

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, February 28, 2022
7:30 PM
Remote Meeting

PRESENT: Tim Bailey, Beth Delahaij, Anne DeSouza Ward, Brian Gregory, Paul King, Robert Mercado, Carla Morelli, Greg Sampson & Jack Welch

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Denise Gaffey, Director and City Planner, Lori Massa, Senior Planner & Maya Noviski, Assistant Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 PM by Mr. Sampson.

Pursuant to An Act Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency signed by Governor Baker on June 16, 2021, this meeting was be conducted via remote participation. Specific information 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 could be found on the City of Melrose's website, at www.cityofmelrose.org. 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, or in the event that we are unable to do so, they would be post on the mmtv3.org website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting. A link was also available on www.cityofmelrose.org.

Meeting access information was found at the following link:
www.cityofmelrose.org/remotemeetings.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, January 24, 2022

Board Members had no comments or adjustments to previous minutes. Mr. Mercado made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Case 22-001, 148 Myrtle St., Brown Dog Properties, LLC

Robert Bell, Attorney, began by introducing Matt and Joe Roman, the Applicants, and owners of Brown Dog Properties LLC. Attorney Bell took care to note Brown Dog Properties' reputation for high quality work and the Planning Board's prior support for projects developed through the company in the City. Attorney Bell continued by describing the property, previously owned by

Brad Hutchinson, and explaining how this project not only fulfills the historical goals of the City but will also raise the City's revenues while increasing the number of available housing units. He noted that it would not be feasible to have an affordable unit onsite but that the payment that they are required to make to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund will be substantial because these will be expensive units.

Attorney Bell introduced Joe Roman who went on to describe the deficiencies with the existing property including issues with the foundation and the front porch, and various structural elements including high levels of lead paint. Mr. Roman argued that these concerns justified completely dismantling for reuse or tearing down the existing structure and replacing it with a net zero capable building complete with EV chargers, solar power, and bicycle storage. This building will have 5 units with three bedrooms per unit and one parking space per unit. The developers have met with potential neighbors who have expressed support and with department heads who requested moving the trash enclosure, expanding the sprinkler and utility storage room, and adjusting the landscape plan.

Mr. Roman noted that they are still working on conducting a traffic survey and updating the engineering plans, specifically around storm water management. Ms. Gaffey concluded by explaining that the Planning Staff supports the project and the reduced parking request although the Applicant will have to provide justification for the parking reduction for the Planning Board to grant a special permit for the reduction.

The Board then opened the case for public comment. Two community members spoke, John Ferrara of 18 Vine Street and Finn McSweeney of 160 W Wyoming, and one community member, Julia Kono of 154 Myrtle Street, submitted written comments during the hearing. The Board received letters from neighbor Richard Curl and the Melrose Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee prior to the hearing. The first community member who spoke expressed concern over the limited parking the development offers. He mentioned that there is a library close by and during the summer, traffic becomes increasingly heavy. He was worried that the development would not be able to contain overflow parking and would negatively impact the already busy street. This sentiment was echoed in Ms. Kono's comments. Mr. Curl's letter included tempered support and a comment about the design of the front porch. A Member asked about this comment and the Applicants like the porch design but will speak with their architect about the comments.

Finn McSweeney, representing the Pedestrian and Bike Committee, voiced the Committee's support for this project. He believes that this transit-oriented development has the right amount of parking spaces due to its proximity to public transportation, its walkability, and the developer's commitment to bicycle access and storage.

Several Board Members were in agreement that the number of parking spaces posed an issue. In response, Matt Roman highlighted the surrounding municipal parking lots with available spaces that residents' guests could use. The City has an is a parking permit program that allows for parking in municipal lots overnight for a fee. Mr. Roman suggested that building managers will encourage people to not park on Vine St. or Myrtle St. and will alert people to the aforementioned parking spaces. Attorney Bell also suggested that these units will attract a certain group of people that are not bothered by limited parking, and buildings with a similar parking

design have proven to be viable in other locations. Additionally, the reduced parking will allow for additional housing which will help the City meet its housing production goals. Several Board Members agreed with Mr. Roman and Attorney Bell and did not feel that this was a point of concern.

Other points of concern from the Board included the accessibility of the bicycle storage room, soil testing results, a lack of safety measures around parking areas, snow storage and removal, and trash pickup. In response to the bicycle storage, Joe Roman explained that the storage would be for the winter and for longer periods of time; during the nicer months the property provides for residents to be able to park their bikes outdoors. Additionally, those who choose to bring their bicycles into their respective units can do so relatively easily due to design elements that intentionally allow for easy transport.

In reference to the soil testing, Matt Roman explained that four test pits were completed with positive results – the soil is gravel, which will drain well. They dug 10 to 12 feet and did not find ground water. Mr. Roman also noted that due to the property's elevation, which is higher than the neighboring properties, it is precluded from the water and soil issues facing surrounding properties and he will update the project's drawings to reflect this. Mr. Roman went on to describe the curb work that will be done in the front of the property to mitigate parking safety hazards and the walkways around the property which will differentiate the parking and pedestrian spaces. Mr. Roman also noted that they would like to keep the retaining wall already on the driveway.

The project's current snow storage area raised concerns among many Board Members, both in size and placement. In the event that snow will have to be plowed and stored, the tenant occupying the fifth parking space will have to move their vehicle due to the location of the snow storage area. In addition to noting that there was not an abundance of space for snow storage and that the building may have to remove the snow from the premises, Mr. Roman suggested that with proper coordination, he does not think that the snow storage placement will be problematic. Board Members pushed back and requested more clarification on the logistics of a contingency plan if a tenant has to move their car and is unable or unavailable to do so. One member suggested possible uncoupling the parking spaces from the units. Additionally, Members raised concerns over the parking and space limitations for service trucks and snow plows.

In response to questions over trash removal, Mr. Roman explained that there will be space for six totes along the driveway which will serve the entire building and for recycling and trash. One Board Member suggested adding a composting service to this building to help reduce both waste and environmental impact.

A member pointed out that the design of the building and site works well with the context of the neighborhood. The landscape plan includes substantial planting that will enhance the development.

This case concluded with Mr. Sampson requesting that the Applicant submit the parking memo, the response to the Engineering Department's comments, and to further develop the plans for snow removal and storage. A motion to continue this case to the next Planning Board meeting on

March 28th, 2022, was made by Mr. Mercado, seconded by Mr. Welch, and all members voted to continue the case.

Documents: Application Materials, January 3, 2022
 Response to Preliminary Review, January 3, 2022
 Civil Plans, January 4, 2022
 Landscape Plans, January 4, 2022
 Heat Pump Locations, January 4, 2022
 Construction Management Plan, January 4, 2022
 Stormwater Management, January 4, 2022
 Inspectional Services Letter, July 20, 2021
 Green Building Overview, February 28, 2022

Case 21-002-R, 735 Newburyport Turnpike, John T. Pugh II

John T. Pugh II, Applicant, appealed to the Planning Board for a modification on a previously issued site approval for the project at 735 Newburyport Turnpike. Mr. Pugh began by presenting a brief summary of the project which involves the demolition of the existing structures on the lot and the construction of a 94,000 square-foot warehouse/distribution facility. This property sits on the Melrose/Malden boundary and changes to the plans that the Melrose Planning Board approved occurred during review by the City of Malden in connection with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) review.

These changes include the reconfiguration of two of the three site driveways to improve truck circulation, an additional tractor trailer entry off Route 1, less onsite parking, less open space and increased permeable pavement onsite. Additionally, a channelized island was added to prohibit a left turn on Rt. 99 and a deceleration lane was added off of Route 1. Furthermore, the plans include the dumpster locations, bicycle racks on the Malden side of the property, and modified snow storage. Mr. Pugh sought variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals for modifications for the open space requirement and the maximum driveway width.

Once Mr. Pugh concluded his presentation, Board Members responded with questions and comments about the need for the proposed number of parking spaces and the ability for trucks to enter the site from Route 99. Mr. Pugh said that trucks will be able to enter from Route 99. He also said that they are trying to balance the size of the building, maneuvering space, open space and parking. A member pointed that there may be a better way to arrange the parking rows to gain more open space.

Mr. Sampson felt that while the safety improvements to the site plan were acceptable, he did not support the additional open space relief requested, maintaining consistency with how the Board felt previously. Many Board Members voiced their agreement with this stance. The Board then opened the case for Public Comment to which there was none.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to approve the site plan with modifications and which was seconded by Ms. DeSouza Ward. By roll call all members voted in favor to approve the revisions to the site plan and none were opposed.

Documents: Application Materials, February 1, 2022
Description of Proposed Changes, February 1, 2022
Revised Plans, December 22, 2021
Operations and Maintenance Plan submitted Feb 1, 2022
Planning Board Decision for Case 21-002, August 9, 2021
Previously Approved Site Plans
Architecture Plans
Previous Traffic Impact Study Letter
Previous Storm water Management

OTHER

Housing Production Plan Update

Ms. Gaffey gave a presentation on the final Housing Production Plan. This plan has had a robust public process over the past 16 months. Ms. Gaffey began her presentation by reintroducing the Housing Production Plan, discussed the planning process and concluded by summarizing the plan's recommendations. The Housing Production Plan will be presented to City Council who will hold a vote in the middle of March and if approved, it will go to DHCD for final approval. After discussion, Mr. Welch made a motion to approve the Housing Production Plan and Mr. Mercado seconded the motion. By roll call all members voted in favor to approve the plan and none were opposed.

Documents: Housing Production Plan, February 2022

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Board of Appeals Public Hearing on March 9, 2022:

Case 21-002-R, 735 Newburyport Turnpike, Pugh Management, LLC

The Board found that the improved safety plans for the project were acceptable but decided to maintain consistency with their previous recommendation to grant a variance for the parking and driveway width but not the open space reduction. A motion was made by Ms. DeSouza Ward and was seconded by Ms. Morelli to send this recommendation. By roll call all members voted in favor and none were opposed.

Documents: Applicant Materials for Case 21-002-R

Case 22-003, 66 Beech Ave, Johanna & Kevin Cohan

The Board did not have any issues with the proposed addition. They discussed the removal of a large window with no proposed window in the addition creating a blank wall on the house. They decided to not specifically put a recommendation about this issue in the letter. Ms. DeSouza

Ward made a motion to send a neutral letter with acknowledgement of Staff recommendations and Mr. Mercado seconded the motion. By roll call all members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Applicant Materials for Case 22-003

NEXT MEETING

Planning Board Annual Meeting, Monday, March 28, 2022

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.