

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
Regular Meeting and Public Hearing
Monday, July 25, 2011
7:45 p.m.
Mayor's Conference Room

PRESENT: Carla Francazio, Richard Connolly, Anne DeSouza-Ward, Ed Cassidy, Jack Welch, Bob Mercado, and Paul King

ABSENT: Mike Cassavoy and John Sadowski

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 p.m. by Ms. Francazio.

Ms. DeSouza-Ward MADE a MOTION to move the Patriot Way – Partial Release of Bond up to the front of the agenda. Mr. Cassidy SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed.

OTHER

Patriot Way Subdivision – Partial Release of Bond

Mr. Hennigan informed the members that the Planning Staff recently received notification that an amount of work valued at \$23,192 has been completed on the Patriot Way Subdivision to the satisfaction of the Department of Public Works. Mr. Hennigan indicated that the City Engineer recommended the release of the corresponding portion of the developer's bond. Mr. Connolly MADE a MOTION to approve the partial release of the bond in the amount equal to \$23,192. Ms. DeSouza-Ward SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed.

Document: Memorandum from Planning Staff dated July 21, 2011 regarding Partial Release of Bond for Patriot Way Subdivision
Memorandum from the City Engineer dated July 19, 2011 regarding Partial Release of Bond for Patriot Way Subdivision

SITE PLAN REVIEW - AFFORDABLE HOUSING SPECIAL PERMIT MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL USE IN A NONRESIDENTIALLY ZONED AREA SPECIAL PERMIT
SP-11-002, 185 Essex Street, Tom McGrath-McGrath Enterprises (public hearing)

Bob Bell, the representative for the Applicant, was in attendance with the Applicant, Mr. McGrath, the Applicant's Architect Dan DiLullo, the Applicant's Engineer, Rick Salvo and the Applicant's Traffic Engineer Rob Woodland to present to the Board. Mr. Bell offered an overview of the history of the property. Mr. Bell introduced Mr. DiLullo to review the details of the application with the Board.

Mr. DiLullo indicated that the proposal includes 26 parking spaces (1.6 spaces per unit). Mr. DiLullo stated that the proposed multifamily residential building is comprised on 14 two bedroom units and 2 one bedroom units. The proposed four story wood framed structure includes a peak/gable roof, a full basement for storage, and handicap entrances at the front and rear. Mr. DiLullo noted that the building has been designed in an effort to fit within the context of the neighborhood, which may result in some minor changes to the floor plans to add more character to the structure. Mr. DiLullo stated that the proposed building has been set back from the street considerably more than the existing structure to create more open space in the front of the property.

Mr. Salvo detailed the engineering components of the application. Mr. Salvo noted that presently the entire site is paved. Mr. Salvo stated that the Applicant's proposal calls for the demolition of the existing

structure which currently includes three tenants: a roofing company, a sign company, and a dance studio. Mr. Salvo noted that the existing site includes three curb cuts, which would be reduced to two under the Applicant's proposal. Mr. Salvo stated that the project site includes a right of way located at the northwest corner of the lot that serves as an egress for the Emerson Arms Apartments. Mr. Salvo stated that the Applicant's proposal meets all the dimensional requirements for the UR-C zone. Mr. Salvo expressed that the Applicant is requesting that the Board grant a parking reduction under the provisions of the Affordable Housing Incentive Program. Mr. Salvo noted that the parking lot contains all full sized spaces and includes two handicap spaces. Mr. Salvo presented the proposed provisions for water and sewer service. The Applicant's proposal specifies the replacement of the two existing sewer connections with a new 6" PVC sewer service onto Vine Street. Mr. Salvo stated that Public Works has directed the Applicant to camera the Vine Street main to ensure that the additional flow can be handled and is not creating any issues downstream. The Applicant's plan for water consists of a new 2" copper domestic service to be installed in conjunction with a separate 6" DI fire service. Mr. Salvo stated the Applicant is not proposing any pole lighting on site due to the sufficient level illumination provided by the streetlights on Essex Street and Vine Street. In terms of drainage, Mr. Salvo stated that the amount of impervious surface on the site will be reduced considerably as a result of the installation of approximately 10,000 square feet of landscaped area. The proposed stormwater management plan includes separate subsurface systems for the runoff from the parking area and runoff from the roof. Both systems are designed to infiltrate into the ground. The parking area system shall include an emergency overflow only for discharge into the City drainage system during instances of maximum capacity. Mr. Salvo stated boring results show ground water to be at 8' 10". Mr. Salvo stated that the Applicant's proposal includes the reuse of existing fencing along the northern and western property lines. Mr. Salvo indicated that the Landscape Plan consists of combination of trees and shrubs around the building and the perimeter of the site. Mr. Salvo noted that the application also includes the installation of a vinyl picket fence along the Essex Street and Vine Street frontage, in addition to new concrete sidewalks.

Mr. Woodland briefly summarized the Applicant's Traffic Report. Mr. Woodland indicated that the overall traffic impacts of the 16 unit proposal will be minimal and that the traffic generated by the commercial uses that have operated previously on the site exceed the impacts projected by conversion to multifamily during both weekday morning and weekday evening commute peak hours. Mr. Woodland stated that the proposed closure of the curb cut on Essex Street reduces a point of conflict and results in an improved pedestrian experience. Mr. Woodland noted that the proposal also includes reducing the driveway width on Vine Street. Mr. Woodland stated that the proposed parking plan for 26 spaces is well justified considering the urban setting and close access to public transportation.

Mr. Bell reviewed with the members the zoning relief requested by the Applicant from the Planning Board, which includes Site Plan Review, a special permit under the provisions of the Affordable Housing Incentive Program, and a special permit for multifamily residential use in a nonresidentially zoned area. Mr. Bell noted that the Applicant's proposal does require any variances or special permits from the Board of Appeals. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant has reached out to the Ward Alderman to arrange a neighborhood meeting. Mr. Bell stated that he anticipates the meeting to take place at the beginning of August and noted that so far feedback regarding the proposal has been positive.

Ms. Francazio asked the members for their comments. Ms. DeSouza-Ward confirmed that the proposal is subject to the dimensional requirements for the UR-C zone based on the provision in the Zoning Ordinance which establishes that any new residential use in a nonresidential district shall be subject to the dimensional and density regulations of the nearest residential district as determined by the Building Commissioner. Mr. Connolly asked for clarification regarding the Emerson Arms right of way. Mr. Mercado asked whether the Applicant has conducted a market analysis for the project. Mr. Bell stated that no study has been administered. Mr. Bell stated that this project offers an opportunity for downsizing

and noted that there are not a lot of downsizing options presently available in Melrose. Mr. Bell added that transit oriented development projects are presently in demand. Mr. Mercado inquired whether the Applicant has any development projects in the area. Mr. Bell stated that this proposal would represent the Applicant's first project in Melrose. The Applicant, Mr. McGrath, introduced himself to the Board. Mr. McGrath stated that he has developed hundreds of units, which include projects in Lynn and Lynnfield as well as Laconia, NH. Ms. DeSouza-Ward inquired how the parking spaces would be divided. Mr. Bell stated that he anticipates that one space would be allocated to each unit with the distribution of the remainder of spaces being market driven. Mr. Bell noted that the Pondfield condominiums across the street ended up with extra parking that they could not sell, which was eventually leased out to local businesses in the area. Ms. DeSouza-Ward confirmed that the Applicant is required to supply two affordable units and inquired whether the Applicant intended to expand their proposal to include the two "incentive units" permitted under the Affordable Housing zoning. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant is committed to providing the two affordable units as required by zoning. Mr. Bell stated that the Applicant has discussed the possibility of purchasing a two family dwelling to fulfill the Affordable Housing requirement. However, Mr. Bell confirmed that the Applicant does not propose additional units beyond the 16 specified in the application. Ms. Gaffey noted that the Board could give consideration to granting the Applicant's request for a parking reduction as the incentive in this case.

Mr. Mercado asked the Applicant to explain their plan for snow storage. Mr. Salvo indicated that snow from the parking lot shall be stored on the adjacent landscaped areas. Mr. Mercado inquired regarding the location of the HVAC equipment for the units. Mr. DiLullo indicated that the building's air conditioning condensing units will be located at grade along the north and south elevations and shall be screened appropriately with plantings. Mr. Mercado asked for more information regarding the curbing proposed for the parking lot. Mr. Salvo indicated that the proposal calls for sloped granite curbing for the parking area, which will be graded to direct runoff toward the middle of the property and keep runoff away from Vine Street. Mr. Mercado asked whether any site lighting is proposed and was informed by Mr. DiLullo that the building-mounted lighting fixtures shall be installed. Mr. King cautioned that the proposed building is only buffered from the parking lot by a 5' walkway and suggested that the Applicant consider the installation of bollards for protective purposes.

Mr. Cassidy noted that the proposed design offered a relatively ordinary feel. Mr. Cassidy encouraged the use of appropriate architectural techniques to soften the elevations and expressed that the proposed siding treatment might not be suitable in this instance. Mr. Cassidy observed the brick and stucco structures in the area and suggested that the Applicant consider taking a masonry approach to the first floor. Mr. Cassidy found that the combination mansard-gable roofing system still has room for improvement and noted that the use of shutters does not work given the scale of the building. Mr. Cassidy commented that the proposed Landscape Plan is not appropriate for a residential structure of this nature. Mr. Cassidy noted the need for "good neighbor" fencing to screen the headlights from the parking area. Ms. Francazio suggested that the Applicant consider clustering plantings in a different manner to better emphasize the architectural features of the building. Ms. Francazio commented that the proposed use of picket fencing is incompatible with the rest of the proposal. Ms. Francazio noted that the proximity of the proposed trash enclosure to the nearby handicap parking could create a potential conflict. Mr. Salvo explained that this issue was raised at the Department Head meeting at which time the Applicant agreed to shift the trash storage enclosure eastward so that it is adjacent to the landscaped area in northeast corner of the site.

Mr. Bell noted that the proposed picket fencing would assist to prevent pedestrians from cutting the corner and entering the property. Mr. Cassidy suggested the incorporation of more significant landscape elements that complement the building and the architecture in the area such as the use of masonry. Mr. Cassidy put forward the possibility of using balconies as a device to break up the massing of building.

Mr. DiLullo stated that the noise generated by trains at the Cedar Park Station reduces the benefit of the inclusion of balconies.

Mr. Connolly MADE a MOTION to open the public hearing. Mr. Mercado SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed. Ms. Francazio noted that no one from the public was present.

Mr. Bell requested a continuance of the public hearing to the Board's August 8th meeting. Mr. Cassidy MADE a MOTION to continue the public hearing to August 8, 2011. Ms. DeSouza-Ward SECONDED the MOTION. All voted in favor. None opposed.

Document: Site Plan Review Application SP 11-002

ZONING SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Signage Zoning Amendment

Ms. DeSouza-Ward summarized the progress that the Zoning Subcommittee has made to date towards revising the Signage section of the Zoning Ordinance. Ms. DeSouza-Ward updated the Board on the proposed timeline for the zoning amendment moving forward. Ms. Gaffey reviewed the proposed revisions with the members for comment. Ms. Gaffey expressed that there will be an opportunity to provide additional input at the Board's August 8th meeting.

Document: Proposed Revisions to Article VII dated July, 21, 2011

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM.