

MELROSE BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING MINUTES
Public Hearing
Wednesday, January 27, 2021
7:45 p.m.
Remote Meeting

Present:

Rita Mercado, *Chair*
Megan Carriere, *Associate*
Curtis Dooling, II
Katherine Moore
David Roache
Bryan Thorp

Absent:

Julianna Hanlon, *Associate*

Staff Present: Denise Gaffey, Director & City Planner, Lori Massa, Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 pm.

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Melrose Zoning Board of Appeals was conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting were found on the City of Melrose's website, at www.cityofmelrose.org/remote-meetings. No in-person attendance of members of the public was permitted, but every effort was made to ensure that the public could adequately access the proceedings in real time, or in the event that we are unable to do so, on the mmtv3.org website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings was posted as soon as possible after the meeting. A link was also available on www.cityofmelrose.org.

Application materials were posted to the City's website: www.cityofmelrose.org/board-appeals.

CASES BEFORE THE BOARD

20 031 – 47 Orient Avenue

The appeal of Thomas & Elizabeth Hanover for Variances from §235-18 & -19 of the Zoning Ordinance for side yard setback for a deck on the single-family house at 47 Orient Ave, Melrose, MA, on a lot of land containing 6,100 sf and shown on Assessor's Map E9 0 42.

Mr. Hanover submitted a written request to continue the case to have more time to work on a proposed screening for the deck.

By roll call the Board voted, 5-0, with Curtis Dooling recused, to grant the continuance request to February 24, 2021.

Documents: Email from Mr. Hanover dated January 26, 2021

21 003 – 12-16 Essex Street

The application of Carroll Essex LLC for a Comprehensive Permit pursuant to M.G.L. c.40B, s. 21 for an approx. 17,900 nsf, 4-story mixed-use building with approx. 1,600 sf of commercial space, 24 residential units, of which six will be affordable as is required and regulated under the law, and 10 parking spaces at 12-16 Essex Street, Melrose, MA, on a lot of land containing 5,777 sf and shown on Assessor's Map C7 0 72. Exemptions per statute are claimed for: Melrose Zoning Ordinance §235-18 & -19 for lot frontage/width, floor area ratio, and open space, §235-32 for off-street parking spaces & §235-16.1 site plan review; Charter and Administrative Code of the City of Melrose §131-3 Historic District Commission.

The Applicant team including Attorney Robert Bell, Architect Timothy Johnson, Mark Carroll, John Carroll, and Scott Filleul of CarrollCo appeared remotely to present the case.

Ms. Mercado explained how this is a comprehensive permit application and she explained the process.

Attorney Bell gave a presentation on the history of the site and the scale of the buildings downtown. He discussed the findings for a comprehensive permit which are based on the local need for affordable housing. He explained the differences between the current proposal and the one that the Planning Board approved in 2019. He mentioned that most downtown properties are exempt from providing parking but this property is not because it technically does not abut a municipal parking lot.

Mr. Carroll mentioned the other properties that he has redeveloped in Melrose through reuse and new construction. He will control and manage the proposed site as an asset. He said that the intersection of Main Street and Essex Street is a critical location and this proposal will bring the downtown energy and activity to Essex Street.

Mr. Johnson explained the proposed site and building plans and how the design is respectful of the neighborhood.

Ms. Gaffey provided positive comments about the proposal. They included: voicing Mayor Brodeur's support; the zoning regulations support the proposed use; the proposal is consistent with the City's Master Plan; the development has intrinsic sustainability features; the city fought off a 40B project that was in a remote part of the City but this proposal is in an appropriate location for density; and the affordable housing units are desirable.

Board members discussed the following:

- There are no intended uses for the roof. The roof access is for maintenance for the HVAC units. There could be solar panels on the roof in the future.
- Heat pumps and all electric energy should be considered for the apartments. The commercial spaces will need to use gas. Mr. Carroll said that if they have gas meters for the apartments he believes that he would be allowed to put them inside of the building because it is a local historic district.
- A passive house feasibility study should be considered for the building. There are state funds to cover the cost of the study.
- It is a nice feature that almost all of the units have a balcony for outdoor space. Mr. Johnson said that a previous iteration of the plans had a green roof on the lower level but this was removed.

- There are only a few windows in the back of the building. This was to provide privacy for the roof deck at 530 Main Street. A portion of the building was cut back to allow for balconies and windows.
- The northwest façade has no openings because it is a party wall. Mr. Johnson said that he will study what they can do with the 4 by 8 fiber cement panels in terms of color and patterns to make it more interesting.
- There will trash and recycling trucks that will back down the alley as they do today. They may need to pickup twice per week.
- Having bicycle storage in the basement is inconvenient and will be a disservice to the residents.
- The heated driveway will use a lot of energy.
- The driveway will be stamped asphalt. It will end at the sidewalk and not cross over the sidewalk due to liability concerns.

Board members requested the following information:

- Study alternative façade design options for northwest and rear façades – improve articulation.
- Address architectural comments raised about the building’s plain appearance. The base could be emphasized and the top edge could use some detail. The massing looks appropriate.
- Confirm vehicle maneuverability entering and exiting from the rear covered garage with turning radii.
- The applicant should clarify how the project design, including the parking garage (no handicapped space) meets the requirements of 521 CMR (Mass Architectural Access Board regulations).
- Determine if there needs to be an agreement or change to the easement to allow for the ability to build a permanent structure in the easement and ensure that trash storage will be permissible for 12-16 Essex Street for the life of the building.
- Take a closer look at what is needed for solar panels in terms of roof load and appearance.
- Provide opaque screening and sound mitigation for the HVAC units.
- Provide a brief explanation of the traffic generation from a Traffic Engineer to satisfy the Traffic Study requirement in the Comprehensive Permit Rules. A full traffic study is not needed because there are so few parking spaces and generated trips.
- Improve quantity and at-grade accessibility of bike storage.
- “Caution” sign is urban. Details on how this will operate.
- There will likely need to be approval from the City Council for the bay projecting over sidewalk.
- Provide a response to the requests cited by the Melrose Historical Commission and comment on whether any existing building materials might be repurposed.

One person, Finn McSweeney of 160 W Wyoming Avenue, spoke in support of the proposal on behalf of the Melrose Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee. He said that the Committee did not take a position on the prior proposal at this site but is supportive of the current proposal, which has more value and a higher use of the land with more housing and less parking spaces. This type of housing is needed in Melrose. The applicant should consider having one or more e-bikes for the residents and having bike storage in the garage.

The Board received three letters of support from the Melrose Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee, Doug Pippy of 354 Upham Street, and Amanda Humphrey of Greywood Estates Condo Association. The Board also received a letter from the Melrose Historical Commission that included recommendations and requests.

The Board will schedule a site visit at 11am or noon on a weekday before the next public hearing. The date and time will be posted as is required.

Documents: Application Materials, case 21-003

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting is set for February 10, 2021.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00pm.