

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, September 23, 2019
7:45 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, City Hall, 562 Main Street

PRESENT: Mike Cassavoy, Anne DeSouza-Ward, Paul King, Robert Mercado, Carla Morelli, Sharon Petrillo, John Sadowski, Greg Sampson & Jack Welch

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Denise Gaffey, Director, Emma Schnur, Senior Planner & Lori Massa, Planning Coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 PM by Ms. DeSouza-Ward.

ASSENT CALENDAR

Board of Appeals Public Hearing on October 16, 2019

Case 19-024, 1 Ireson Court, Mark & Patricia Beckford

Mr. Cassavoy MADE a MOTION to send the Board of Appeals a letter stating that the Planning Board did not object to the applications and believed the cases involve judgments that can best be determined by the Board of Appeals based on the application materials and the information provided by the applicant and abutters at the public hearing. Mr. Sadowski SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Applications, Case 19-024

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Board of Appeals Public Hearing on October 16, 2019

Case 19-025, 138 Main Street & Sylvan Street, Jay Dunham of Metro Credit Union

The Representative for the case submitted a request to continue the Zoning Board of Appeals hearing date to November 13. The proposal also requires Site Plan Review and the Applicant would prefer for the presentation to the Planning Board for that application and for the recommendation to the Board of Appeals to be on the same night.

Mr. Cassavoy MADE a MOTION to continue the review to October 28, 2019. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Applications, Case 19-025

Case 19-026, 44 Cochrane Street, Robert and Sara Mestjian

Mr. Mestjian appeared to present the case. The Board felt that the case could have been placed on the assent calendar. Mr. Sadowski MADE a MOTION to send the Board of Appeals a letter stating that the Planning Board did not object to the applications and believed the cases involve judgments that can best be determined by the Board of Appeals based on the application materials and the information provided by the applicant and abutters at the public hearing. Mr. Cassavoy SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Applications, Case 19-026

Case 19-027, 76 Swains Pond Avenue, Ryan Luks

Owner Ryan Luks appeared to present the case. The owner of 80 Swains Pond Avenue, Paul King, was also present as this proposal involves a land swap with his property. When Mr. Luks purchased the property a land swap agreement was already in place with the prior owner. The development that occurred behind their properties caused the owners to know that a swing set and stairs to the second floor of a garage at 76 Swains Pond were on 80 Swains Pond's property. Mr. King maintains the land along the road that is owned by Mr. Luks. A lot line adjustment would allow for a land swap so that they continue to maintain their structures and use of the land without being on their neighbors' property for liability reasons. The Board was not supportive of the proposal because the frontage regulation is an important dimension in lot regulation. The Board suggested that the Applicants consider a different plan to move the lots line that does not involve a change to the lot frontage or the creation of a swap by easement agreement to achieve the goals of the application. Since there appear to be other ways of handling the issue without creating a new nonconformity, the Board recommended denying the application. Handling the land swap in another way would also eliminate the need for the Applicant to undergo the subdivision approval process.

Mr. Cassavoy MADE a MOTION to send the Board of Appeals a letter stating that the Planning Board was not in support of the application because of the reasons discussed. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Applications, Case 19-027

Case 19-028, 423 Pleasant Street, Jeffrey P. Newman

Attorney Clark and Jeff Newman appeared to present the proposal. The current owner and the real estate broker were also present. Ms. Gaffey stated that there have been many businesses interested in this building but because of the limitations of the site it is still vacant. The proposed photo rental business seems like a good fit. Attorney Clark handed out updated sign renderings and Mr. Newman brought a sample of the signage letters. The letters will be brushed aluminum. The signage is for orientation and not meant to be for advertising. It is an online business. The Board was supportive of the proposal and recommended approval of the variances and special permits. They found that the use is suited for the land and building. In terms of the driveway and parking relief, with only two employees and minimal customer trips to the site, the existing conditions should be sufficient for the business.

Documents: ZBA Applications, Case 19-028

Ms. Petrillo arrived at the meeting.

SITE PLAN REVIEW & AFFORDABLE HOUSING SPECIAL PERMIT

Case 19-003, 12-16 Essex Street, Mark Carroll

Attorney Bob Bell, Applicant Mark Carroll, and Tim Johnson of Tim Johnson Architect, LLC appeared to explain the proposal.

Mr. Carroll and Mr. Johnson have worked on other developments together. An example is the Periwinkle Gift Shop site on Upham Street.

Attorney Bell said that the current building cannot be made accessible without taking up a lot of the interior space, which is small, for an internal ramp. He said that we have a housing affordability crisis and need to increase the supply of housing. All of the stormwater will be handled onsite, which currently flows into the street. The proposed building does not mimic but fits in with the downtown architecture. He showed historic pictures of the buildings on Main Street to highlight how there used to be many taller buildings that are now single-story due to fires and weaker construction methods. The proposal is in keeping with the historic structures in downtown Melrose.

Mr. Johnson described the style, layout and materials of the building. They are using dark sky and water sense guidelines; the light fixtures will be downward lit and the appliances will be low-flow. The parking rack system will be self-actuated and will be used for the first time in Melrose at this property.

Ms. Gaffey explained the permitting process with the Historic District Commission (HDC), since this property is in a historic district and needs HDC approval to demolish the building. The HCD met last week and will meet again on December 3. She said that there are strong opinions from Commission members on if the building should be demolished or not. From the staff perspective, the history and cultural aspect of the site are significant but the building itself is losing its appeal and will be difficult to re-tenant. The proposal is consistent with the district and will bring vitality and housing to downtown. Ms. Gaffey read Mayor Infurna's letter to the Planning Board which explains her reasons for supporting this project.

Mr. Mercado MADE a MOTION to open the public hearing. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members present voted in favor. None were opposed.

Patrick Keefe of 80 Lynde Street, Doug Pippy of 354 Upham Street, Bill Ahern of 88 Ellis Farm Lane, Greg Messina of 132 Country Club Road, and Linda Okoniewski of 280 W Emerson Street appeared to speak in support of the proposal. Comments included the following:

- The proposal will add to the positive experience of walking and shopping downtown.

- The project will provide much needed housing for empty-nesters.
- Mr. Carroll maintains his properties and the Upham Street buildings that he built are energy efficient.
- It is important to preserve historic buildings but the existing one here is a tired building.
- The proposal fits in with the character of the downtown.
- It will raise the tax base. An example given of the benefit of a tax increase is that a \$60,000 increase is enough to cover a 2.5 million bond.
- This project is smart growth and adds to what people love about downtown.
- We need revenue and housing.
- The aesthetics of the building are beautiful.

The Planning Board members had the following questions and comments. The development team's responses are noted below.

- How many bedrooms will the two affordable units have?
 - One affordable unit will be one bedroom and the other will be two bedrooms to reflect the mix in the building.
- Some members were glad that there would be 14 parking spaces on site and think that the parking system is beneficial. Others felt that all 14 were not needed.
- How does the parking system work?
 - It is a lift system that moves cars around in a circular motion. It is regulated by the state's elevator board.
- A car-share vehicle would be useful in this area but should be in a public lot.
- They discussed the function of the driveway as it exists now for 11 parking spaces and how it would change as part of the development.
 - There would be a vehicle exiting sign on a motion sensor that would light up and make sound to alert pedestrians when a car is exiting. The driveway could be stamped concrete but the City has to approve the sidewalk treatment.
 - It is rare for two cars to be in the driveway at the same time. If this did occur there is room for a car to back into the garage to allow for another car to pass.
 - They may make the garage door wider to allow for more space to enter and exit the garage.
- They discussed the trash enclosure and the ability for it to handle a food service tenant.
 - The trash enclosure/room will be 33% bigger than it is now. There will be water service to the room to be able to clean it. They are not yet sure if they will seek a food service tenant but there will be room for a chase for venting.
 - There is room to put recycling bins in the garage and space will be maximized with shelves.
- It would be a nice amenity to have outdoor seating in front of the restaurant and/or a storefront system that opens.
 - Because the front of the building faces north it is in shadow and is cold. The sidewalk is not very wide here. Operable glass on the storefront is a good idea.
- Where are the condensers?
 - The condensers will be on the roof and wrapped with wrought iron that will act as a snow barrier and visual screening.
- Where will the columns be in the garage?

- The columns will be next to and coordinated with the lift system.
- Will the rear door have steps?
 - No, the entrance will be at grade.
- Will the residents of 532-546 Main Street use the driveway easement to access their building or parking?
 - There will only be pedestrian activity to access the trash room at the end of the driveway. There are no entrances for the abutting building along the driveway and there will be no parking for this building in the new building.
- Will the tenants of 532-546 Main Street lose parking?
 - Some commercial and residential tenants have parking space at 12-16 Essex Street now. Some of the original tenants are gone and all are aware that they will no longer be able to park in the lot if the development moves forward.
- Will the units be condominiums or apartments?
 - This has not been decided yet.
- What is the distance between the abutting buildings?
 - There will be about 4 feet between the proposal and the new construction at 530 Main Street and the building will touch the one-story building to the right.
- The proposal will require a number of variances for FAR, frontage, driveway width and open space.
- There will be private open space on the site with the balconies proposed which will be nice for the residents.
 - Faux boxwood will be installed as shown on the model. There is no sun here so real plants will not grow.
- What is the plan to not undermine the foundation of the abutting building?
 - They will be underpinning a portion of the building and constructing away from other portions.
- There will be a bathroom in the basement?
 - Yes but if a pump is required for the toilet they will remove it from the plan.
- The building looks heavy, especially on the right side which is next to a one-story building.
 - The two-story tower marks the commercial entrance and the four-story tower marks the residential entrance. The four-story tower is needed for the layout to work and the tower blocks the residential elevator core. The one-story building to the right may be redeveloped in the future. The right wall is required to be a firewall so no openings are allowed. If the slight overhang of the tower is in the way of a future building on that site, it could be removed on this side.
- There is a lot going on with the design of the building. The front is ornate and the back is more industrial with vertical siding.
 - The material samples were presented.
- What is the timeline for seeking Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) and HDC approval?
 - They plan to move forward with the Planning Board process. If the HDC or ZBA require substantial changes, they will come back to the Planning Board to seek a revision.
- Are there accessible parking spaces proposed?
 - No, they are required if there are more than 15 spaces.

The Board requested the following items for the next meeting:

- Information from staff on if an overhang above the sidewalk needs other approval
- A shadow study
- More information on the trash and recycling plan
- Details on the catch basin at the end of the alley. The civil engineer will provide more information about the project once the City Engineer's comments are received.

Mr. Cassavoy MADE a MOTION to continue the public hearing to November 25, 2019. Mr. Mercado SECONDED the MOTION. All members present voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Site Plan Approval and Affordable Housing Special Permit Application, Case 19-003

NEXT MEETING

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 28, 2019, at 7:45pm.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 pm.