MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, May 22, 2023
7:45 PM
Milano Center, 201 W Foster Street, Melrose

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

ABSENT: None

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:48 PM by Mr. Sampson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, April 24, 2023
Board Members had no comments or adjustments to the minutes. Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Design Review Subcommittee Meeting, May 15, 2023
Board Members had no comments or adjustments to the minutes. Mr. Welch made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. King seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW & SPECIAL PERMITS

Case 22-009, 14-24 Tremont Street, Eli Pechthold & Greg Young—K&K Developers Inc (c/0 Garden Homes Development) (continued public hearing)
David Lucas, Attorney, Jack Raker, Architect, Vinod Kalikiri, Traffic Engineer, and Greg Young, Applicant & Developer, appeared to present the case. Attorney Lucas explained that the Development Team has held meetings with neighbors on Lake Avenue who voiced concerns over the proposed building's massing and traffic generation. Based on these discussions, the team is reviewing the massing, the visitor parking, and bicycle parking. The updated plans and shadow study will be provided for the next meeting.

Mr. Raker provided information on the rooftop heating and ventilation condenser units (HVAC). There will be one unit for each apartment placed at the center of the roof over the building's hallways. These condensers are approximately 3 ft. tall and will be elevated and surrounded with dampers so vibrations do not transfer to the residential units. There will also be larger equipment for the building's common areas that will be about 5 ft. tall. The edge of the roof will be lined

with parapets to shield the units and additional screening can be provided for the larger units as needed. The venting system will utilize ex-vents, which will match the color of the building.

Mr. Raker reviewed the building's green features noting that the project was a transportation-oriented development near the Cedar Park Commuter Rail station. The roof will be a light color to reduce heat island effect and the project will comply with the regulations in the updated State building code that will go into effect July 1, 2023. They have decided to make the building all electric.

Board Members asked if the ex-vents will be used in lieu of the makeup units on the roof. Mr. Raker explained that the makeup units are for the common spaces and the ex-vents will be used for the bathrooms. Members requested the dB ratings for the HVAC units to which Mr. Raker responded that the exact models have not been chosen but he can provide a basic rating for now. He also noted that a sound consultant will be hired to make recommendations for the building envelope. It was asked if the building will have solar panels or be solar ready. Mr. Raker explained that solar panels are being considered and if they are required by the updated building code then they will be installed.

Mr. Kalikiri continued by providing information on City intersection improvement projects. He noted that the City recently installed a 4-way stop at West Emerson St. and Tremont St., and is planning to reduce the size of the West Emerson St. and Vinton St. intersection to increase pedestrian safety.

Mr. Kalikiri explained that during meetings with neighbors, some suggested relocating the garage entry closer to West Emerson St. to prevent Lake Ave. from becoming a cut through. Based on his findings, this would only allow for a 4-5 car stacking capability at the intersection, which would likely result in bottlenecks and traffic interference from residents attempting to cross the left lane to enter the building. The current design allows for a 13-14 car stacking distance, so a car turning into the garage would not affect the intersection. He explained that the predominant traffic flow associated with the site is to the north towards Lynn Fells Parkway and the traffic on West Emerson St. will be small compared with the overall traffic patterns. Given these variables, he concluded that relocating the garage closer to the intersection would likely be detrimental and the current design provides the best outcomes.

The drop off area in front of the building was also discussed during the neighborhood meetings. Mr. Kalikiri noted that it is designed to accommodate multiple vehicles, but the Development Team wants to make the area bigger to allow more space for car share services and deliveries. The neighbors requested that the Development Team conduct an additional traffic count when the athletic fields at the Knoll and the Middle and High School are in use. Mr. Kalikiri explained that a traffic count was conducted in November, which showed that traffic was at its peak in the morning rather than the evening so there may not be a significant overlap between field use and commuter traffic, but an additional count is scheduled for early June before the end of the school year.

One Member asked how many curb cuts there would be if the entry was moved closer to the Tremont St. and West Emerson St. intersection. Mr. Kalikiri explained that the exit would stay

where it is so there would be two curb cuts with at least two garage doors; however, a building design was not completed to know exactly how the building would work with a difference entrance point to the garage. One Member suggested modifying the traffic pattern on Lake Ave. to only allow resident access during certain hours. Mr. Kalikiri noted that various traffic options were discussed during the neighborhood meetings and offered that a condition of approval could include post construction monitoring of Lake Ave. to understand the project's impacts on Lake Ave. However, he does not believe it will be used as a cut through. One Member commented that the construction management plan needs refinement; the Development Team must identify an alternate truck route, because Lynn Fells Parkway is a restricted road, and an alternate parking option, because construction vehicles will not be permitted to park on Tremont St.

The Board received four letters with questions and comments regarding the Planning Board's processes, the project's traffic and parking, its size and scope, and its sustainability measures. The Board also received updated materials from a presentation given by community members at a prior hearing. Thomas Dick of 82 Lake Ave., Penelope Young of Lake Ave., George Ohar of 28 Pine St., Andrew Farantinos of 89 Lake Ave., James Stringer of 92 Lake Ave., Christopher Park of 76 Vinton St., Susan Daly of 36 Tremont St., Mary Anne Lane of 20 Otis St., Nancy Clover of 185 Essex St., Joe Pelrine of 70 Howard St., Roger Graf of 32 Lake Ave., Zachary Veaner of 175 West Emerson St., and Martine and Michelle Shafer of 93 Lake Ave, appeared to speak about the proposal.

Most of the public who commented expressed concerns about the proposal including:

- Added traffic volume, congestion, and safety
- Number of parking spaces
- Lake Ave. being used as a cut through
- The building's size, setback, and shadow
- Noise disturbance from the HVAC units
- The venting system
- Snow removal

Other comments included:

- The project should have a commercial component
- The meetings should continue in-person
- Meeting notification process should be improved
- A parking rail should be installed to prevent people from damaging the abutting building
- A crosswalk should be installed on Tremont Street between West Emerson St. and Lynn Fells Parkway.

In response to some of the comments, the Chair clarified that public input is welcome and it helps shape the project. The project will need relief beyond what the Planning Board is authorized to grant, and the Board is only reviewing the requested special permits, and site plan. The point of these hearings is to hopefully get the project to a design that is acceptable for neighbors and for the Developer, but the project will still need zoning relief from the Board of Appeals. It was also clarified that the Housing Production Plan (HPP) is not prescriptive and the recommendation for this site was not meant to be limiting. The HPP and the Melrose Forward

Master Plan are good planning tools that are meant to be flexible, but each case is reviewed on its merits and on the regulations in the zoning ordinance.

It was also noted that the dB ratings were requested to understand the HVAC units' impact on the surrounding area.

Members provided feedback on the proposal. Some were concerned about the height and size of the building, suggesting that the fifth floor be stepped back or removed. One Member agreed that more space for deliveries would be beneficial and instead of a backyard, there could be a roof deck which would allow the building to be further setback from the sidewalk. Benches and street trees could be added, and sidewalks improved. Some Members supported consideration of a commercial component to the development proposal.

Pedestrian safety was a major concern among Members especially considering the amount of children that are in the area because of the close proximity of the schools and fields. One Member suggested that the neighbors appeal to the Traffic Commission for additional crosswalks and increased safety measures to improve current conditions, which is the source of many complaints. Another Member cautioned against restricting access to Lake Ave. during certain hours because it is not equitable to restrict cars on one street. If others wanted to do the same thing it would overburden other streets. Instead, the design of the building and street should mitigate potential conflicts by influencing traffic patterns. Members preferred keeping the garage entry further away from the West Emerson St. and Tremont St. intersection because it reduces the number of curb cuts and allows for a longer car queue at the intersection.

Mr. Welch made a motion to continue the public hearing to June 21, 2023. Ms. DeSouza Ward seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor. None were opposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Case 23-011, Sylvan Street

Board Members wondered if the entire lot was under common ownership with the residents of the adjacent unit at 2-4 Sylvan St. and Ms. Gaffey explained that 2-4 Sylvan Street is two condos and one of the condo owners also owns the vacant lot. Members supported granting most of the variances noting the uniqueness of the lot's size and independent status; however, they felt that the driveway should be brought into conformance and shifted to the side of the property. They encouraged the Applicant to address if the proposal will limit access to the parking for 4 Sylvan Street early in the process since it appears that the vacant lot is needed to access the driveway on the abutting lot. Members noted that the design was appropriate for the site and agreed with the comments in the Staff Brief that a residential use would improve current conditions and be more compatible with the neighborhood than a commercial use, which was previously proposed.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to send a letter recommending the Board of Appeals approve the variances except for the driveway variance. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-011

OTHER

Update on Zoning Amendment Package

Ms. Gaffey provided an update about the Planning Board's proposed zoning amendments noting that the City Council passed the BA-2 Zoning District Line Adjustment proposal on May 15, 2023, without change.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Zoning Subcommittee meeting is Thursday, June 1, 2023.
The next meeting of the Planning Board is scheduled for June 21, 2023.
The meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.