

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Design Review Subcommittee
Thursday, February 11, 2021
7:30 PM
Remote Meeting

PRESENT: Carla Morelli, John Sadowski, Jack Welch, & Robert Mercado

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Denise Gaffey, Director and Emma Battaglia, Senior Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:43 PM by Ms. Morelli.

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 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.

Case 17-002, 419-429 Main Street

Teddy Lantzakis, owner, Matt Roman, general contractor, and Will Chalfant, project architect, appeared to present the changes to the building at 419-429 Main Street that differ from what the Planning Board and Design Review Subcommittee have approved. In the basement, the bike storage area has been moved, the mechanical areas were consolidated, and they added a public restroom. On the first floor, they have relocated the trash to the alleyway and made changes to the rear design, such as eliminating the metal canopies and adding two parking spaces. They are proposing to add a planting bed along the ramp as well as a permeable walkway at the back. On the roof, the condensers have been located more centrally and the owner has installed solar panels to power the common areas.

Mr. Sadowski inquired about the order of the process and what else the Zoning Board of Appeals reviewed when they voted to approve the Variance for the micro-units since the project representatives alluded to the ZBA approving other changes to the building. Ms. Gaffey clarified that the ZBA never made a determination about anything other than the micro-units. Mr. Roman admitted that this may have been an oversight on their part. Mr. Sadowski made clear that, according to the Site Plan Review regulations, any modifications to the building or site need to come back to the Planning Board for review and approval.

Subcommittee members inquired about why they lessened the tenant storage and the intent of the third storage space if there is not a third retail tenant. Mr. Lantzakis responded that they thought they would not need more tenant storage and they want to keep the option open for a potential commercial occupancy in the basement if it is okay with the building code. Ms. Gaffey explained that the Building Inspector would assess this, but since this is a recently approved Site Plan, he would want it to go back to the Planning Board for review. In the spirit of collaboration moving forward, Ms. Morelli wanted to make sure that the project team is aware of the process and that the Planning Board or Design Review Subcommittee needs to approve any and all changes to the Site Plan that occur after their initial approval.

The proposal originally included a dedicated room in the basement for eight bike spots. The bike storage area has since been relocated to near the elevator in the basement and there is now room for nine spots on a bike rack. A formerly internal staircase at the rear has been relocated to the exterior of the building. Mr. Mercado mentioned that moving the staircase without coming back to the Board is a major change. He would have suggested that they put the staircase elsewhere. He would prefer to have the whole Planning Board vote to approve the changes. Mr. Sadowski responded that tonight they can make recommendations that are later presented to the full Board.

Trash and recycling was initially proposed to be located at the rear of the building, and has since been moved into the alleyway against the south façade. The alleyway is 7.5 feet wide and there is 4.5 feet for pedestrian passage with the trash and recycling barrels. Ms. Gaffey summarized correspondence from the Health Director saying that she is okay with barrels in the place of the dumpster initially proposed because there will not be a restaurant. A Subcommittee member mentioned that people may put their personal trash in those barrels, and Mr. Roman responded that he would rather pedestrians put trash in the receptacles than leave it in the alleyway.

Mr. Sadowski explained again that the onus on the owner to build to the approved plans and update the Board if there is a need to change the plans. They went from a manicured proposal to putting trash barrels in an alley and people do not want to walk past that. Mr. Roman said that he thinks it is an improvement to have the trash out of the rear. The alley is not a public way and the developer could gate it off. Ms. Morelli said that she takes offense to that suggestion. Pedestrians are used to cutting through that alley to Main Street and that is an asset for the building. She also mentioned that the planting proposed for the alleyway is essentially a drip edge for the building. She suggested taking the square footage of landscaping proposed for there and adding it to the planting bed along the ramp at the back. It could also be helpful to use landscape beds to demarcate the property line since it is not clear where it is.

Mr. Mercado suggested removing one of the parking spaces and putting in landscaping there. Mr. Roman said that they do not want to plant over and disturb the City's culvert. Ms. Morelli stated that maybe the City needs to do some striping back there but Mr. Roman wanted to be sure that they do not want to block the drive-thru at Eastern Bank. Mr. Chalfant mentioned that he is personally concerned about the parking spaces and maneuverability. Mr. Sadowski said that he does not understand why they cannot include more planting along the ramp area, and that the Board is looking for more consolidated planting. The proposal now meets the 5% open space

requirement because the permeable pavers in the alleyway count as open space, according to the Applicant.

Ms. Morelli said that she would like Mr. Lantzakis and the owner of Eastern Bank to work together to add meaningful landscaping to the side of the building abutting the bank. They are jumping through hoops to accommodate Eastern Bank's drive-thru. Mr. Roman responded that the owner of Eastern Bank has plans for that area so he did not want them to add landscaping there at this time. Ms. Morelli explained that if you have a skinny landscape strip, you cannot have depth or good coverage, and it will defeat the purpose of screening. The rendering of landscaping at the back is not realistic. It would be great if they could tuck the dumpster or barrels back there. They could fit fenced-in within the L-shape of the ramp. Mr. Sadowski added that they should use a granite curb around the landscape area as cedar or the like would not protect the curb if it were hit by a car. The trash and recycling was approved to take place in this location and they could kill two birds with one stone by redesigning this area.

The conversation shifted to the façade changes at the back of the building. The mental canopies approved by the Board have been omitted and black fabric awnings that match the ones at the front have been proposed as an alternative. Subcommittee members did not mind the fabric awnings, though it was noted that the fabric will need to be replaced. A member asked if lighting was being proposed around the signage at the front. Mr. Roman responded that the lighting proposal has not changed and the only exterior lighting will be that which is already affixed to the columns.

Mr. Roman asked if the rooftop solar needs to be reviewed by the Planning Board. The Building Inspector did not identify that when they did the permitting for the solar. Mr. Mercado asked if the solar panels are visible from the street. Mr. Roman said that it depends what direction from Main Street you are driving down but they should not be more visible than condensers. Mr. Welch mentioned that solar panels could cushion some of the noise from the condensers.

Two bike racks have been added along the alley where the trash and recycling is located. The bike racks should not stick out into the alleyway because bikes will be oriented parallel to the building. Subcommittee members had no problems with the bike racks and agreed that they will be good for people on Main Street.

Ms. Morelli repeated that she would prefer the receptacles be relocated back to the rear with a revised solution. Mr. Lantzakis asked why you would want to move it to the back since it is a beautiful, high-traffic area. The gates to the dumpster enclosure would always be left open as dumpster companies never close them. Mr. Welch remarked that it is more work to move the rubbish barrels up the alley for pickup. Mr. Lantzakis said that the Board of Health said that it would be better in the alleyway. Trash and recycling is currently picked up once a week and they wheel the barrels to Main Street and back. They can have pickup occur more often, whatever the demand is.

Ms. Morelli asked the project team provide a coordinated plan for trash and landscaping. They should create a planting environment where more will thrive back there. The Planning Board would rather a mature landscape bed than more permeable pavement.

A concern about insufficient parking is what prompted the building owner to add two parking spaces to the rear. Mr. Sadowski asked if this area was originally intended for loading. Mr. Roman said that a loading area is not needed since there is not a restaurant. Mr. Sadowski mentioned that the program could change at some point and they could have a restaurant tenant. They need to conform with zoning. They could make the spaces month to month in case the commercial tenant changes. Signs will be needed for the parking spaces but non-tenants will still try to park there.

Mr. Sadowski remarked that he would hope the Building Inspector would wait to sign off on full occupancy until he gets correspondence from the Design Review Subcommittee. Ms. Morelli stated that a process we all thought was clear cut has gotten muddled along the way. The group agreed to try to meet again on February 22 for the full Board meeting so they do not have to meet with the Subcommittee again.

Documents: Post Completion Narrative; Red-Lined and Annotated Plans dated July 14, 2020

The meeting ended at 9:45pm.