

**MELROSE BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING MINUTES
Public Hearing
Wednesday, June 5, 2024
7:30 p.m.
Remote Meeting**

Present:

Daniel Gelormini
Benjamin Rosenberg
Megan Carriere
Chris Coughlin
David Roache
Bryan Thorp

Absent:

Curtis B. Dooling, II

Staff Present: Denise Gaffey, City Planner, Lori Massa, Senior Planner & Maya Noviski, Assistant Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm.

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this meeting will 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

24 009 – 164 Essex Street

The application of Cedar Park Development LLC for a Comprehensive Permit pursuant to M.G.L. c.40B, s. 21 to construct an approximately 23,309 sq. ft., 5-story building with 76 residential units and 54 parking spaces at 164 Essex Street in Melrose on a lot containing 32,148 sf and shown on Assessor's Map C8 0 4. Nineteen of the project's units will be affordable as is required and regulated under the law.

Jesse Schomer, Attorney, Sean and Laura Szekely, Applicants, Donnie Garrity, Architect, and Rich Williams, Engineer, appeared before the Board to present the case. Attorney Schomer provided an overview of the updated project materials. He explained that the development team

met with Elena Proakis-Ellis, Director of Public Works and Chair of the Traffic Commission, who reviewed the proposed changes to the right-of-way and did not have any concerns about the proposed changes. The Applicants are willing to go before the Traffic Commission to receive final approval if the Board approves the project.

Attorney Schomer reviewed the submitted turning movement models for the two parking spaces at the southern end of the building and the hammerhead spaces at the back of the garage. The models show that access and egress is feasible, although multiple turning movements will be required to exit the hammerhead spaces. He noted that if the applicants acquire the rights to use the MBTA land behind the property, the hammerhead spaces will be reconfigured. In response to the Board's comments about the impracticality of pervious pavement, he noted that the proposed amount is minimal, but the Applicants intend to clean and maintain those areas regularly. He clarified that the walkways will be permeable pavers and the public sidewalk will be concrete.

In response to the Board's questions about snow removal, move-ins, deliveries and trash pickup, Attorney Schomer reviewed the information in the Operations and Management Plan. He explained that while there are minimal outdoor areas that would require snow removal, there are designated on-site storage locations and during extreme weather events, snow will be taken offsite. Tenants with outdoor parking spaces will be responsible for clearing their own spaces.

During move-in, residents will be required to coordinate with management and will be restricted to using trucks no larger than 20 ft. Attorney Schomer explained that move-in trucks can enter the garage and unload by the door leading to the building or use the short term loading zone along the street. He clarified that the garage will only have the 20 ft. clearance for the front portion and not the southern wing. The trash room will be able to accommodate three, four-yard containers and two, 96 gallon barrels; the collection frequency has yet to be determined. Three short-term parking spaces for visitors and guests will be provided inside the garage and rideshare and delivery services will use the on-street loading zone.

Attorney Schomer also highlighted information outlined in the Construction Management Plan. He explained that it is expected that a crane will be needed for 20 days and they are exploring securing temporary rights to place the crane on abutting parking lots. The construction staging will take place on site and truck routes have been identified in the construction management plan. Attorney Schomer noted that the Applicants consulted with an Acoustical Engineer regarding potential echo effect from the building to abutters across the train tracks. The Engineer reported that the proposed materials are well-suited to mitigate possible reverberations. Attorney Schomer also noted that an easement already exists for the sidewalk on the property and the Applicant intends to continue allowing for the easement.

Revisions to the architectural plans include a redesigned façade along the rear and southern corner, the relocation of the roof deck from the north to the south, and the elimination of the vertical address sign. Murals will be added along the rear wall of the bicycle room to improve the streetscape and the Applicants are willing to commission a local artist to paint the transformer. Attorney Schomer noted that the final location of the transformer will be subject to National Grid's specific requirements, which are difficult to fully gauge at this point in the process.

Model specifications were provided for the HVAC equipment and based on their final placement and the location of the solar array; screening will be provided if needed. Specifications on the types of bicycle racks were also provided, and it was confirmed that the bicycle room will be able to accommodate the proposed design and allows for adequate maneuverability. The Applicants are also open to providing charging stations for electric bicycles.

The floor plans were updated to show the proposed location of the affordable units, which are subject to final approval by MassHousing. Attorney Schomer noted that the parking will be unbundled for all the units, including the affordable units. The Applicants also provided a diagram showing the heights of the surrounding buildings and the proposed project is about the same height as The Residence at Melrose Station, next door. Attorney Schomer noted that the Applicants discussed the proposed fire access path with the Fire Captain who did not have any comments or suggestions. They are also discussing access agreements with the abutting properties to facilitate access to the rear of the site.

Mr. Garrity elaborated on the architectural plans noting that the depth of the bike room increased to enhance maneuverability. He described the design of the building noting that the rear now consists of a variety of materials such as brick, fiber cement paneling with a board and batten look, and wood composite panels. This pattern was repeated along the southern portion of the front of the building to continue the texture and façade style. Balcony elements were also added on the southern corner of the building. One Member commented that the fiber cement paneling with a board and batten look may deteriorate faster than the other materials used. One Member commented that installing continuous insulation will be difficult given the building's undulations and number of windows proposed. One Member commented that installing continuous insulation will be difficult given the building's undulations and number of windows proposed.

Board Members discussed the southern corner of the building and recommended adding windows along the stairwell. Some of the other windows on the building's façade nearby could be removed if others are added at the stairwell. Board Members also recommended removing the hammerhead parking spaces. One Board Member commented that it is unreasonable to expect tenants to remove snow from their parking spaces. Board Members also requested additional information about the fire access plan including a swept analysis with approval from the City's Fire Captain.

Board Members asked about the plan for the fence along the rear of the property. Mr. Szekely explained that he prefers to install a solid fence, but he is waiting for the MBTA to confirm that that is acceptable. If the MBTA prefers a chain-link fence, they will install a solid fence in front of the chain-link if allowed to screen the building from the neighbors along the rear. It was clarified that the garage columns are correctly sized.

The Board received seven letters and two people from the public appeared to speak during the hearing including Bruce Carmichael at 121 Essex St. and Edward SanClemente representing 158 Essex St. Those in support noted:

- The location of the project, specifically that it is a transit-oriented development and close to many amenities
- The provision of additional housing units

- The project's boost to the City's economy
- The number of bicycle parking spaces and the location of the bike parking room on the ground floor with a repair station
- The striping of the on-street parking space to enhance visibility

Concerns included:

- The design of the garage
- Lack of green space and removal of street trees
- Design of street lights
- The impact of the project on neighboring parking areas during and after construction
- Lack of detail about dust control during construction
- Hours of construction
- The size and scale of the building
- Fire access plan
- The number of parking spaces

By roll call the Board voted 5-0, to grant a continuance to June 26, 2024. Voting Members included David Roache, Bryan Thorp, Benjamin Rosenberg, Chris Coughlin, and Megan Carriere.

OTHER BUSINESS

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Thorp made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from May 15, 2024. Ms. Carriere seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2024 and subsequent meeting will be on June 26, 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.