

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
Regular Meeting and Public Hearing
Monday, December 20, 2010
7:45 p.m.
Mayor's Conference Room

PRESENT: Richard Connolly, Bob Mercado, Anne DeSouza-Ward, Mike Cassavoy, Carla Francazio, Ed Cassidy, John Sadowski, and Jack Welch

Denise Gaffey, Planner, and Matt Hennigan, Assistant Planner, were present.

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 p.m. by Mr. Connolly.

MINUTES

Draft Regular Meeting and Public Hearing, November 22, 2010

Mr. Connolly offered minor revisions. Mr. Cassidy MADE a MOTION to accept the minutes as revised. Mr. Mercado SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed.

ASSENT CALENDAR

Case 10-022, 41 North Avenue, McLaughlin

Mr. Sadowski requested that the case be taken off the Assent Calendar for a brief discussion after which Mr. Sadowski MADE a MOTION to send an amended standard letter to the Board of Appeals that noted while the Board noted the potential maintenance and public safety issues generally associated with side setback encroachments of this nature, the members acknowledged the design efforts taken by the Applicant to reduce the massing of the dwelling by bringing down the roofline and setting back the addition inside the line of the existing structure. Mr. Cassidy SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed.

Document: ZBA application Case 10-022

SITE PLAN REVIEW

a) SP-09-001, Blueberry Hill Lane, Delta Fairfield Corporation (continued public hearing)

Mr. McAvoy requested a continuance to the January Planning Board Meeting to allow the Applicant's Engineer to integrate the changes to the plan. Mr. Mercado MADE a MOTION to continue the public hearing to January 24, 2011. Ms. DeSouza-Ward SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed.

b) SP-10-007, 99 & 111 Essex Street, Paul Wise (public hearing)

Mr. Connolly explained to the members of the public present the purview of the Site Plan Review process. Bob Bell, the representative for the Applicant, was in attendance with the Applicant, Paul Wise and his partners John Wise and Shawn Herlihy, and the Applicant's Architect, Peter Quinn, and the Applicant's Engineer, John Barrows, to present the application to the Board.

Mr. Bell provided the introduction for the application. Mr. Bell noted that the existing commercial building has been neglected over the years and is currently suffering from a dwindling tenancy. (The building is presently half occupied.) Mr. Bell stated that the roof is on verge of failure. Mr. Bell noted that the property has been on the market for three years without any success. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant is the ideal developer for the site who will be able to convert the troubled property into a valuable asset for the neighborhood. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant has the wherewithal for the project to be successful. Paul Wise introduced himself and shared his development credentials, which include four decades in the industry. John Wise introduced himself and explained that his involvement

would be focused on the day to day construction of the project. Mr. Herlihy noted that the project is fully funded and budgeted.

Mr. Quinn presented the details of the application from an architectural perspective. Mr. Quinn noted that the application is an adaptive reuse project, which is among the specialties of his firm. Mr. Quinn explained that the Applicant is proposing to convert the existing commercial building into 16 residential units (mostly one-bedrooms/studios with a few small two-bedrooms). Mr. Quinn stated that the redevelopment of the building to residences does not require expansion of the existing footprint of the structure. However, the application does involve the addition of approximately 1,100 square feet of loft and dormer areas, which will increase the total square footage of the building to approximately 21,100 square feet. Mr. Quinn stated that each unit will have a unique layout and will be designed to appeal to professionals who value convenient access to public transit. Several units will be multi-level. Mr. Quinn noted that the proposal involves restoration of the major architectural features of the building, including the tower, the entry porches, the stained glass detail, and the roof lines. Mr. Quinn stated that the project will also include the installation of new siding and trim as well as additional windows to facilitate the residential use. Mr. Quinn explained that the ceiling in the basement is 12' high, which will require the floor to be lifted in order to construct the proposed landscaped light wells. The basement level has been designed to include additional Work Space (i.e. available office space for tenants) as well as trash storage and bicycle storage rooms. Mr. Quinn stated that LEED certification will be sought for the project. Mr. Quinn explained that the parking plan includes provisions for thirteen (13) spaces on the adjacent parking lot. The parking lot will be screened by a 4' picket fence and landscaped where possible. Mr. Quinn noted that a Traffic Report will be provided. Site lighting is proposed to consist of a combination of wall mounted fixtures and bollard lighting. Mr. Quinn stated that the front courtyard area shall be attractively landscaped and designed to take advantage of the rainwater from the roof. In terms of handicap accessibility, Mr. Quinn stated the tower entryway will be equipped with a porch lift to provide access to the first floor. The first floor common areas shall all be made accessible. No elevator is included in the application.

Mr. Barrows detailed the engineering components of the application. Mr. Barrows stated that multiple domestic water and sewer connections currently service the building. The application includes provisions for the installation of single domestic water and sewer service connections in Essex Street. Mr. Barrows stated that the application also includes the installation of a fire suppression system, which will require putting in a separate water service. Mr. Barrows noted that the abandoned services will be cut and capped. In terms of drainage, Mr. Barrows stated that the existing gutter system is in disrepair, resulting in stormwater running off into adjacent properties. Mr. Barrows stated that the proposed roof top stormwater recharge system will feature the installation of a cultec system beneath the front courtyard area that shall facilitate infiltration into the groundwater. Mr. Barrows stated that the proposed stormwater recharge system is sized to accommodate the two year storm event.

Mr. Quinn added that the architectural plans include provisions for screening the roof top HVAC equipment. Mr. Quinn noted that the installation of skylights is also part of the application.

Mr. Bell expressed that the LEED program takes into consideration the quantity of parking provided. Mr. Bell stated that the intent is to provide a 1:1 ratio of units to parking spaces. Mr. Bell stated that the use of public transit will be encouraged. Mr. Bell emphasized that the Applicant has experience with developing similar projects of this nature. Mr. Bell cited a successful 12-unit project in Winchester that was developed by the Applicant with no parking. Mr. Bell noted that the Applicant is confident that arrangements are in place for the provision of additional parking spaces off site in the quantity to be found necessary by the Board to complement the 13 spaces provided on site. Mr. Bell stated the application is for apartments rather than condominiums. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant views the project to be a

long-term investment and intends to be a long term owner. Mr. Bell noted that the availability of financing for condominium projects is currently nonexistent. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant is confident that there is a market for high -end rental units. The Applicant intends to target to energy conscious, transportation conscious tenants. Mr. Bell suggested that the parking/traffic impact associated with the proposed residential use would be lower than the existing commercial use. Mr. Bell stated the marketplace does not want this building to be commercial and added that there is currently no market for condominiums. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant is the right buyer at the right time.

The members asked Mr. Quinn to clarify the number of two bedroom units proposed and were informed that six two bedroom units are included in the proposal.

Mr. Connolly opened the meeting for public comment.

Paul Cassidy, 100 Essex Street

Paul Cassidy inquired whether the building will be apartments or condominiums as well as whether the building will be managed on site. Paul Cassidy noted the possibility of crime still exists in association with high-end tenants. Paul Cassidy expressed concern regarding litter and the impact on the neighborhood of tenants moving-in and moving-out. Paul Cassidy questioned whether the sewer line on Essex Street will be able to sufficiently service the 16-unit proposal. Paul Cassidy inquired regarding what type of siding is proposed. Paul Cassidy stated that the traffic in the area is dangerous and suggested that the installation of a four-way stop is needed.

Tom Buske, 83 Essex Street

Mr. Buske expressed concern regarding the traffic and parking issues in the area.

Scott Darragh, 90 Essex Street

Mr. Darragh expressed concern regarding the caliber of people moving into a rental property. Mr. Darragh noted that he feels that the condominium market does exist and that the units would likely be attractive to young professionals. Mr. Darragh stated that he is in favor of fewer units and believes that condominiums are a better use. Mr. Darragh stated that the proposed volume of rental units is not good for Melrose.

Gail Hamm, 61 Willow Street

Ms. Hamm noted that she is in favor of condominiums. Ms. Hamm expressed that privacy is her main concern as her entire backyard is exposed to the building.

Bruce Carmichael, 121 Essex Street

Mr. Carmichael noted that his property abuts the parking lot. Mr. Carmichael encouraged the Applicant to meet with the neighborhood in a community setting. Mr. Carmichael stated that his concern is the parking lot as 13 cars seems excessive. Mr. Carmichael questioned whether the parking lot as proposed allows for the required turning radii. Mr. Carmichael noted that the egress issues associated with the parking lot and expressed support for the use of screening and landscaping. Mr. Carmichael cautioned that the limited number of spaces included in the proposal will result in more cars parking on the street. Mr. Carmichael expressed concern regarding the precedent that this project could set with respect to density in connection with the potential future redevelopment of the Deering Lumber site. Mr. Carmichael stated that he is in favor of a reduction in the number of units.

David Choate, 21 Vine Street

Mr. Choate expressed concern regarding exacerbating the on-street parking issues in the area. Mr. Choate questioned how guest parking would be accommodated. Mr. Choate expressed that he finds 16 units to be too much. Mr. Choate stated that the intersection has traffic issues.

Paul Cassidy, 100 Essex Street

Mr. Cassidy expressed concerns regarding guest parking.

Mr. Connolly asked the members for their comments. Mr. Cassavoy confirmed that the Applicant would require parking relief from the Board of Appeals as the Zoning Ordinance requires two spaces per unit and suggested that fewer units may be appropriate. Mr. Bell stated that additional parking will be contracted by the Applicant, however, he is not able to disclose the location of the spaces at this time. Mr. Bell stated that they are prepared to defend a 1:1 parking ratio, but he acknowledged that the parking will be at the Planning Board's and ZBA's discretion. Mr. Bell noted that reducing automobile usage is viewed as environmentally friendly from a LEED perspective. Mr. Cassavoy expressed that parking is difficult in the area and questioned whether there any fire access issues with respect to the building. Mr. Cassidy inquired regarding which LEED standard that the Applicant is targeting. Mr. Welch noted that the plans do not show access to the roof to allow for service of the HVAC equipment. The Applicant indicated that the HVAC system is proposed to be a four pipe system, currently being design by R.W. Sullivan.

Ms. DeSouza-Ward asked what additional zoning relief will be required. Mr. Bell explained that the Applicant is awaiting a comprehensive zoning determination from the Building Commissioner. Mr. Bell stated that at this point the Applicant knows that Site Plan Review is required. Mr. Bell explained that the Applicant initiated tonight's public hearing for transactional reasons related to the acquisition of the property prior to the Building Commissioner completing his final zoning analysis. Ms. Francazio noted that it is especially difficult to exit the existing parking lot. Ms. Francazio requested that the Applicant provided a dimensional site plan and questioned whether LEED certification makes sense for a rental project. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant is an investor who is in it for the long term. Mr. Bell noted that Applicant has the ability and the expertise to execute a successful LEED project. Mr. Wise added that the long term return is there for a LEED project of this nature and noted that the project site location provides a lot of LEED points. Mr. Bell emphasized the Applicants have experience with similar projects and stated that they will be investing a lot of their own funds into the project.

Mr. Sadowski agreed that there are parking issues associated with the application and confirmed that three units are proposed on the basement level. Mr. Sadowski asked for additional clarification regarding the use of the designated work space areas. Mr. Mercado confirmed that there is not any evidence of water problems in the basement. Mr. Mercado pointed out that the Applicant's drainage system connects directly to a City catch basin and questioned whether this is permitted. Mr. Cassidy expressed that the residential use is appropriate, but questioned whether occupying the basement makes sense. Mr. Cassidy stated that the proposed density is too much and noted that the parking lot is difficult. Mr. Cassidy stated that he found the Applicant's LEED argument to be backwards with respect parking and agreed that financing for condominium projects is presently very hard to obtain. Mr. Bell requested a continuance to the January Planning Board meeting. Mr. Cassavoy MADE a MOTION to continue the public hearing to January 24, 2011. Mr. Mercado SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed.

Document: Site Plan Review Application SP 10-007
 Executive Summary dated December 20, 2010

c) SP-10-006, 354 & 360-362 Upham Street, Mark Carroll (continued public hearing)

Bob Bell, the representative for the Applicant, was in attendance with the Applicant, Mark Carroll, and the Applicant's Architect, Tim Johnson, and the Applicant's Engineer, Randy Huber, to present to the Board. Mr. Johnson distributed a revised Landscape Plan and a hand-out that specified the proposed site lighting, pavers, fencing, and plantings. Mr. Johnson noted that the application's remaining issues pertain to drainage, parking/impervious surfaces, site lines, and signage. Mr. Johnson noted that the parking area adjacent to Upham Street has been reduced from eight spaces to six spaces. Mr. Johnson stated that the proposed site lighting is twofold: LED light pole fixtures (night sky compliant with shield) and a system of bollard lighting. In terms of signage, Mr. Johnson proposed a simple hanging sign from one of the light fixtures at the front of the site.

Mr. Johnson introduced Mr. Huber to present the engineering update. Mr. Huber stated that the provisions for water and sewer service on the site have been revised in accordance with the comments from Public Works. Mr. Huber stated that his research has found that there is no stormsewer on Upham Street to make a potential connection. There is street drainage only. Mr. Huber stated that the stormwater management system has been upgraded to capture, retain, and percolate to ground all runoff from impermeable surfaces generated by the five year 24 hour storm event as required by the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Huber stated that the upgraded stormwater management system has been designed to accommodate the roof runoff and includes three leeching fields. Mr. Huber stated that a licensed soil evaluator has been on-site to conduct an analysis and has found that the soil will allow the necessary percolation.

Ms. DeSouza-Ward stated that she found the revised parking plan to be appropriate, but expressed concern regarding drainage. Ms. Gaffey stated that she will have the City Engineer review the Applicant's revised stormwater management plan. Mr. Cassidy noted that the location of the parking for Unit 4 is unfortunate and likely difficult to pull into. Mr. Cassidy suggested that the two parking spaces adjacent to Upham Street and closest to Unit 1 be reconfigured to a parallel assembly. Mr. Cassidy commented that the four spaces in the rear could be reoriented to face east to facilitate parking in this area. Mr. Carroll pointed out that Unit 4 includes a car port that features a trellis screening system. Mr. Sadowski noted that the tandem parking at Unit 4 resembles parking for a single family dwelling. Mr. Sadowski questioned whether the stormwater management system would require a stormceptor. Mr. Mercado inquired regarding the depth of the groundwater and was informed by Mr. Huber that it is lower than 8 feet. Mr. Mercado confirmed that the Applicant intends to use conventional pavement. Mr. Cassidy confirmed that the curbing within the interior of the site will be concrete or granite, not asphalt. Ms. Francazio suggested that the Applicant add an additional layer of landscaping to screen the potentially reconfigured parking spaces closest to Unit 1. Mr. Mercado inquired regarding the Applicant's plan for snow storage. Ms. Gaffey asked for an update regarding the utility pole at the entrance to the development. Mr. Carroll stated that he would be in contact National Grid to determine potential options. Mr. Carroll added that all utilities presently overhead will be moved underground as part of the project.

Mr. Connolly opened the meeting for public comment.

Kathy McNeil, 30 Ards Moor Road

Ms. McNeil requested that the appropriate screening measures be taken should the Applicant decide to reconfigure the parking in the rear as suggested earlier by Mr. Cassidy. Ms. McNeil indicated that snow storage is a concern for her and noted that the storage of excess snow in the rear of the property would be a problem. Ms. McNeil expressed that a residential development is the consensus of the neighborhood for the site and emphasized the importance of making sure that all factors are taken into consideration.

Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant is agreeable to a condition in the decision that would prohibit the storage of snow in the rear of the property.

Maryann Hichar, 17 Ardsmoor Road

Ms. Hichar noted the history of water problems in the Periwinkles building basement and expressed concern regarding the traffic issues on Upham Street. Ms. Hichar questioned what would happen if “empty nesters” did not purchase the units as anticipated by the Applicant.

Richard Hichar, 17 Ardsmoor Road

Mr. Hichar raised the possibility of the impact on the neighborhood if the condominium units were unable to be sold.

Peter Nuytkens, 38 Ardsmoor Road

Mr. Nuytkens stated that the proposed level of density is inappropriate and cautioned that the proposed project will change the dynamic of the neighborhood and could possibly start a trend in the area. Mr. Nuytkens voiced concern regarding water issues.

Kathy McNeil, 30 Ardsmoor Road

Ms. McNeil expressed that she feels that twenty cars on a $\frac{3}{4}$ acre site is a lot of cars. Ms. McNeil questioned whether the proposed parking area includes the necessary turning radii. Ms. McNeil inquired where the overflow parking will go. Ms. McNeil questioned the basis for the recommendation in Staff Report for a waiver for a traffic study. Ms. McNeil noted the proximity of the proposed project to a school zone.

Maryann Hichar, 17 Ardsmoor Road

Ms. Hichar voiced concern regarding overflow parking.

Margaret Nuytkens, 38 Ardsmoor Road

Ms. Nuytkens inquired whether any traffic counts for Upham Street are available.

Jonathan Blaize, 328 Upham Street

Mr. Blaize expressed his concerns regarding the traffic on Upham Street from a pedestrian perspective and questioned why a traffic study is not required.

Mr. Sadowski stated that the traffic impact on Upham Street as a result of the relatively small development proposed by the Applicant will be minimal compared to the existing traffic volume on Upham Street. Mr. Cassavoy noted that the previous commercial use on the site would have a more significant traffic impact than the all residential use proposed by the Applicant. Mr. Cassidy expressed that he feels that the project is over-parked, however, he does not think that the density proposed is unrealistic. Mr. Cassidy stated that the Applicant’s proposal is a good resolution as far as the use of the site. Mr. Mercado stated that he is agreement with the proposed number of units.

Mr. Bell noted that the Applicant would be agreeable to any snow storage conditions that the Board finds to be appropriate. Mr. Bell stated that the necessary screening will be provided if the parking in the rear is reoriented. Mr. Bell explained that the Applicant is trying to come up with a solution for the site that is feasible. Mr. Bell noted that the “empty nester” market is a niche market, which is a gamble that the Applicant is willing to take. Mr. Bell asked if not this project, what is the alternative? Four single family dwellings are not financially feasible and the zoning exempt uses would have a far greater impact on the neighborhood. Mr. Bell expressed that the Applicant is willing to work together with the neighborhood

and tweak the project where appropriate. Mr. Bell requested a continuance to the January Planning Board meeting. Mr. Cassavoy MADE a MOTION to continue the public hearing to January 24, 2011. Mr. Mercado SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed.

Document: Site Plan Review Application SP 10-006
 Revised Landscape Plan dated December 18, 2010 and Planting Schedule

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 PM