

**MELROSE BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING MINUTES
Public Hearing
Wednesday, March 22, 2023
7:30 p.m.
Remote Meeting**

Present:

Megan Carriere, *Associate*
Rita Mercado, *Chair*
Katherine Moore
Benjamin Rosenberg
Bryan Thorp

Absent:

Curtis Dooling, II

Staff Present: Maya Noviski, Clerk; Lori Massa, Senior Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

Pursuant to An Act Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency signed by Governor Baker on July 16, 2022, this meeting was be conducted via remote participation. 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

23 003 – 28 Greenwood Street

The application of Greenwood Development LLC for a Comprehensive Permit pursuant to M.G.L. c.40B, s. 21 to construct an approximately 11,923 sq. ft., 5-story building with 38 residential units and convert the existing 2.5 story building into two residential units with a 1,500 sq. ft. addition and additional half-story, and 40 parking spaces on three adjacent parcels of land at 0, 28, and 54 Greenwood Street, Melrose, MA with a lot area containing 39,780 sf and shown on Assessor's Maps B13 0 81, B13 0 82, and B13 0 83. Ten of the project's units will be affordable as is required and regulated under the law. See application for exemptions claimed.

Jesse Schomer, Attorney, appeared before the Board to present the case along with the development team including: Laura & Sean Szekely, Owners & Developers; Rich Williams,

Civil Engineer; Dan Mills, Traffic Engineer; Andrew Blaisdell, Geotechnical Engineer; and David O'Sullivan, Architect.

Mr. Schomer described the context of the neighborhood, gave a high level description of the proposed project that includes 40 residential units, and an overview of MGL c.40B permitting. Some details include that six new street trees are proposed. There will be amenities for the residents in the rear yard and a rooftop deck towards Greenwood Street. There will be one parking space per unit; 25 spaces will be located in a garage and the remainder will be in the front of the multifamily building and 28 Greenwood St. There will be secure bicycle parking within the garage.

Mr. and Ms. Szekely described their experience in development of housing; which has included sites that required blasting of rock. Ms. Szekely commented that they plan to own and manage the property.

Mr. O'Sullivan described the architectural plans. The garage is planned for the first floor with a trash room, bicycle room and a lobby, which will have space for packages. He noted that for trash pickup, dumpsters will be rolled out of the garage and onto the sidewalk along Greenwood St. The backyard is at the level of the second floor and there will be a door at the back of the building to access the yard. The building includes an elevator and 38 one-, two- and three-bedroom units. Most of the units have balconies. He also noted that the Applicant is exploring locating solar panels on the roof and creating green roofs on the fourth and fifth floors. The building is intended to be modern and contemporary and materials include clapboard siding, double hung windows, and a brick base. Mr. O'Sullivan also explained that the existing house will be preserved, and a rear addition will be added.

Mr. Williams described the land alterations, the site plan and stormwater plan. He also provided an overview of the site's varying elevations noting that the front of the site is at a 97 ft. grade and the back has an average of a 160 ft. grade that ranges between 154 ft. and 170 ft. He reviewed the difference ledge faces at the left and middle of the site which are 50 ft. and 40 ft., respectively. He explained that there are existing curb cuts in front of 54 Greenwood St. and 0 Greenwood St. and they will add more curb cuts for the outdoor parking spaces. In addition to residents being able to access the backyard from the building's interior, there will be an exterior walkway around the building, as well.

A member asked if test pits were done, and Mr. Williams explained that there is bedrock close to the surface in the back of the site and soil in the front of the site as deep as 9 ft. from the surface. However, the test pit information is in the submitted stormwater report. He noted that the project requires a fair amount of ledge removal and a catchment area with a swale will provide a safe place if rocks fall and for runoff from the wall to be captured. There will be two stormwater chambers: one in the rear and one in the front. The rear stormwater chamber is only for roof runoff and will not collect runoff from the ledge wall. The rear chamber is designed to collect and slow the flow of stormwater to the front chamber, which is designed for infiltration. One Board Member asked about the rate of infiltration in the front of the site.

The chambers are roughly 6 feet deep below the surface and the system is sized for the 100 year storm. All of the runoff from the site currently goes to Greenwood Street. With the proposed system the model shows that there will be a reduction in flow for all modeled storms. The elevator pit will be about 4' below the garage floor. The building will be slab on grade. The ground water is running on top of the ledge so its depth varies.

Mr. Mills explained the traffic study, which strictly reviewed traffic in front of the property. He explained that the development will increase the weekday morning traffic by 3% and the weekday afternoon traffic by 3.6%. The report also recommended Transportation Demand Management (TDM) practices including adding public transportation information, pedestrian connections, secure covered bike parking, unbundled parking, and EV charging stations. The Developer has agreed to implement all of these. Members requested that the study include the intersection of Greenwood Street and Franklin Street.

Mr. Blaisdell spoke about the blasting impacts and rock slope stability. Members asked about the extent of the earth removal and if this is the final report since it seems preliminary. They are not planning on drilling borings to do more exploratory work. Mr. Blaisdell explained that the report includes recommendations based on their findings and that GZA plans to monitor vibrations during blasting. Mr. Blaisdell said that the rock wall will be close to vertical. There will be a passive wire mesh over the rock so that small pieces of rock will fall down and not outward with future erosion. There will be a catchment area and barrier at the bottom of the wall.

A member asked if there are any concerns with the proximity to the MBTA Commuter Rail tracks and why they used a 250 foot radius for the pre-blast survey, which includes 37 residences. Mr. Blaisdell did not have a concern about the proximity to the tracks and 250 feet is the required distance in the regulations. They can discuss doing more than is required. He explained that the 37 residences will be offered a pre-blast survey which will involve a video and photos for documentation of both the interior and exterior of the dwelling. It will take approximately an hour for each property. The information is not shared with anyone except for the homeowner. This is the way to determine if new issues arise due to construction. A member asked what will happen if there is an existing issue but it is worsen as a result of the blasting. The answer seemed to depend on this situation and the quality of the survey.

Mr. Blaisdell provided detailed information on blasting and vibrations. There are 80 individual blasts anticipated with one per day on average. Prior to a blast there will be a warning signal and the Melrose Fire Department will be present during blasting. Each blast will be monitored and will produce a detailed report. He showed a picture of a finished wall and how the wire mesh will attach to it.

The development team's presentations were requested to be submitted for the file.

Ms. Mercado opened the public comment portion of the meeting. She mentioned that the Board received 45 letters with concerns, 2 voicemails, and a video showing the street along Greenwood Street. The topics of the correspondence included concerns regarding erosion control, ledge and blasting, loss of trees, the abutting conservation land, size and density of the building, traffic,

inadequate parking, strain on public utilities, too many variances, historical structures nearby, drainage, flooding, noise pollution, and construction impacts.

The following people spoke during the meeting:

- David Roache, 8 Prescott Street, is in support of dense residential development; however, he finds that this is a tough location with the blasting of ledge and flooding. He mentioned that peer review of the stormwater calculations is warranted as the infiltration calculation is not typical and may be off. He did not think that the proposal will produce a lot of traffic; however, deliveries of goods and ride-share services should be considered. There is no service parking planned for the building.
- Dan Hill, Attorney hired by neighbors, stated that peer review is critical and should be done soon for geotechnical, traffic and stormwater reports. A site section from Clifton Park should be provided with a 3-D model. The HVAC air compressors will be at the same level of the backyards of the houses on Clifton Park. They will have a noise impact and a noise evaluation should be provided. The Greenwood Street and Franklin Street intersection is not included in the traffic study and should be. He questioned whether Melrose meets the 1.5% land area threshold for affordable housing.
- Jonathan Olsen, 46 Clifton Park, is concerned that his foundation will shake and he works from home and has children in his house. He also has a retaining wall that may be impacted by the blasting. Foundations of houses in the neighborhood were built into the ledge that will be blasting. We have 100 year storms often. Flooding in the area will be a problem for neighbors but also for people living in this building. The development will be like an echo-chamber for the residents of the building. Erosion is a huge concern. The GZA report is preliminary so perhaps the 180 day clock has not started because the application is not complete.
- Manjula Karamcheti, Ward 1 City Councilor, voted for the Housing Production Plan; however, she has concerns about the size and scope of the project. The safety and security of the residents should be the top priority. She has a fear for the impacts to the residents on Clifton Park and flooding. If we need mesh to hold back rock perhaps this is not a location for housing. The project needs 33 waivers and rules usually exist for a reason.
- Anthony Pappalardo, 37 Greenwood Street, discussed the parking and existing traffic that backs up to his house.
- Erin Kirby, 39 Clifton Park, offered for members to access her property to see the perspective of the project from behind the site.
- Veronika Tuckerova, 569 Franklin Street, discussed how the loss of trees and the impact to the environment and aesthetics was not addressed.

Board members discussed additional information that they would like to see including:

- Additional information regarding the existing soil conditions, the test pit logs, and the amount of earth removal is warranted. GZA is a reputable firm however, blasting is an inexact science.
- Acoustical information should be provided for the rooftop mechanical equipment.

- There should be screening of the rooftop units and the screen should be factored into the analysis of sound impacts.
- A construction management plan would be helpful and is part of the application material checklist.
- The Traffic Study should be updated to include information on where guests will park and the LOS impact to the Greenwood Street and Franklin Street intersection including additional traffic projected for development projects in the pipeline. Attorney Schomer agreed to look into if these items could be added to the study.
- A site section in at least three locations and a cut and fill analysis. The sections should include a view including the houses on Clifton Park to understand the quantity of material that will be removed. If a blasting company has been chosen it would be helpful to hear directly from them about rock removal.

Attorney Schomer stated that a full-service engineering firm can look at the functionality of the site and additionally that the City's Engineering Department is reviewing the plans. He said that all of the plans are preliminary; however, they can provide additional information that is available.

A member asked why there was a change in the number of units in the proposal. Attorney Schomer said that it was happenstance that the abutting property owner approached the developer with an option to purchase that property, which allowed the proposal to expand. A member asked if a study has been conducted regarding the proposed future solar panels on the building. The Architect stated that it is the intention to provide capacity for solar panels and that it will likely be required by the new energy code. It was also acknowledged that the proforma can only be reviewed after conditions are placed on the project.

The Board took a vote related to the retention of peer review services to address stormwater, geotechnical analysis, and other engineering related issues. By roll call all voted in favor. None were opposed.

The Board discussed scheduling a site visit and decided on Saturday, April 8 at 9am. Attorney Schomer said that since the site is not very accessible and members of the Board and the public will likely stay on the sidewalk.

By roll call the Board voted, 5-0, to continue the case to April 26, 2023.

Documents: ZBA Application 23-003
Memo from OPCD regarding Peer Review & Site Visit

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 pm.