

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, February 22, 2021
7:30 PM
Remote Meeting

PRESENT: Beth Delahaij, 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 7:35 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.

Ms. DeSouza-Ward introduced Beth Delahaij who is the new Planning Board member. Ms. Delahaij filled Michael Cassavoy's position.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, January 25, 2021

Mr. King made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Sadowski seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor, except for Sharon Petrillo and Beth Delahaij who abstained. None were opposed.

Design Review Subcommittee Meeting, January 20, 2021

Mr. Mercado made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor, except for Sharon Petrillo and Beth Delahaij who abstained. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW & AFFORDABLE HOUSING SPECIAL PERMIT

Case 20-004, 40 Vine Street, 39 Tappan Street LLC

Attorney Patrick McAvoy indicated that they would like more time to explore options for the site.

Mr. Mercado made a motion to continue the case to March 22, 2021. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

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

This case is currently before the Zoning Board of Appeals and Attorney Tolley requested to continue the case to March 22, 2021.

Mr. Mercado made a motion to continue the case to March 22, 2021. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor. None were opposed.

Document: Email from Attorney Tolley from February 19, 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Case 21-003, Comprehensive Permit Application, 12-16 Essex Street, Carroll Essex LLC (ZBA continued to February 24, 2021)

Ms. Gaffey gave an overview of the proposal and explained the support for it.

The Board asked how the Applicants responded to the Planning Board's previous concerns and the Zoning Board's comments; particularly the blank wall on the northwest elevation and sight lines and safety coming out of the driveway.

Mr. Carroll stated that the northwest façade will be a darker color as the Planning Board recommended in the past and they are redesigning the façade materials to create interest with textures. They did not want to draw attention to the wall with a lot of detail.

Mr. Carroll sought a traffic study that confirms that there will be no significant traffic due to the proposal. The number of parking spaces has been decreased to 9 to make room for on-grade bicycle parking. A car will never back out of the driveway. The driveway is an existing condition. The vehicle exit sign which will be a two-sided, LED sign will be affixed to the Main Street building. He submitted the cut sheet for the sign. The sensor will be triggered when the vehicle exists the garage. There will not be an audio warning unless requested. A member asked the Applicant to check to see if it is an ADA requirement. Even if it is not, members recommended the audio warning since this is what will catch pedestrians' attention.

The bays have not changed in size from the proposal that the Planning Board approved. Attorney Bell has been in touch with the City Solicitor regarding if approvals are needed to have the bays project over the sidewalk. The history of Essex Street is in question on if the street was taken by easement rights or owned in fee simple. Roads owned in fee tend to be State roads. If the City owns the street by easement, the bays do not interfere with those rights. If the City owns the street in fee simple, the City Council will have to approve the projection. Many of the buildings

on Main Street have projecting bays. They are continuing to research the ownership and the approvals needed.

Mr. Carroll said that the bays are part of the historic vernacular in a new and modern way. The Architect made some changes that meet in the middle with the design. The revised plans will be submitted prior to the next ZBA hearing. The revised plans will include a more defined cornice line, textures on the northwest wall and design changes to the bays.

The Board discussed the trash operation. Currently trash is picked up at 6am on Friday mornings. The truck backs into the driveway. The 4-yard dumpster will need to be moved by a machine. There does not appear to be the space to move the dumpsters around and it will be enclosed which restricts movement. The dumpsters will have wheels and will need to be pulled out and lifted by the truck. Mr. Carroll said that the dumpster situation is the same as it is now with a 6-yard dumpster. They may have to increase to two trash pickups per week.

Mr. Carroll does not have a tenant in mind for the commercial space. It could be a food service.

The building will be efficient. It will comply with the stretch code and may be LEED certifiable.

Mr. Sampson made a motion to write a letter to the ZBA in support of the project. Several of their concerns were raised by the ZBA as well and they felt that they would adequately address the outstanding issues. They appreciated the Applicant's willingness to work with them. The proposal will help boost the affordable housing numbers and this is an appropriate location for multi-family housing. The Board was supportive of the original proposal with design modifications. The number of parking spaces is reduced from the proposal that they approved; however, they are not concerned about parking. The Planning Board was glad to see the adding bicycle parking in the garage. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Comprehensive Permit Application Materials, Case 21-003

Board of Appeals Public Hearings on March 10, 2021:

Case 21-002, 40-40A Chestnut Street, Magalie Valcin

Board members had mixed opinions on the proposal. Some had concerns with a principal structure being so close to the property lines and rewarding an illegal use in a large garage. The history of how this came to be would be helpful in understanding the situation. On the other hand, the structure would not be changing a great deal and could provide another unit of much needed housing. With the close proximity of the structure to the property lines the abutters' comments will be particularly important in evaluating this proposal.

There was a general consensus on the following recommendations. The proposed deck should be smaller and it should be shown on the site plan. At the proposed size and at the second story height it would loom over the small backyard. To the extent that the Board approves the proposal there should be clear findings that are specific to this situation that utilizes an existing structure.

Mr. Sampson made a motion to send the Board of Appeals a letter with these comments. Mr. Sadowski seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 21-002

Case 21-004, 4 Wentworth Road, Marina Winkler

The Board had no objections to the proposal. The property is a corner lot with onerous setback requirements and the requested relief of a half of a foot is minor. The drawings are well planned for the addition.

Mr. Sadowksi made a motion to send the Board of Appeals a letter with these comments. Mr. Mercado seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 21-004

Case 20-010-R, 423 Pleasant Street, MPower Energy, LLC

Generally, the Planning Board had no objection to this application except for one member who recommended denial. This member, as well as others, had concerns that the business will need more than four on-site parking spaces on an occasional basis. Other members felt that the business will make it work considering that they have worked through the appeal of the case. To alleviate the parking concerns the Board recommended that MPower Energy submit an employee handbook or similar document to give assurance that the employees know that there is an expectation that they use public or alternative transportation to commute to the office and if they do drive they will not park on the street or block the driveway.

Mr. Sampson made a motion to send the Board of Appeals a letter with these comments. Mr. Sadowski seconded the motion. All members by roll call voted in favor except for Mr. Welch who was opposed to a letter of no objection.

Documents: Application Materials, Case 20-010-R

OTHER

Zoning Amendment Update

Ms. Gaffey explained that the Planning Board last reviewed the zoning amendment for incentive zoning tools and parking related modifications in December. She has since met with the City Councilors to review the proposal and they provided some comments. She also reviewed comments from the Building Commissioner today. These changes could be incorporated into the amendment before initiating it with the City Council. The amendment could also be made consistent with recent legislative changes in the Housing Choice Law that allows for approval with a simple majority vote. The Board will meet on March 8, 2021 to review the amendment and initiate it to the City Council.

Design Review Subcommittee Update

The subcommittee met on February 11, 2021 to discuss the 419 Main Street case. For this meeting they asked for an analysis of the changes from the approved plan to what was built.

They have reached an agreement on most items but have still asked for a comprehensive solution for the rear of the building for trash, landscaping and parking. Once they get to a resolution they will come back to the full Planning Board with a presentation of where they would like the project to end up.

For future projects, the Planning Board may want to mandate a check-in during development so that this situation does not happen again. The timing of the check-in will be important; however, depending on when builders deviate from the plans it is difficult to catch all changes along the way.

NEXT MEETING

The next special meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 8, 2021 at 7:30pm.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 22, 2021 at 7:30pm. This will be the annual meeting. Those interested in being Chair or Clerk or changing subcommittees should inform Ms. Gaffey.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm.