. If it is a light drizzle, it's ok to work. If it is wet outside, it does not cure fast enough and the wall could shift if the wall were too high; the wall supports itself. After 1.5 hours, there should be no leeching; 90% of it should be cured.

Homeowner's comments/question: I preferred the cut limestone for two reasons. First, if one imagines the overall appearance of the neighborhood from Camp Bullis Road, the review is, on many days, very bright and cheery. The bright sun shining on the median landscaping and the light colors of the houses contribute to this appearance. I believe that the lighter colors in the limestone fence version would reflect the sun in the same way and create a more cohesive look. Second, notice the large amounts of mortar associated with the Pena blend. Mortar deteriorates more quickly than the stone, of course, particularly with the force of pressure washing. I am genuinely concerned that the mortar may erode unduly with pressure washing. Of course, such a fence could be built with considerably less mortar. However, that would require greater amounts of labor and skill to cut the stones to a more exact fit. The contractor under current consideration may or may not be capable of doing this. In any case, doing a more perfect job using this technique would likely cost more. I also have a concern about the cut limestone version. The color variation is very nicely done in the sample wall. However, we should keep in mind that the sample wall was built as a marketing exercise and is thus likely to be the very best work that we will see from this contractor. Consequently, I believe that the contractor's work should be closely monitored to ensure that the fence is built with the same quality as the samples. Regarding the cut limestone version, one of the characteristics that should be closely monitored is the consistency of the color variation of the limestone pieces, if that makes sense. In other words, we should not end up with a

gray fence that is essentially colorless, or with the color spread too far apart within areas of gray, or good color variation along some sections of the fence and poor color variation along other sections of the fence. My consistent experience, from having lived 60 years on the planet, is that it is a serious mistake to adopt the attitude (when working with any contractor) that the contractor is a "professional" and so all will be well. Contract specifics, contract specifics, contract specifics; and then oversight, oversight, oversight! One other question that came to mind, as I cannot remember from my quick look at the samples, is the depth of the limestone pieces. So, for example, the limestone pieces on either side of the fence could be razor thin, with the depth between such limestone "façades" filled with cement. In that case, we would not have a limestone fence but rather a cement fence with a limestone façade. On the other extreme, the limestone pieces on each side of the fence could touch each other in the middle. In that case, we would have a practically solid limestone fence with small amounts of mortar to hold the limestone pieces in place. Other variations could have various depths of limestone and cement within the fence. The more limestone, the more substantial the fence, of course. This too is a parameter that should be agreed to in the contract and should be closely monitored.

I am assuming, again from not having looked at the samples recently, that the cut limestone *is* actually natural limestone and not some artificially fabricated material. I have seen the latter at the building supply stores, and some of it looks very real. I do not believe that this is the case, but for the record, ***I would be adamantly opposed to spending this kind of money on artificial stone.*** (BEH)

Per Contractor: The homeowner is correct. There should be oversight to any project. I welcome oversight. Inspections are welcomed. Random inspections by homeowners are discouraged secondary to safety concerns, e.g., exposure to nails. Arrangements can be made; I am happy for homeowners to come directly to me and we can walk together.

The limestone is pre-cut. The color patterns will match those of the sample wall; the limestone that is delivered will have the same percentage of each color delivered as is in the sample wall. Therefore we have no choice, so to speak, to have a consistent color match to the sample wall.

The fence will be double-sided; the stone is a natural product and therefore the thickness will vary. The stone will be 3.5-5 inches thick. The wall itself will be 10" thick; there will be some gap so some of the stones will tie the wall together, i.e., 10" thick stone. This tying the wall together is the usual procedure for us. If some of the stone is too thin, it is put aside and the supplier will credit it. It is harder to use 2" stone than 4" for a consistent fit. The tie-in, the cap, and the foundation hold the wall together. Even with the tie-in, there is some shift; it is still a flexible structure.

Homeowner's comments/question: In regards to power washing, what issues should concern us? Can we expect the appearance of the stone fence to stay clean?

Per Contractor: If power washing is done correctly, there are no issues. Using the proper nozzles is important. A fine nozzle is bad and can etch the stone. Use plain water first then a good commercial detergent, then power wash. Do not use a

concentrated stream. A stream about 4 inches across is fine; there should be no issues with mortar failure.

If the stone fence is under a tree with falling leaves and other debris or if the stone fence stays wet, there will be discoloration of the fence. My 10 year old home is made with stone; only a couple of areas have needed cleaning during this time.

I can do the power washing; at the same time, I could inspect and address any problems or damage to the wall. I have my own equipment (600 gallon tank). Ideally, there would be a near-by water source to minimize travel expense.

Homeowner's comments/question: Random Pena Blend – Appears to be the same as existing columns. Graffiti, dirt, iron stain, green mold, etc. won't show as well on the Random Pena Blend. (CPF)

Per Contractor: Punks can graffiti anything. They simply change the paint color so their graffiti shows up on the fence. In my experience, the gray holds onto more dirt. That's how you get the color in the rock in the first place. Limestone does not want to react with the materials in the ground; the orange stone does have iron in it—that's what gives it its color. Overall, limestone will react less with dirt, mold, iron, etc than the Pena blend. Light colored stone tends to stay light colored. To keep the stone fence consistent in its look, it is important to remove nearby trees and shrubs. If the wall stays dry, it will stay clean. The leaves and mold and wetness are what discolor a stone wall. The dust is washed off with the rain.

Homeowner's comments/question: If other homeowners asked you to perform work for them while you are here in our neighborhood with your equipment, can you?

Per Contractor: This Camp Bullis Rd. stone fence is a big project with lots of exposure; it's the best ad I'd have with others being able to view my work. Homeowners can receive a better price for their own personal projects if they contracted with me and the work performed while my equipment/logistics are on-site. There is a potential I could give Crownridge a slightly better price on the whole project IF I received "enough" additional work from others at the time.

I want everyone to be comfortable with me and with the project. If not, it is hard to satisfy with so many reservations and issues blown out of proportion.