

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, September 18, 2023
7:45 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, 562 Main Street, Melrose

PRESENT: Paul King, Beth Delahaij, Carla Morelli, Greg Sampson, Jack Welch, Michael Aveni, & Tim Bailey

ABSENT: Anne DeSouza Ward & Brian Gregory

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, August 28, 2023

Board Members had no comments or adjustments to the minutes. Mr. Welch made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW & SPECIAL PERMITS

Case 23-002, 272 Tremont Street, OnPoint Capital (continued public hearing)

David Lucas, Attorney, Max Taylor, Applicant, Will Chalfant, Architect, and Eric Bradanese, Engineer, appeared to present the case. Attorney Lucas noted that since the last hearing, the Applicant has addressed issues relating to snow removal, the location of the transformer, and the landscaping at the front of the site.

Mr. Taylor continued, explaining that he has spoken with the commercial abutters on the right about the onsite solid waste pickup and food deliveries. Waste is collected once per week for Ernie's Lunch and Thai Basil Cafe, and once per month for Bravo Kitchens. The dumpsters are rolled down the driveway to the truck, which then backs out onto Tremont Street. There is also a food delivery that occurs once per week. Mr. Taylor explained that while these activities are occurring, the entire driveway is blocked and the ingress to 272 Tremont St. is inaccessible. He also noted that Bravo Kitchens requested the end of the driveway not be landscaped so the owners can retain access to the back of their building. On the left side of the building, the chain link fence will be removed, and the driveway will be wide enough to accommodate vehicles entering the apartment building and exiting the proposed building. Mr. Taylor noted that there will be traffic and directional signage to minimize vehicular conflicts and a clearance sign will be added for trucks on the right side of the building.

Board Members wondered if limiting access to the full easement for the abutters on the left is legally possible. Attorney Lucas explained that this plan proposes using directional arrows on the pavement and does not propose installing a physical barrier such that access would be restricted in any way. Members had differing opinions on the safety of the proposed traffic pattern. Mr. Taylor responded that on the left side, the driveway is wide enough for two-way traffic and vehicles can be directed to the correct ingress and egress. One Member felt that having directional and traffic signage will be sufficient to prevent conflicts, and another commented that the proposed direction of circulation will help with the queuing issues on the corner of Tremont St. and Franklin St. Another Member felt that it will be too difficult to habituate to a traffic pattern that is not intuitive and questioned if the Applicant asked the abutter if the traffic pattern could be changed so that vehicles from both properties would be exiting in the same direction. Mr. Taylor responded that they have not. One Member suggested extending the easement so that it is 24 ft. wide so it can accommodate two-way traffic.

Mr. Chalfant added that there will be a 25 ft. curb cut, which will further facilitate the vehicles accessing the sites. It was clarified that the dumpsters for the abutters on the left will be in the easement but there will be enough room for vehicles on both sites to maneuver safely.

Members agreed that hearing from the abutters on the left would be helpful to ensure that they understand and are supportive of this plan. Members also felt that it would be helpful to have a set of plans that showed the surrounding buildings to get a better idea of the surrounding environment and any constraints on site. Members supported the reduced number of parking spaces.

Mr. Taylor continued explaining that there are two viable locations to install the transformer: underneath the driveway or underneath parking space number 11. Mr. Chalfant explained that the transformer will be vaulted in a shea concrete box with manholes that will be fully accessible at all times, in line with National Grid's requirements. Board Members wondered if National Grid can require the transformer to be located in the front yard. Mr. Chalfant responded that there is no room in the front yard and National Grid has approved vaulted transformers for past projects.

Mr. Taylor noted that additional wall mount racks have been added in the covered parking area and more bike parking was added in the front of the site. Plantings have been added to the roof deck and the fifth floor has been stepped back 28 ft. from the property line. The snow management plan has been updated and any snow that cannot be contained onsite will be brought offsite. The trees at the back of the site will be removed and replaced with hardier plants.

Two community members appeared to comment in front of the Board including Susan and Fred McGrath of 242 Tremont St. They expressed a need for more parking and a concern about sightlines around the building, especially if a trash truck is pulling in and out of the driveway on the right. Additionally, they felt that the owners of the condominiums next door should be consulted.

Board Members suggested including signage alerting pedestrians of vehicles entering and exiting the driveway. Attorney Lucas noted that the Board could condition that the Applicant work with the condominium association next door to explore widening the easement before demolition.

Mr. Aveni made a motion to close the public hearing and continue the case to October 23, 2023. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor of the motion. None were opposed.

Documents:	Letter from Inspectional Services	March 22, 2023
	Application	April 20, 2023
	Construction Management Plan	April 20, 2023
	Green Building Report	July 5, 2023
	Trash & Recycling Memo	July 5, 2023
	Traffic Impact Report	July 2023
	Memo from DPW	August 2023
	Revised Plans	August 22, 2023
	Financial Analysis	N/D

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Case 23-001, 32-34 Linwood Avenue, Eric Kenworthy

Eric Kenworthy, Applicant, Will Chalfant, Architect, Patrick McAvoy, Attorney, and Eric Bradanese, Engineer, appeared to present the case. Attorney McAvoy explained that the project appeared before the Board of Appeals on May 10, 2023 and received a special permit for the townhouse use. The surrounding uses are mostly single- and two-family dwellings and there are multi-family units and townhouses nearby on Sylvan St. Plans for this project include demolishing the existing two-family structure and constructing a four-unit townhouse with eight surface parking spaces in the back of the property.

Mr. Chalfant continued explaining that much of the lot is ledge, but this project will not disturb the natural slopes on the site. Although four units are proposed, the structure will appear like a two-family house from the street. The entrance to all four units will be on Linwood St. and each will have an entry porch and a back porch. Each unit will be about 2,500 sf.

Mr. Brandese commented that test pits were dug at the front of the site and results show that infiltration is possible. There will be stormwater chambers underneath the driveway to store runoff.

Ms. Gaffey noted that the Applicant met with City Officials and concerns about the massing and the design, the trash and recycling plan, snow management, the location of the mechanical equipment, and the landscape plan, were raised. Board Members commented that the Applicant should consider adding additional windows in the basement to ensure that the amount of available natural light complies with the building code requirements. The driveway width could also be reduced to 20 ft so more vegetation can be planted along the side of the drive facing the cemetery and it could include pervious pavers. Members noted that the design should be revised to break up the massing and roof line.

The Board received one letter in support of the project. Additionally, Gary Bernard of 11 Fairfield Ave., Christine Bell of 14 Whitwell St., and Guy Finley of 63 Linwood Ave. appeared to speak before the Board. Those in support noted that this project will improve the site and it will provide additional family housing. Others voiced concerns that the project does not fit within the neighborhood context, it will create additional traffic, and the massing and the design of the porches need to be revised.

Mr. Welch made a motion to continue the public hearing to October 23, 2023. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor of the continuance. None were opposed.

Case 23-003, 12-14 Sylvan Street, Treetop Investments, LLC c/o Siddharth Gehlot
Robert Bell, Attorney, Eric Bradanese, Engineer, Siddharth Gehlot, Applicant, and Yael Getz Schoen, Architect, appeared to present the case. Attorney Bell explained that the project appeared before the Board of Appeals on June 14, 2023 and received a special permit for townhouse use. Plans for this project include demolishing the existing single-family structure and constructing a four-unit townhouse with attached two car garages for each unit.

Ms. Getz Schoen described the architectural plans. The units will function as four, attached single family dwellings but the structure will appear like two single family houses from the street. Two shades of gray siding will be used. Each unit will have dormers, a patio, and an attached garage. Guests will be able to park onsite, in front of the garage doors. The front entrances and patios will have exterior lights but there will be no spillover onto adjacent properties. There will be a common sprinkler room located in the front unit for fire safety access. The units will be about 3,400 sf. and there will be a fence along the property line separating the lot from abutters.

Mr. Bradanese explained that there will be snow storage at the front of the site, but it will not interfere with sight lines for vehicles entering and exiting the property. There will be a subterranean stormwater system located under the driveway with chambers large enough for a 100-year storm event. The system will capture driveway and roof runoff, which will be diverted to the system through roof drains. The water will be treated, retained, and infiltrated onsite. The owner of the property provided test pit data, which confirms that water can infiltrate but there is not enough data to verify that the rate required by DPW has been met. Mr. Bradanese explained that most of the existing vegetation will be removed from the site and the landscape plan includes shrubs, trees, and perennials.

Board Members requested to see the test pit data and emphasized that this neighborhood is subject to flooding so understanding the soil conditions is critical. Members also requested the cut sheet for the fence and the specifications for the mechanical equipment. Members supported the appearance of the project from the street but questioned why the Applicant is proposing such large units rather than smaller and denser units. Mr. Gehlot explained that this is the most economical decision. One Member commented that the side and rear massing makes the building look large and suggested lowering the roofline above the garages. Members wondered if the driveway could be narrowed to 20 ft. to reduce the amount of impervious pavement. One

Member asked if these units will be electric to which Mr. Gehlot responded that they will be gas powered. Members requested a more robust landscape plan and a clear delineation of the proposed open space.

The Board received two written comments and Dennis Fazio of 10 Sylvan St., Lianne and Joseph Coviello of 149 Main St., Lisa Landry of 24 Sylvan St., and Karen Sawyer of 12 Mt. Vernon Ave., appeared to speak. Concerns included:

- The large size of the units
- Additional flooding
- The lack of air circulation
- The shadows
- Soil contamination
- Parking availability
- Snow storage
- Lack of landscaping
- Noise impacts
- Infringement on privacy

Attorney Bell responded that the test pit results that the owner provided show that there is urban fill on the site, and there were no contaminants. He noted that the developer must follow the State's environmental regulations and if there are contaminated soils they will have to be removed or remediated.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to continue the public hearing to October 23, 2023. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor of the continuance. None were opposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Case 23-016, 14-24 Tremont Street

Board Members were supportive of the request for variances given the amount of time spent on reviewing the project and the revised design that resulted in a more conforming building than originally proposed. Members agreed that the project supports the City's housing goals while improving the block's existing conditions and will provide public benefits such as street furniture, extensive landscaping, and pedestrian safety improvements.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to send a letter of support to the Board of Appeals. Ms. Delahaij seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-016

Case 23-021, 37 Grandview Avenue

Board Members had no comments or suggestions. They felt that this request is best handled by the Board of Appeals with input from abutters.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-021

Case 23-022, 134 Linden Road

Board Members had no comments or suggestions. They felt that this request is best handled by the Board of Appeals with input from abutters.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-022

Case 23-023, 21 Summer Street

Board Members discussed that this is a unique situation due to the existing garage and attached shed and emphasized that it will be important to engage with the abutter at 27 Summer St. to ensure that they understand what is being proposed.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-023

NEXT MEETING

The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for October 23, 2023. The Board discussed starting meetings at 7pm, as opposed to their typical meeting time of 7:45pm, moving forward so that the meetings do not end so late in the night. They agreed with the new start time if it works for all members.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 PM.