

MELROSE BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING MINUTES
Public Hearing
Wednesday, November 13, 2024
7:30 p.m.
Remote Meeting

Present:

Jeffery Ugino
Benjamin Rosenberg
Bryan Thorp
Chris Coughlin
Daniel Gelormini

Absent: David Roache

Staff Present: Maya Noviski, Senior Planner & Adam Forrester, Assistant Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 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

24 019 – 109 West Foster Street

The appeal of Brendan Cunningham for a Special Permit under §235-17 of the Zoning Ordinance and under §235-5.2 of the proposed Zoning Ordinance for single-family use to convert the existing office building to a single-family house at 109 West Foster Street in Melrose on a lot consisting of 3,990 sf and shown on Assessor's Map C7 0 45.

Robert Bell, Attorney, and Brendan Cunningham, Applicant, appeared before the board to present the case. Information regarding the hearing and the Board's discussion regarding the proposal and findings are documented in the decision for the case.

By roll call the Board voted 5-0, to grant the request to convert the existing office building to a single-family house. Voting Members included Benjamin Rosenberg, Jeffery Ugino, Chris Coughlin, Bryan Thorp, and Daniel Gelormini.

24 020 – 222 West Wyoming Avenue

The appeal of Michael & Kathleen Nelson for a Variance from §235-18 and -19 of the Zoning Ordinance and from §235-6.2 of the proposed Zoning Ordinance to construct a two-story addition in the front yard setback on the single-family house at 222 West Wyoming Avenue in Melrose on a lot consisting of 5,500 sf and shown on Assessor's Map A7 0 135.

Michael and Kathleen Nelson, Applicants, and Jenna Ellison, Architect, appeared before the Board to present the case. Ms. Nelson provided an overview of the project, which includes constructing a two-story addition in the front yard setback. The first floor will consist of a mudroom and office space, and on the second floor, the existing bedrooms will be extended, and a second bathroom will be added. She noted that the house currently only has one bathroom for five people and her children share a bedroom so the extension will allow the bedroom to be more functional and comfortable. She also noted that she and her husband have hybrid work schedules, and the office will provide a dedicated workspace where none currently exists.

Ms. Ellison shared the design plans. She explained that the addition would maintain the same setback as the existing front porch. She noted that the design is in line with the neighborhood context and the abutters on the left and the right have enclosed porches with similar front yard setbacks.

Board Members wondered about the existing and proposed setbacks for the front stairs and Ms. Ellison explained that the setbacks are approximately 14 ft. and 10.5 ft., respectively. One Board Member wondered if one continuous wall is proposed from the first to the second floor and Ms. Ellison confirmed that it is. Board Members discussed the design of the addition. One Member noted that for many of the surrounding houses with front additions, the second story is stepped back and asked if Ms. Ellison considered this approach. Ms. Ellison noted that she wanted to minimize the addition's encroachment into the front yard while expanding the livable area on the second floor.

One Board Member noted that the first floor of the addition could be pulled one foot closer to the front property line and the second story could be stepped back one foot so the second story would read more like a dormer. Members agreed that having the addition encroach one foot into the front yard setback would not negatively impact the streetscape since many of the surrounding houses appear closer to the sidewalk than Nelson's house. Some Board Members agreed that staggering the first and second story would keep with the rhythm of the street and enhance the pedestrian experience, while others were not bothered by the current design.

Board Members wondered if any changes were being proposed to the back of the house. Ms. Ellison explained that the Applicant considered building an addition above the existing sunroom but it required structural work, so they preferred an addition in the proposed location. Additionally, there is a fence that extends from the rear of the house, in line with the existing garage, that separates the backyard from the shared driveway on the right so there is limited available space.

Finn McSweeney of 160 West Wyoming Ave. appeared to speak in support of the project noting that the request is reasonable and in line with the neighborhood context and would not negatively impact the neighborhood.

The Applicant requested a continuance to the hearing on December 11, 2024, to consider design alternatives. One Board Member asked for additional photographs that illustrate the structure's front yard setback in comparison to those of surrounding houses.

By roll call the Board voted 5-0, to grant a continuance to the hearing on December 11, 2024. Voting Members included Benjamin Rosenberg, Jeffery Ugino, Chris Coughlin, Bryan Thorp, and Daniel Gelormini

Documents: ZBA Application 24-020

24 021 – 112 Lynde Street

The appeal of Tana Qoqi for a Variance from §235-18 and -19 of the Zoning Ordinance and from §235-6.2 of the proposed Zoning Ordinance to construct a staircase and second story deck in the side yard setback on the two-family house at 112 Lynde Street in Melrose on a lot consisting of 4,672 sf and shown on Assessor's Map D6 0 67.

Tana Qoqi, Applicant, appeared before the board to present the case. Information regarding the hearing and the Board's discussion regarding the proposal and findings are documented in the decision for the case.

By roll call the Board voted 5-0, to deny the request for a variance for side yard setback. Voting Members included Benjamin Rosenberg, Jeffery Ugino, Chris Coughlin, Bryan Thorp, and Daniel Gelormini.

Documents: ZBA Application 24-021

OTHER BUSINESS

Case 23 016—14-24 Tremont Street Request for Variance Extension

David Lucas, Attorney, submitted a written request to the Board of Appeals to grant a six month time extension for the Variances approved for 14-24 Tremont Street, as allowed under the Melrose Zoning Ordinance §235-3.2.4.C.

Attorney Lucas and Greg Young, Applicant, appeared before the Board to present the request. Attorney Lucas explained that due to the project's proximity to the MBTA railroad tracks, the Applicant required certain permits from the MBTA that have taken almost a year to obtain. He also noted that the City required a third-party review of the project to ensure that it complies with the building code and that it is in its final stages. Attorney Lucas informed Members that the Applicant is preparing to demolish the existing structures on the site in January or February.

By roll call vote, the Board voted, 5-0, to grant the requested time extension. Voting Members included Benjamin Rosenberg, Jeffery Ugino, Chris Coughlin, Bryan Thorp, and Daniel Gelormini.

Zoning Board of Appeals Draft Rules and Regulations & Updated Application Forms

Maya Noviski, Senior Planner, provided Board Members with a draft of the newly created Zoning Board of Appeals Rules and Regulations and shared updated versions of the standard Application Form and the Comprehensive Permit Application Form. She explained that the rules and regulations outline the Board's processes, including what forms of public comment the Board accepts and what members of the public can expect during public hearings, which will be helpful for both the Board and community members. She also noted that the application forms were edited for clarity and concision.

Members agreed to review the draft documents and provide comments before the next hearing.

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Coughlin made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from October 9, 2024. Mr. Rosenberg seconded the motion. By roll call the Board voted, 5-0, to approve the minutes. Voting Members included Benjamin Rosenberg, Jeffery Ugino, Chris Coughlin, Bryan Thorp, and Daniel Gelormini.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm