

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, June 21, 2023
7:45 PM
Milano Center, 201 W Foster Street, Melrose

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

ABSENT: Tim Bailey

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:55 PM by Mr. Sampson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, May 22, 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.

Zoning Subcommittee Meeting, June 1, 2023

Board Members had no comments or adjustments to the minutes. Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Gregory 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/o Garden Homes Development) (continued public hearing)

David Lucas, Attorney, Michael Lawson, Architect, John Barrows, Engineer, Michael Santos, Traffic Engineer, Greg Wilson, Landscape Architect, and Greg Young, Applicant & Developer, appeared to present the case. Attorney Lucas provided a brief overview of the revised architectural plans explaining that the building and garage entry were redesigned, the number of proposed units was reduced, and a shadow study has been provided. They will be applying for a special permit to have more than 30% of the parking spaces be the compact size.

Mr. Lawson provided additional details about the revised architectural plans. He explained that the unit count was reduced to 89, one- and two-bedroom units with 92 automobile parking spaces, including three dedicated visitor spaces, and 89 ground mounted bicycle spaces. To increase the width of the drop off area in the front, the building was pulled further out of the front yard setback. To reduce the building's massing, the fifth floor was stepped back 54 ft. from

the property line on the right side of the building and 20 ft. from the property line on the left side. The middle portion of the fifth floor was also removed. These changes help to minimize the appearance of the fifth story and result in a reduced FAR. There is also an amenity space on the fourth floor which can be accessed from either side of the building.

Other changes included relocating the loading area to the front of the building and changing the parking garage access. The loading area consists of a pull off in front of the trash and recycling room and the bicycle room to facilitate trash pickup and street access. Instead of garage doors along the street, there will be a two-way driveway with an open entrance for the upper parking level, which will help with traffic flow and visitor access. There will be two elevators in the building that can be accessed from the garage. The top of the elevator shaft was minimized so it protrudes 5 ft. above the fifth floor and will not be visible from the street.

The proposed materials were also updated with plans showing fiber cement panel lap siding and a reduced center storefront system size to provide a more residential appearance. The wings of the building will be a combination of brick and fiber cement paneling. The top of the building will be a lighter material to provide contrast. A shadow study was submitted showing the building's shadow during each season at 10 AM, 1 PM, and 3 PM and to verify that no shadow is cast on the roofs of any of the abutting residential properties. Mr. Lawson added that the building will be fully electric and the noise from each HVAC unit will be 60 decibels on average, which is equivalent to a normal speaking voice.

Mr. Barrows presented the building's new footprint, which has been reduced by approximately 5,000 ft. The building will have the same water and sewer connections as previously proposed and will not require gas service. The building will be all electric. The infiltration chambers are located underneath the entrances to the garage and the interior drainage system is designed to capture roof runoff.

Mr. Santos presented the traffic study's findings for the additional counts that were done at the end of May. A 24 hour traffic count was conducted on Lake Ave. and Tremont St. and peak period turning movements were observed on Lynn Fells Pkwy and Tremont St. Compared with the data collected in May, Mr. Santos noted that there is about a 2-12% increase in the number of vehicles which translates to 1 vehicle every 2-3 minutes. He emphasized that the drop off area in the front of the building can accommodate 2-3 vehicles, the curb cuts are out of the queuing area and the distance between Lake Avenue and the driveway is about 3-4 queued vehicles.

Mr. Wilson presented the landscaping plan explaining that neutral-colored pavers, and Belgium blocks will be used for the drop off areas. The driveway and drop off zones will be well lit to support pedestrian safety and the loading zone will be screened. The townhouse stoops will have sconces. Plans include a diverse selection of plantings such as Mountain Laurel, Hydrangeas, Boxwoods, ornamental grasses, groundcover, and Evergreens to promote year-round seasonal interest. The back of the building will have a lawn and pavers.

Board Members wondered if the shadow study included the rooftop mechanical equipment and if there were any vertical projections about the fifth floor. Mr. Lawson clarified that the equipment is included in the study and there is a 5-foot elevator override. Members also wondered if the

building will have solar panels or be solar ready. Mr. Lawson explained that due to the vents on the roof and the placement of the HVAC units, there is only a small amount of space that could accommodate solar panels, which would have a nominal effect on offsetting the building's energy consumption. Members suggested installing smaller HVAC units to facilitate including as many solar panels as possible and referenced the new state building code which has updated sustainability requirements for multifamily developments.

As a result from a question from the audience, members asked the Traffic consultant to explain how the analysts determined the peak hours of traffic and concluded that the project would result in an insignificant change in traffic patterns from current conditions. Mr. Santos explained that a 24-hour traffic count was conducted and broken down into 1-hour impacts, from which the peak hours were determined. Projected traffic patterns were developed by collecting data about the current trips to the site and cross-referencing the data published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers for the projected trips for the project, which is standard industry practice. Census data was used to predict how many trips would be by transit/walk/bike/other non-vehicular.

Members had questions about how the drop off area would be managed. Apart from cameras monitoring the area, there would be a manager onsite during the day and there will be signage indicating that parking is not allowed. Members asked if a new fence would be installed along the back of the property and if the sidewalk in front of the project would be replaced. It was clarified that the existing fence would be taken down and the MBTA has yet to decide if a new fence is desired, and the sidewalk would be replaced. It was also clarified that the underground garage will be ventilated and will have 3-5 visitor spaces and parking will be decoupled from the rent.

Members asked about the wading pool and the size and use of the lawn in the back of the property. Mr. Lawson explained that the pool is shallow and is intended for residents to place their feet or a chair, into the water. The lawn at the back right corner is 20 sq ft by 30 sq ft and could either be used as a dog park or for snow storage. It was clarified that this lawn area is inaccessible from the garage. One Member suggested that the team explore seeding the lawn with plantings other than grass. Members wondered about snow removal and management. Mr. Lawson noted the team is exploring heating the driveway. Snow from other areas would be stored at the back of the site or taken offsite. Members asked if public seating will be provided in front of the building to improve the urban landscape and the neighborhood. Mr. Lawson noted that the team can explore adding benches in the front yard.

Members asked how trash pickup will be managed. Mr. Lawson explained that a truck would pull into the loading zone and then continue forward to exit the area. Members were concerned about the ability to push the trash receptacles up the ramp, the number of curb cuts in proximity and requested vehicle turning movements for the drop off area and the loading zone. They requested more information about the trash operation plan.

The Board received 3 letters in support and 17 in opposition to the proposed project. In addition, Jane McDonald of 12 Mount Vernon St., Thomas Dick of 82 Lake Ave., John Connery of 19 Parker Ave, Christie Arsenault of 20 Lake Ave., Andrew Farantinos and Mari Farantinos of 89 Lake Ave., Liz Donaldson of 20 Emerson Pl., Christopher Park 56 Winston St., Ellen Connelly

70 Main St., Finn McSweeney of 160 W. Wyoming Ave., Michael Carlino of 601 Lynn Fells Pkwy, James Stringer of 92 Lake Ave., Houghton Young of 220 Essex St., Lisa Halloran of 27 Whittier St., and Robert Mercado of 60 Argyle St., appeared before the Board.

Most of the public who provided written and/or verbal comments expressed concerns about the proposal including:

- Added traffic volume, congestion, and safety
- The year and applicability of Census data for vehicular trip reduction
- Number of parking spaces
- The landscaping plan
- Lack of commercial space
- Number of variances requested
- Lack of solar panels
- The building's size and shadow
- Noise disturbance from the HVAC units
- The units should be condos rather than rental units
- The renderings do not accurately depict the surrounding area including the power lines, sidewalk width and proposed street tree size
- Questions about the acoustical study's capture of all of the HVAC units

Those in support expressed approval of:

- The updated driveway design
- The number of units and parking spaces
- The need for housing units that this proposal would help to address
- The financial benefits for the City through the project's property taxes and residents through increased property value
- The location of the project close to the Commuter Rail Station and Downtown Melrose
- Utilizing an underutilized lot

In response to some of the comments, the Chair explained that the Board has requested an acoustical report to understand the impacts of the proposed HVAC units. Board Members also clarified that the Planning Board cannot require a project to provide commercial space in this zoning district. Members agreed that the amount of parking proposed is sufficient and referenced other successful projects throughout the City with similar parking ratios.

Mr. Aveni made a motion to continue the public hearing to August 2, 2023. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor. None were opposed.

PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENT

Denise Gaffey, City Planner, presented a proposed zoning amendment that defines and establishes a Brewery use that would allow for a brewery within City limits. Ms. Gaffey explained that the primary purpose of the establishment will be to produce and serve beer, ale, or other malt beverages to be consumed on premise but allows for accessory uses such as retail sale

of the product for offsite consumption and distribution of the product offsite in certain districts. The facility can only sell beverages produced by the establishment or for the brewery and sold under the brewery brand name.

Ms. Gaffey explained that breweries without offsite distribution are proposed to operate in the City's business, Smart Growth and Rail Corridor Overlay Districts, in the same way that restaurants or eating and drinking places are allowed, and in the industrial districts. Breweries with distribution are proposed to be allowed in the industrial districts and by special permit in the BB-1. This differentiation is intended to minimize the impacts of delivery and truck trips for distribution in the denser areas of the City.

Board Members asked if the brewery license is specific to beer or if an establishment could sell wine or other alcoholic beverages. Lori Massa, Senior Planner, confirmed that the brewery would only be able to sell and produce beer. One Board Member wondered if a brewery would be allowed to sell brand name soft drinks or nonalcoholic drinks. Board Members agreed that the amendment should be revised to clarify that all alcoholic beverages must bear the brewery's brand name, but nonalcoholic beverages may be sold under other brand names.

Ms. DeSozua Ward made a motion to send the proposed amendment, as amended, to the City Council to initiate the approval process. Ms. Delahajj seconded the motion. All voted in favor, none were opposed.

Documents: Draft Brewery Amendment

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Case 23-012, 29 Lovell Rd.

Board Members had no questions or comments and felt that the decision was best left to the Board of Appeals.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-012

Case 23-013, 65 Echo St.

Board Members were supportive of the application. Members discussed the comments in the Staff Brief regarding the proposed number of windows. One Member noted that the amount of proposed natural light will be evaluated when the Applicant applies for a building permit and will have to comply with the building code regulations. One Member suggested adding windows in the playroom, if possible.

Mr. Welch made a motion to send a letter in support of the proposal. Ms. DeSouza Ward seconded the motion. All voted in favor, none were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-013

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Planning Board is scheduled for August 2, 2023.
The meeting adjourned at 11:00 pm.