

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, October 26, 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 7:45 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 Regular Meeting, September 21, 2020

Zoning Subcommittee Meeting, August 31, 2020

Zoning Subcommittee Meeting, September 24, 2020

Zoning Subcommittee Meeting, October 15, 2020

Mr. Sadowski made a motion to approve all of these meeting minutes. Mr. King seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor, except for Mr. Sampson who was not yet present. None were opposed.

ASSENT CALENDAR

Board of Appeals Public Hearing on November 18, 2020

Case 20-025 68 Windsor Street, Gregory Lane

Mr. Sadowski and Mr. Cassavoy requested to discuss this case and not send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals. Members had varying views on the proposal and did not come to a united recommendation. Some members were not in support of the proposal because there would not be enough space to maintain the house on the property with a two-story structure three feet from the lot line. They found that even though the abutting land is owned by a utility company there is no justification for expanding the building to be this close to the property line. They discussed if there was another configuration that would push the proposed garage farther back on the lot so that it encroached less in the side yard. Additionally, the expansion is for a second garage parking space, which is an amenity and not a necessity. Other members who were not opposed felt that the addition would not be detrimental as it is next to vacant land that the utility company would not develop at least for the foreseeable future. An addition that stepped back to create a bigger side yard would be awkward.

Mr. Sadowski made a motion to send a letter explaining these views to the Board of Appeals for this case. Mr. Cassavoy seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 20-025

APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED

Florence Avenue Lot (Map E6, Lot 66)

Mr. Sadowski made a motion to take this item out of order on the agenda. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor. None were opposed.

Rehman Khan, Sharon Pica, and Karen Compben were present for the case. Board members discussed how the lots would be divided. Lots 9A and 9B are currently one lot that is owned with 127 Whitman Avenue. Lot 9A will be combined with 64 Florence Avenue. An ANR is needed to convey the land. They discussed how the lack of frontage for lot 9B is not an issue because it is combined with 127 Whitman Avenue for zoning purposes and cannot be conveyed separately.

Mr. Sampson made a motion to endorse the ANR plan. Mr. Sadowski seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ANR Application for Florence Avenue Lot (Map E6, Lot 66)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Board of Appeals Public Hearing on November 18, 2020

Case 20-026, 121 Green Street, Patricia Burns O'Brien

Ms. O'Brien and Fritha Burns appeared to explain the proposal.

The Board recommended denying the application for the following reasons. There is an excessive number of variances requested for the proposal. The existing barn is a passive accessory structure and building a 2 ½ story house in its place would be a significant change.

The setbacks of the proposed structure are minimal and there may not be enough land to locate a second principal structure on the lot that has more conforming setbacks. The large curb cut would be detrimental and parking should be located away from the street.

During the course of the review, some members suggested that the applicant consult with an architect to consider whether there may be other design options that would require fewer variances and less significant zoning relief.

Mr. Sadowski made a motion to send the Board of Appeals this recommendation. Mr. Mercado seconded the motion. By roll call all voted in favor of sending this letter, except for Mr. King who was not present for the vote due to technical difficulties. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 20-026

Case 20-021, 138 Main Street, Metro Credit Union

Attorney Christopher Tolley, John Cavanaro, Engineer, Robert Cashman, Metro Credit Union CEO, Craig Fishman, Building Coordinator, Jeff Bandini, Traffic Engineer, Camilo Villa, and Jessica Palm, Facilities Manager, appeared to explain the proposal.

The Board made a recommendation before reviewing the typical Site Plan Review considerations. The use was established by a variance and the ZBA needs to approve of the use before they get too far into the details. Also, the City requested additional engineering information that is pending.

With the proposal as configured, the Board recommended denying the variances. They felt that the current design is suburban in nature and is inappropriate for this location. Even in commercial districts parking should be located behind buildings. The parking could be located behind the building by shifting the building's footprint forward and redesigning the expansive driveway. Altering the site plan in this way would not only eliminate parking in the front yard along Main Street but it would also free up land for open space on the lot.

The Board questioned if a use variance is required for this proposal considering that the commercial use is physically expanding onto a residential lot and increasing in intensity with a larger building, drive-through, more parking and more trips to the site. Members had varying opinions on the existence of a drive-through ATM, especially one so close to residential abutters. Some members felt that a one-way driveway would work better, decreasing the width of the curb cuts and paving and limiting the turning movements into and out of the property. Some preferred no drive-through due to the necessity for a new curb cut on Main Street to accommodate circulation for it and the increase in traffic and emissions from idling cars.

Members also questioned whether the Sylvan Street lot was merged for zoning purposes with 2-4 Sylvan Street and if so, it could not be sold as proposed to provide parking for the bank. The Applicant agreed to provide more information on this item.

Mr. Sadowski made a motion to send the Board of Appeals these recommendations. Mr. Sampson seconded the motion. By roll call all voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 20-021

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Case 20-002, 138 Main Street, Metro Credit Union

Mr. Sadowski made a motion to open the public hearing. Mr. Mercado seconded the motion. By roll call all voted in favor. None were opposed.

Six people appeared to speak in opposition to the application. Ellen Katz of 70 Line Street, Ryan Williams of 88 Malvern Street, Zerong You of 103 Ledgewood Avenue, Finn McSweeney of 160 W Wyoming Avenue, Robert and Laura Moylon of 144 Main Street. Comments included the following:

- Concerns about the drive-through as a relic of a car centric city where idling cars create pollution. It is counter to the City's Master Plan goals and drive-throughs are not permitted in newer zoning districts. It is also counter to the City's net-zero goals.
- The proposal will negatively impact the complete street improvement plan for this section of Main Street, which will improve non-vehicular trips to Oak Grove Station.
- The Pedestrian and Bike Committee's letter point out other negative impacts of the proposal and auto-centric drive-through ATM.
- The drive-through will be detrimental for the neighbors. It will be within feet of the abutters' bedroom window.
- Parking in the front will be an eyesore.
- With on-line banking not as many people need to go to the bank.
- There is a lot of parking in the area.
- There is a lot of visibility on Sylvan Street. A Main Street curb cut will not and this will be unsafe for bicycles.
- This proposal will negatively impact the quality of life of the residential neighborhood.
- The Sylvan Street lot is used by the residents of 2-4 Sylvan Street and it should not be considered a separate lot.
- The parking lot is only full at certain times.
- The bank appears residential now and it is nice that the lawn blends together with the abutter's lawn in the front.
- There is congestion at the intersection and it is too busy to have a curb cut so close.
- The proposal will change the character of the residential neighborhood.
- The bank should be in a more commercial area.

Robert Cashman, CEO and President of Metro Credit Union said that the property is an eyesore along Sylvan Street and will be improved with this application. They are following the market and it demands a drive-through ATM. Employees get tickets parking on the street. They need more on-site parking.

A Board member said that this is a residential neighborhood and the neighbors' comments about the drive-through ATM hold a lot of weight.

Attorney Tolley requested a continuance to the November 23, 2020 hearing. Mr. Sampson made a motion to accept the request. Mr. Mercado seconded the motion. By roll call all voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Site Plan Review Application, 20-002

OTHER BUSINESS

Incentive Zoning Update

Ms. Gaffey explained the zoning amendment text and map that the Zoning Subcommittee has been working on over the last couple of months. There was some discussion of the amendment but due to the late hour, the members will look through the materials again before the next Planning Board meeting and be ready to discuss and potentially initiate the amendment.

NEXT MEETING

The next Design Review Subcommittee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, 2020 at 7:30pm to discuss the as-built condition of 419 Main Street.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 23, 2020 at 7:30pm.

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 pm.