

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, July 27, 2020
7:30 PM
Remote Meeting

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 Battaglia, Senior Planner & Lori Massa, Planning Coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 PM by Ms. DeSouza-Ward.

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Melrose Planning Board was conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Meeting access 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 was 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. An audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings was posted on the mmtv3.org website as soon as possible after the meeting. A link was also available on www.cityofmelrose.org.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Special Meeting, May 18, 2020

Mr. Welch MADE a MOTION to approve the meeting minutes from May 18, 2020. Mr. King SECONDED the MOTION. All members by roll call voted in favor except for Ms. Petrillo and Ms. Morelli who were not yet present. None were opposed.

Planning Board Special Meeting, June 8, 2020

Mr. King MADE a MOTION to approve the meeting minutes from June 8, 2020. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. There was discussion about if trucks could be onsite and ready to start before the hours of construction allowed for the Swains Pond Avenue case, which was referenced in the minutes. There should be no disturbance before 7am and the neighbors will complain if this happens. All members by roll call voted in favor except for Mr. Mercado who abstained and Ms. Petrillo who was not yet present. None were opposed.

Planning Board Regular Meeting, June 29, 2020

Mr. Mercado MADE a MOTION to approve the meeting minutes from June 29, 2020. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members by roll call voted in favor except for Ms. Petrillo who was not yet present. None were opposed.

ASSENT CALENDAR

Board of Appeals Public Hearing on August 12, 2020

Case 20-012, 32 Charles Street, Pierre Destouches

Mr. Sampson MADE a modified MOTION to write a neutral letter the Board of Appeals to consider along with the information provided by the applicant and abutters at the public hearing in making a determination on this case. Mr. Mercado SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor by roll call. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 20-012

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Board of Appeals Public Hearing on August 12, 2020

Case 20-014, 133 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Greg Lang

Mr. Lang and Mr. Crowell appeared to explain the proposal. Mr. Lang has been doing work on the three-family house to maintain it but realized that the porch foundation needs to be reconstructed and that he should do a larger project to improve the property. He said that the neighbors are probably upset because the repairs have been done slowly.

The Board discussed how the proposal intensifies the nonconforming three-family house in the front and side yards with a change to the form and massing of the structure. The existing enclosed porch would be replaced with a taller, flat façade. The Board generally does not support encroachments in front yards because of the impact to the streetscape.

The Board members had varying opinions on the application ranging from concern that the changes to the house will make it feel imposing to recognition that the changes will improve the appearance and safety of the house given that the existing house has an unusual form. The eave return detail and solid, quality siding proposed are appropriate for the neighborhood. Members suggested adding a water table or texture change to the siding at the level of the eave to visually break down the volume of the building. One member felt that regardless of the design this nonconforming three-family should not increase in size due to the intensity of the use on the small lot.

The Board recommended that the Applicant get clarification on the Building Commissioner's determination of the existing front yard setback. The enclosed porch is setback approximately 10 feet from the front property line. The denial letter states that the existing setback is approximately 15 feet and this determination may be considering the allowance for a porch projection into a required yard.

Members also discussed how there were many two-family houses in the neighborhood and asked about parking for the units and the bedroom count. The Applicant said that there are multi-unit

buildings in the area and that the exiting driveway fits five cars. The property is close to the train and downtown and few of his tenants own cars. There are a total of six bedrooms in the house including the porch, which is used as a bedroom. There would be eight bedrooms after the addition.

Members did not reach a consensus on a recommendation.

Mr. Sadowski MADE a modified MOTION to write a neutral letter and request that the Board of Appeal take their comments into consideration along with the abutters' comments provided at the public hearing in making a determination on this case. Ms. Morelli SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor by roll call. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 20-014

Case 20-013, 272 Tremont Street, 495 LLC c/o Eric Kenworthy

Attorney Lucas appeared to request a continuance. He said that they received the Engineering Department's comments seven days ago and since their engineer was away last week they did not have enough time to respond. They have started digging test pits. Also, they are waiting on an updated denial letter from ISD. The Board members will hold their comments until the public hearing on August 24, 202 and wait until then to make a recommendation to the ZBA for the variance requests.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 20-013

SITE PLAN REVIEW & AFFORDABLE HOUSING SPECIAL PERMIT

Case 20-001, 272 Tremont Street, 495 LLC c/o Eric Kenworthy

See case 20-013 above. Mr. Mercado MADE a MOTION to continue the case to August 24, 2020. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members by roll-call voted in favor.

Documents: Site Plan Review and Affordable Housing Special Permit Application Materials

Case 17-002, 419-429 Main Street, Theodore Lantzakis

Attorney Robert Bell and Developer Matthew Roman appeared to explain the request for a modification to the Site Plan Review and Affordable Housing Special Permit Decision for the project that is under construction at 419 Main Street. The project received a variance from the minimum residential unit size to add two units to the project without any exterior alterations. The unit count went from 10 to 12. At the June 29, 2020 meeting the Board decided that since the amendment does not change the approval requested, the design, the parking required or affect the decision the proposed amendment does not need a full public hearing. Additionally, there was a public hearing for the variance for unit size where the public had an opportunity to speak on the issue.

The Board discussed how we need more housing, there is a demand for micro-units and an additional affordable unit will be provided. The affordable unit was specified in the decision as unit 204. The additional affordable unit provided will be micro-unit 205. Units 204 and 205 are not adjacent to each other.

Mr. Mercado MADE a MOTION to approve the modification to the Site Plan Review and Affordable Housing Special Permit Decision. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members by roll-call voted in favor.

Documents: Floor Plans, dated 4/14/2020

OTHER BUSINESS

Zoning Subcommittee Report

The Zoning Subcommittee met on July 23, 2020. The subcommittee discussed a number of items including the corner lot provision, the special permit duration, and a number of other items that have come up often over time. The Subcommittee also discussed a new idea of amending the business districts to allow for projects that they approve to be allowed without needing variances, as so often they do. The idea was a result of the appeal of the MMTV's site redevelopment which had strong community support. The subcommittee will be discussing regulations regarding the number of parking spaces, parking space size, density and others. They will bring draft language to the full Board to review once it is written. The Subcommittee will meet again on August 31, 2020.

Affordable Housing Initiatives

The City received a Community Compact Program grant to create a housing production plan and will be working with MAPC and the Planning Board on it. Some of the zoning amendment ideas will be solidified into the plan. This type of plan is in the MGL Chapter 40B statute. It is a plan to determine how and where more housing can be built. It offers a safe harbor for a period of time from 40B projects and is a great tool to plan for more housing. The City Council will be voting on the funding in August. Ms. Gaffey asked that if a member of the Planning Board would like to be part of the plan's committee to let her know. MAPC will have a few meetings directly with the Planning Board through the process.

The City Council will discuss the Affordable Housing Trust on August 17, 2020. The trust is written into the Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan and is needed in order to use the money that has come from payments in lieu of providing affordable housing. The fund will hopefully increase with the recent amendment to the affordable housing regulations that require a payment for a fractional unit. At this point the structure of the trust would be determined and the people on the committee and their rules would be created at a later time. Mr. Sampson MADE a MOTION that the Board writes a letter to the Council in support of the creation of the trust. Mr. Welch SECONDED the MOTION. All members by roll-call voted in favor.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for August 24, 2020 at 7:30pm.
The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.