

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Thursday, October 13, 2022
7:30 PM
Remote Meeting

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

ABSENT: None

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM by Mr. Sampson.

Pursuant to An Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, signed into law by Governor Baker on July 16, 2022, 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:
<https://www.cityofmelrose.org/remote-meetings>

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, September 12, 2022

Mr. Welch noted that the minutes should be edited to indicate that he was not present at the September 12th meeting. Mr. Welch made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended. Ms. DeSouza Ward seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Case 22-006, 681-687 Main St., Green Rise Homes, LLC. (continued public hearing)

David Lucas, Attorney, appeared before the Board to present the case and reviewed the project's updates. In response to the Board's requests, Kyle Russo, Developer and Applicant, explored leasing parking from nearby commercial properties but was unsuccessful in his attempts. However, Attorney Lucas noted that he does not believe that the project needs parking. He continued by highlighting several changes made to the architectural plans including:

- The exterior material for the staircase on the corner of East Emerson St. and Main St. was changed from glass to cementitious siding with windows
- The residential entrance has been relocated to Main St.
- The commercial solid waste storage room has been updated
- Solar panels have been rearranged on the roof

Attorney Lucas noted that the project requires variances and special permits from the Board of Appeals for dimensional relief and for parking. However, he wanted to confirm with the Planning Board that if they approve the Special Permit for reduced parking requirements, that would satisfy the project's parking needs and negate the need for an appeal for parking from the Board of Appeals.

Ken Feyl, Architect, continued describing the architectural changes made from the last hearing. The floor plan for the ground floor reflects the following updates:

- The retail space square footage was reduced by about 600 sq ft.
- A solid waste and recycling storage room for commercial tenants containing four, two-yard dumpsters and an entrance on Main St. was included. The receptacles will be wheeled down Main St. to a collection point in the Livermore Municipal Lot next to the building.
- The residential entrance was relocated to Main St.
- The configuration of the lobby, package room, solid waste storage room, tenant storage, and bicycle room was reorganized.
- The residential solid waste storage room shows four, two-yard receptacles that will be wheeled out directly to the designated collection point in the Livermore Municipal Lot.
- Details for the bicycle room show ground floor and wall mounted storage.
- The stairs connected to the lobby were relocated to provide for a larger tenant amenity room.

Plans for the roof were also updated including the addition of rain barrels for water collection, the relocation of the utilities on the roof, modification of the elevator, staircase and bathroom location, and revision of the building's solar panel array. Mr. Feyl explained that the building's green elements were also enhanced with an improved thermal envelope and the inclusion of high efficiency energy heat pumps, low flow plumbing and Energy STAR rated appliances. Additionally, he noted that the solar panels on the building would provide enough electricity to cover residential demand.

Other updates include the stair tower design which is now opaque with smaller windows, like those found on other areas of the building. The building's corner on East Emerson St. and Main St. was revised to match the other building corner and the signage was relocated to the ground level. Mr. Feyl highlighted that more detail was provided with regards to the architectural detailing on the ground floor. Plans show a stone base, cementitious panels painted with half inch stainless steel reveals, canopies, and bench planters along East Emerson St. built with stone.

Kristen LaBrie, Civil Engineer, reviewed updates to the project's civil plans which include:

- The installation of a four-foot fence between the abutting property on East Emerson St. and the project.
- Planting two street trees along Main St.
- Restriping the parking spaces along Main St. and spaces in the Livermore Municipal Lot including moving an accessible space closer to the building.
- The designation of a space in the municipal lot for trash and recycling pickup.
- Vegetative screening placed between the property and the municipal lot.

Ms. LaBrie responded to the Planning Board's comments about exploring methods of roof water recharge by explaining that there is not enough space within the property to have underground infiltration.

Keri Pyke, Traffic Engineer, described the updates to the traffic study. She noted that new counts were taken on September 15, 2022 with the data showing that traffic volumes were slightly higher than the prior study, which was conducted in November 2021. She noted that there are still good levels of service. She explained that to collect parking counts, all the public lots within 0.5 miles of the project were studied, which amounted to 650 parking spaces. The data showed that during 7:30AM-9:00AM and 4:00PM-5:30PM, the lots were never more than 30% occupied. There was also plenty of on street parking available during those hours. She clarified that if residents wanted to park in the municipal lots overnight, they would need to apply for a permit through the city.

One Board Member asked if the construction on Main St., in the municipal lot, and relocating the culvert, was all proposed as part of the project and if there has been any coordination with the city. Ms. LaBrie explained that the culvert relocation will be a joint effort between the Developer and the City. The City received a Massworks Grant from the State to cover the construction costs. She also explained that the team met with the City and came to an agreement about the proposed improvements to the municipal lot. She noted that all the proposed improvements and landscaping will be maintained and supported by the project. The project will need a permit for a temporary construction area in the municipal lot, which will be applied for prior to construction.

One Board Member asked about the traffic study data, specifically on vehicle ownership and households without vehicles. Ms. Pyke explained that information was taken from the census for each tract and the percentages presented were derived using the total pool of renters and homeowners in the city.

Board Members were curious about the logistics of the commercial solid waste and recycling. It was explained that there is a hallway behind the two proposed retail spaces, which will be used to access the trash and recycling room. For trash pickup, the proposal requires the bins to be wheeled down Main St. to a pickup spot in the Livermore Municipal Lot. Ms. LaBrie explained that there are two main constraints that require the trash room to be located on Main St.: the location of the transformer and the residential entrance. She noted that the transformer prevents

the commercial trash area from being able to connect to the alleyway on East Emerson St. behind the building. The relocation of the residential entrance further limits the trash room's location. Members felt that it would be better to have trash management be located onsite rather than in a public way and asked the team to explore other options that would not result in moving the residential entrance off Main St. or take away other residential benefits.

Board Members noted that it will be difficult to push the bins down the sidewalk due to their weight and were concerned about potential damage to the sidewalk from the metal wheels. Members commented that the bins will have to be correctly placed in a location where a truck will easily be able to lift and empty the dumpsters. Ms. LaBrie responded that the trash will be in bags and the bins themselves will not be lifted. She noted that it may require two people to wheel the bins but there can be more frequent pickups if the bin weight becomes onerous. She commented that there will be a sign above the designated parking spot that will be used to wheel the bins to the truck restricting parking between certain times and the pickups will happen early in the mornings. It was clarified that the trash pickup will be managed by a private company rather than the city.

One Member asked about the overnight permitting procedure and voiced concerns about the lack of parking proposed. Attorney Lucas explained that this will be marketed as a pedestrian and bicycle friendly project but if residents do have a vehicle, they will be directed to the Parking Clerk for an overnight permit. Denise Gaffey, City Planner, explained that the overnight parking permit allows residents to park overnight in a municipal lot for an annual fee. Residents are required to move their vehicle by 6 AM but the lots do allow for 2-3 hours of free parking so enforcement will happen after that time extension. She explained that there are 600 permits for sale per year and the supply is much higher than the demand. She noted that the biggest concern is that residents will not be aware that they do not have unfettered access to the lot but could sign a piece of paper indicating that they understand the rules and regulations. It was clarified that the Planning Board has the approval authority to grant reduced parking in any situation where Site Plan Approval is required for both residential and commercial spaces.

One Member asked about coordinating with the city and the Massworks grant to bulb out the sidewalk on the corner of East Emerson St. and Main St. to shorten the crosswalk, allow for more public space, and further deter people from parallel parking close to the intersection. Ms. LaBrie noted that she tried this design but it interfered with the crosswalk and would require the electrical box and traffic light to be moved. She explained that this would also cause interference with the proposed drainage location and the budget for the Massworks grant cannot support additional construction. Ms. Pyke noted that the bumpout could also interfere with the existing wheelchair ramp.

One Board Member commented that the corner of the building on East Emerson St. and Main St. needs more articulation, ornamentation, and detail, and asked for details about the trash door on Main St. Mr. Feyl explained that it will be a painted, hollow metal door and storefront windows will be placed along the retail storefront and the residential entryway. One Member suggested the trash room have an opaque glass door to prevent damage that bins might cause a metal door.

It was clarified that during the Design Review Subcommittee meeting, Members will want to see actual samples of paneling and detailed signage. More renderings showing how the project will impact the abutters on East Emerson St. were requested, as well as a shadow study.

One Member asked about the tenants for the retail space. Attorney Lucas explained that the revised plans show a subdivision of the retail space, which could best accommodate a restaurant to the right and another retail space to the left. The restaurant would accommodate about 50 seats. One Member asked if the energy for the residential units from the solar panels will be submetered and how the energy will get transferred to units. Mr. Feyl responded that he would follow up with that information.

Members were supportive of the residential entrance relocation, the proposed street trees, and the improvements to the building design.

The Board received seven letters both in support and opposition to the project. Six community members also appeared before the Board including Ajey Pandey of 199 West Wyoming Ave., Liz Ryan of 17 East Highland Ave., Kori Mendonsa of 102 Richardson Rd., David Solomon of 12 West Emerson St., David Roache of 8 Prescott St., and Gabriel Schweier of 10 East Emerson St. Those in support appreciated:

- The reduced parking
- Green building design
- The bicycle room
- Transit oriented development

Concerns included:

- Parking and traffic
- Trash removal and pickup
- Pedestrian safety and traffic mitigation of business interruption, parking, cleanliness, safety of work zone, and protection of staff and patients during construction
- Rideshare and loading zone interference

One resident requested more details on the landscaping of the project.

Ms. LaBrie explained that deliveries and rideshare drivers are expected to park on the street outside the building for quick deliveries much in the same way that other businesses on Main St. receive deliveries. Delivery trucks could also park in the municipal lot while unloading.

Ms. Gaffey noted that Staff received a memo from the Department of Public Works regarding the engineering review of the project and more information will be provided to the Planning Board prior to the next meeting.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to continue the public hearing to October 24, 2022. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. All voted in favor of a continuance. None were opposed.

Case 22-008, 31-39 West Wyoming Avenue, Navem Partners (continued public hearing)

James Heffernan, Applicant and Developer, appeared before the Board to present the case. He provided a brief overview of some of the project's updates noting that at the building and site plan at the corner of West Wyoming Ave. and Berwick St. was shifted and the commercial space was redesigned. Additionally, he noted that as a part of the project, he is proposing to implement all the pedestrian improvements around the corner of West Wyoming Ave. and Berwick St. rather than make a payment into the city's Streetscape Fund. He emphasized that this is a transit-oriented development that is located steps away from the West Wyoming Commuter Rail Station.

Ken Feyl, Architect, elaborated on the architectural updates. He noted that the bicycle room now provides wall mounted and ground level storage. The columns in the parking area were relocated and the van designated parking space and accessible aisle were exchanged. The pedestrian walkway was also relocated to guide pedestrians around the driveway rather than to cut through vehicular traffic.

Around the commercial space, the parking spots were removed and replaced with the reconfigured commercial space and the transformer. Additionally, the commercial space is no longer recessed from the sidewalk and a covered patio area and planter box are proposed to the left of the space.

Other design items noted were the green roof (exclusive of the roof deck) and setting the rooftop condenser units and high efficiency heat pumps back from the parapet. The updated renderings show a more realistic color scheme and the redesigned facade with the building having a base, middle, and top. The base will be brick with the storefront framed in black materials. A shadow study was also provided.

Kristin LaBrie, Engineer, explained the updated safety measures of the design such as including an ADA ramp, striping the right side of the driveway for cyclists leaving the building, and installing warning panels along the driveway and on the side of the driveway entrance, to alert exiting vehicles. A second bike rack was added to the exterior of the building and the parking space on Berwick St. was eliminated to facilitate better movement around the corner. The planter near the residential entrance was relocated to better comply with fire safety regulations. The residential entrance is still recessed from the sidewalk, which provides some space for the adjacent abutters on West Wyoming Ave. Screening, a fence, is proposed around the gas meter bank that abuts this property. Plans now include a large underground infiltration system under the garage, which the roof drains will drain into, and an emergency overflow in the back right corner. The rain barrels were eliminated from the plan because they added roof recharge but if requested, they can be reincluded.

Keri Pyke, Traffic Engineer, discussed options for the crosswalk across West Wyoming Ave. to improve pedestrian safety. She explained that the project could implement a raised crosswalk and the corner adjacent to the building could be bumped out for more sidewalk space and shorter crosswalks on Berwick St. and West Wyoming Ave. This would also provide more space for a

street tree. She noted that the wheelchair ramps across Berwick St. and the curb line on the southern side of West Wyoming Ave. would be reconstructed.

One Member asked if the parking on West Wyoming Ave. would be eliminated. It was clarified that one space on Berwick St. would be eliminated but the parking on West Wyoming Ave. would remain. Members were supportive of eliminating the commercial parking behind the retail space.

Members were supportive of the street safety improvements and the prominence of the storefront on West Wyoming Ave., however, some were concerned that the patio space would not attract patrons due to its location under the overhang. One Member was not sure what function the patio will have in its proposed location. Another commented that if the sidewalk was bulbed out on Berwick St., some of that area could accommodate an expansion of the commercial area and allow patrons to congregate outside of the shaded space.

Members were also concerned about the design of the building. Many felt that the massing was imposing and suggested using a richer palette of materials, breaking up the façade with different colors or pulling the façade back, opening up the balconies, and redesigning the roof so that it does not protrude out. Members commented that the building's design is inconsistent within the neighborhood and city context. One Member noted that the residential and commercial entries are understated and hidden and suggested adding more detail to the façade under the overhang at the retail level.

One Member asked about the landscape plan. Ms. LaBrie explained that there are planters near the residential entrance and the driveway. The plants will be low light and drought tolerant. The vegetation will help differentiate the patio from the sidewalk and if the project undertakes sidewalk improvements, a street tree will be planted. There are also proposed grasses between the abutting units on West Wyoming Ave. and the project. Ms. LaBrie noted that she will submit the landscaping plan to Staff.

The Board received two letters in support of the project. Five members of the public appeared before the Board including: William Ryan of 21 Damon Ave., Kori Mendonsa of 102 Richardson Rd., Ajey Pandey of 119 West Wyoming Ave., Erin Quinn of 5 Grove St., and Finn McSweeney of 160 West Wyoming Ave. Comments in support included:

- The building's green infrastructure and transit oriented design
- The proposed sidewalk bumpout and raised crosswalk
- The patio area providing shade in the summer
- The developer implementing safety improvements rather than paying into the Streetscape Fund

Concerns included:

- Traffic and parking
- The design of the building
- The sidewalk bumpout and raised crosswalk
- The warning panels along the driveway do not provide enough safety

- The building will cause the abutting properties to be in shadow
- Ensuring the retail space brings vibrancy to the neighborhood

Other comments included wanting renderings along Grove St. and Myrtle St. and extending the radius of abutters notified about projects of this scale.

In response to a question about drainage, Ms. LaBrie responded that the drainage flows north and will not affect properties on Grove St. Additionally, there will be a fence on the back of the property that will provide screening for abutters.

Mr. Gregory made a motion to continue the public hearing to November 28, 2022. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All voted in favor of a continuance. None were opposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Board of Appeals Public Hearing on October 26, 2022

Case 22-018 89 School St.

Board Members remained neutral on the Applicant's request for a variance. They felt that because the lot frontage is a pre-existing nonconformity, there is rationale for considering approval. However, Members found that the lot was not wide enough to accommodate a garage in the front of the property. The prominence of the garage on the street detracts from the streetscape and is inconsistent within the neighborhood context. Members felt that the house should be shifted forward so it is not hidden behind the garage and the garage should be located behind the house.

Case 22-019 31-39 West Wyoming Ave.

Board Members were supportive of approving the variance request for front yard setback. The application is currently under review for Site Plan Approval and two special permits. Members felt that this project promotes the city's housing goals while activating the streetscape. Members are supportive of the building's use of green technology and believe that the location of an existing culvert and the corner lot requirements for front yards pose significant hardships that justify the Applicant's request.

Case 22-020 19 Herbert St.

Board Members took no position on the Applicant's request for a variance. Members felt that the request is de minimis and the alterations would provide more a livable space without detracting from the streetscape or negatively impacting the abutter.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Zoning Subcommittee is Wednesday, October 19, 2022.

The next regular meeting of the Planning Board is scheduled for Monday, October 24, 2022.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 pm.