

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Special Meeting
Monday, February 10, 2020
7:45 PM
Cassidy Conference Room,
City Hall, 562 Main Street

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

ABSENT: Mike Cassavoy & Greg Sampson

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 PM by Ms. DeSouza-Ward.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes January 27, 2020

Mr. Mercado MADE a MOTION to approve the regular meeting minutes from January 27, 2020. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members present voted in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW & AFFORDABLE HOUSING SPECIAL PERMIT

Case 19-006, 99 Washington Street, Oak Grove Mill, LLC

Attorney David Lucas, and the development team including Christopher Kelly, Insight Partners, Ray Murphy, Eastern Real Estate, Nancy Ludwig, Architect, Brian Jones, Civil Engineer, and Elizabeth Peart, Traffic Engineer, appeared to respond to the questions and comments brought up at the last hearing on January 27, 2020.

Mr. Jones reviewed the sewer impact analysis which was done using the City Assessor's data and Title 5 sewer figures to estimate the capacity of the sewer lines before and after the development. The report concludes that there is sufficient capacity downstream to handle the anticipated flow from the development. There is a short section of the pipe before the MWRA interceptor that would be at 65% capacity, which is over the 60% that the City aims to be under. The Applicant agreed to use metering to determine actual flows at that location (pipe reach 9) and at reach 3 and camera inspections to see the condition of the clay pipe at pipe reaches 2 & 3. The Applicant would then need to replace or repair the pipes based on the results. Repairing the pipe often involves lining the pipe with PVC, which does not change the capacity of the pipe and increases the rate of flow.

Mr. Jones explained the stormwater management onsite. With removal of pavement for landscaped beds the site will have a 20% reduction in the amount of impervious surface. With the installation of pervious pavement there will be a 45% reduction in the amount of impervious surface. There will be a reduced volume and rate of stormwater runoff. All of the runoff flows onto the neighboring properties at Stone Place and 37/47 Washington Street which have retention systems that handle the runoff. This condition will not change.

Mr. Kelly outlined the green building practices. Additional elements that were added to the plan include all electric HVAC units and an increase in the number of bicycle parking spaces including 50 indoor, the ability to store a bike in a unit by utilizing the tall ceiling height, a bike share program that will be managed on-site, two EV charging stations and two “zip car” spaces.

In response to the comments regarding improving the experience along Washington Street and the desire to have a place for neighbors to enjoy the site, the site plan will include a seating area at the crosswalk near Brazil Street and a patio and deck area around the beech tree in the front yard that will be open to the public with inviting stairs and a ramp.

Ms. Peart reviewed the traffic study and explained the pedestrian counts that they gathered over a 14 hour period. There were 427 trips that are likely from people walking to and from Oak Grove for commuting. Therefore to get to the number of people walking by the site it is probably half this number.

Parking is proposed at 1.22 spaces per unit. The existing apartment buildings around the site have a higher parking ratio than what they are proposing at this site. They do not want to decrease the number of parking spaces and be at a disadvantage in the ability to provide parking.

At the last meeting a Planning Board member asked about the intersection of Pleasant Street and Wyoming Avenue. It was not part of the study of intersections, which was reviewed by Planning Staff. Staff did ask that an additional intersection in Malden be added to the study initially. Wyoming Avenue is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away. Ms. Peart used the net new vehicle trips and traffic count data for the closest intersection available to estimate that the increase in traffic at the intersection will be 0.8%, which is minimal.

Mr. Kelly reviewed the fiscal impact study done by RKG which shows a net annual and ongoing tax increase of \$95,515, estimated excise tax receipts of \$26,072 and on-time fees of \$868,703.

He also went through retail market fundamentals and the math for tenant viability to show that with the pedestrian counts by the site there is not enough activity to support retail. Retailers would need parking to be successful. To provide some activity at the site for the neighborhood the idea of bringing a food truck to the site was introduced. Landlords would be cost burden by providing a retail space.

There are challenges that come up in rehabilitating an old building and it can be costly. For example they found cedar posts supporting the building that will have to be replaced.

The Board received three letters that are part of the public record from members of the Melrose Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee and Melrose Energy Commission, which was read during the January public hearing, Vicki Gibbs of 82 Washington Street who was supportive and Andy Monat of 57 W Hill Avenue who was also supportive and discussed reducing the parking spaces provided.

Ryan Williams of 88 Malvern Street, Ellen Katz of 70 Lynde Street, Rick Greski of 23 Brazil Street, Christina and Adam Sandore of 131 Washington Street, Janine Venuti of 39 Altamont Avenue, Finn McSweeney of 160 W Wyoming Avenue and Mike Fera of 56 Converse Lane appeared to speak about the proposal. Comments and questions included the following – if mentioned more than once the number of times is in parenthesis:

- The revised bicycle parking plan responds to requests for more bicycle parking (2).
- The bicycle parking outdoors should be covered or it will be underutilized.
- Did the traffic study use 2017 Community Survey for the census data?
 - The Traffic Engineer responded that they did use the Community Survey data.
- There was concern about the condition of the sewer lines which are old (2). The City did a study and was going to replace some pipes but the work has not been done yet. Is the developer paying fees to fix the infrastructure?
- It is a good move to go to all electric for the apartments' HVAC.
- The project should seek LEED or other green building accreditation.
- Is the rooftop able to handle solar panels? The lofts may make it difficult.
- The pedestrian count data did not include pedestrians from the proposed building (2). There are a lot of cars passing by that could support commercial at this site.
- Where did the \$15 per square foot rent estimate in the calculation for having a viable retailer in the building come from?
- The commercial in the building does not have to be retail (4). It could be a service like dry cleaning, a gym, co-working space or provide space for an existing business.
- Retail is not viable here. It would be better in existing nodes like Wyoming Hill.
- Mom and Pop stores have different needs than the chains that the presentation references.
- The Oak Grove development did not want to include commercial space either but it provides a place to go and visit that neighborhood.
- There are no amenities in the apartment buildings surround the site and that is why he bought a house instead of renting in one of these buildings.
- If a food truck will be at the site there should be an electrical hook up so that the vehicle is not idling.
- A food truck would only be there in the warmer months.
- Food trucks would be great but other retail is possible.
- The area should be rezoned residential if there is no commercial in the development.
- The building is beautiful.
- It is a benefit that this site is being redeveloped.
- There would be less parking for this building than the surrounding buildings but the MAPC study shows that the parking on the surrounding site is underutilized.
- The front driveway could be cobblestone because it will not be utilized all of the time.

- Some of the paved area in the back could be used for a different purpose like a dog park and converted to parking in the future if needed.
- Has there been a study to determine that the pervious pavement will drain? This area used to be a wetland and the street floods.

Attorney Lucas reviewed the variances that will be sought for this project. After further review the height will not require a variance. The setback of the building complies with the regulation. The parking reduction will be sought to be approved by the Planning Board through the affordable housing incentive.

The Planning Board had the following comments and questions. The responses from the applicant team are below.

- The reduction in pavement on the site is appreciated. What type of storm can the site accommodate?
 - A 100 year storm.
- There was a request to review the Level of Service (LOS) figures for the intersections.
 - In the morning there would be no change in LOS between the build and no build scenarios. In the evening the intersection at Pleasant Street and Stone Place heading eastbound on Stone Place, which is un-signalized, has a LOS of E with a 40-45 second delay. With the build scenario the LOS crosses the threshold to an F; however, there is only a few second difference in wait time.
- What will the Inflow and Infiltration fee be?
 - Over \$100,000.
- What elements of the building are meeting code versus exceeding code? Will the roof be solar ready?
 - The windows will have a low e-value but they are filling large openings. The white roof is an enhancement and is exceeding the code.
 - The light monitors require a setback from solar panels and the compressors will be on the roof so solar panels are not practical.
 - The compressors will be efficient.
 - Two electronic vehicle charging stations will be on the revised plan.
- Can the irrigation system use gray water?
 - They are planning for irrigation and will ask about using gray water.
- There was an appreciation for the rigor of the retail analysis; however, it included the wrong kind of retailers. There are local businesses that are looking to expand. Having a vacant storefront would not be good but the community would like some kind of commercial use here. There is a desire for walkability and wellness in this city. A gym was previously at the site and this would be a viable commercial use. Other uses could be an art gallery or performance space. This site could be another node around transit. A commercial use could start small and expand if it was successful.
 - Jitters at Windsor at Oak Grove said that they need parking. Most of their customers arrive by car.
- The food truck is a good idea but only seasonal. It would also not offer enough if there was only one truck.

- There should not be as much parking or any parking in the front yard but if there was retail there, it would be a good tradeoff to provide parking for the retail. Residents should not park in this lot. It should only be for short term parking.
 - The parking in the front provides a needed drop-off area and visitor parking. Neighbors do not want people parking on the residential streets.
- The gatehouse could be programed as an amenity or opened up for community use when it would not impact the residents.
- The other buildings in the area do not have the same street presence that this building has making it a better site for a commercial use.
- This will be a transit adjacent project if there is a lot of parking. Not many people will ride share but they will self-select to take transit.
- The site is currently a commercial facility. Did the Applicant reach out to the existing tenants?
 - Mr. Kelly explained that the Owner made the existing businesses aware of the sale of the building with a lot of advanced notice and all of the businesses have vacated already.
- The building that is now the daycare was always commercial. It was an ice cream shop, sub shop and other uses. Businesses did not do well but they did not have the level of residential that is there now. A business in the development would need to be an active use that is open nights and weekends.
- It is unfortunate that there is not an overpass over the tracks to connect this neighborhood with Windsor at Oak Grove. The neighborhoods are isolated.
- How will the parking be policed? Will the spaces be rented to people that do not live there?
 - There will be stickers and numbered spaces. Cars in violation will be towed. Parking will be unbundled from rent but not rented to others. They want enough parking to be able to compete with the abutting apartment buildings and address concerns expressed by local neighbors.
- This building is architecturally different from the neighboring apartment buildings which will give it an advantage. We now have data that shows that not as much parking is needed and if there is a lot of parking it will attract people that own cars.
- The Board discussed the sewer lines and recommendations for investigation and repair. The sewer and stormwater systems are separate here.
 - Mr. Jones said that they are willing to do the metering in the spring when the water table is highest to capture the actual versus estimated flow.
 - Denise Gaffey mentioned that she discussed the condition of the sewer pipe on Washington that is upstream of 99 Washington with the City Engineer. The City Engineer indicated that she would arrange to investigate the condition of that pipe while workers are on Brazil Street in the spring for a planned rehabilitation of the sewer pipe on Brazil. If this upstream segment on Washington Street needs to be relined or replaced the City Engineer would arrange to perform that work with I/I funds.
- Have borings been done to check the water table depth yet?
 - No test pits have been done yet; however, they have worked on the adjacent properties and know the conditions there. The soil is mostly urban fill. The

pervious pavement will have a discharge to the sewer system. The pervious pavement will need to be vacuumed and snow maintenance will be handled differently.

- How will snow and trash be handled?
 - There is snow storage at the perimeter but for significant snow it will be removed.
 - There will be trash chutes that will be maintained. They will get back with the information on frequency of pickup. A neighbor said that a regular sized trash truck going to the other buildings now without a problem.
- Where will the transformer be located?
 - In the front yard screened by landscaping.
- The beech tree drops berries that will fall on the deck.
- The deck feels private because it turns its back towards the street.
 - The deck was designed to be inviting. The grade changes make it difficult to orient in another way. The first floor of the building will have a lot of windows that will provide views into the building from the deck and there will be seating available.
- There is no charm along Washington Street and this project will be a centerpiece.
- A more fully developed landscape plan should be provided.

Mr. Sadowski MADE a MOTION to continue the public hearing to February 24, 2020 at 7:45PM in the Cassidy Conference Room. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Site Plan Approval and Affordable Housing Special Permit Application, Case 19-006
Staff Report dated January 24, 2020
Memorandum from the City Engineer dated February 7, 2020

NEXT MEETING

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 24, 2020, at 7:45pm.

There will be two meetings in March including a Special Meeting on March 16, 2020 to continue the public hearing for the modified 9-lot subdivision plan and the Regular Meeting on March 23, 2020.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 pm.