

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, November 27, 2023
7:00 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, 562 Main Street, Melrose

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

ABSENT: Anne DeSouza Ward

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Mr. Sampson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, October 23, 2023

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

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Case 23-001, 32-34 Linwood Avenue, Eric Kenworthy (continued public hearing)

Will Chalfant, Architect, Eric Kenworthy, Applicant, and Eric Bradanese, Engineer, appeared to present the case. Mr. Chalfant reviewed the changes to the plans since the last hearing. The driveway width was reduced to 20 ft. and pavers were added on the edge of the drive aisle. A trash area is located in the rear corner of the parking area that will be fenced with a gate for access. The development has been redesigned so that the units are paired and staggered to help with the perceived massing. Shed dormers are proposed on the front and the back of the building and the pairs of units now have farmers porches. A combination of cementitious clapboard and board and batten is proposed, with inverted color and material schemes for the pairs of units.

Each of the units has a private patio in the rear with two parking spaces. The condensers are grouped in sets of two on either side of the house and the landscape plan has been updated to include a variety of proposed vegetation around the site. Window wells are included to allow the basement to be livable space in accordance with building code requirements. Mr. Chalfant posited that the updated plans are in line with the neighborhood context and reduce the impact of the increased density on the site.

Mr. Bradanese reviewed the changes to the civil plans. He explained that the stormwater calculations were updated to account for the change in the plans. The stormwater system can

sustain runoff from a 100-year storm event. The Department of Engineering reviewed the proposed plans and requested notations for the utility lines and other information that could be submitted or done as conditions of approval.

Board Members asked if plans included a wall around the parking area. Mr. Chalfant explained that there will be an approximately 6-inch granite curb along the back perimeter. Members asked about the proposed retaining wall along the driveway. Mr. Chalfant explained that it will probably be made of a concrete block material and at its highest point will be 1.5 ft. which will occur towards the back of the building. Mr. Chalfant added that there is a grade change that happens near the proposed patio so the patio will pitch towards the driveway.

Members asked about the proposed trash enclosure. Mr. Chalfant noted that it will be enclosed by a 4 ft. tall cedar fence with a gate that swings in towards the enclosure. He commented that it is a tight space, but it is difficult to locate elsewhere. One Board Member suggested aligning the westernmost patio with the edge of the structure and shifting the trash enclosure to left so there is more room to access the receptacles.

The Board did not receive any public comment, and no one appeared to speak.

Board Members discussed the color and design of the building and the site changes. They thought that the Design Review Subcommittee should consider the alternating color patterns and if the materials should be consistent with board and batten at the base of the entire structure and clapboard at the top. The Board was supportive of the Applicant retaining the tree in the front yard and approved of adding porches to the plans. The Board requested a list of the proposed plantings. It was clarified that the Applicant intends this project to be stick built rather than pre-fabricated but it will depend on the price of materials. It was also clarified that the project does not require any grading.

Denise Gaffey, City Planner, reviewed the proposed conditions of approval. Most of them are standard conditions however, she noted that the Applicant must submit a construction management plan, a revised stormwater report, and an updated operations management plan. Members requested adding a condition about retaining the tree in the front yard. Ms. Gaffey noted that the Applicant is requesting waivers from providing a shadow study, a traffic impact report, and information on signage and lighting. She posited that due to the size of the project, a shadow and traffic report are unnecessary, and the Applicant is not proposing any signage. She added that when the project goes before the Design Review Subcommittee, a cutsheet of the proposed lighting will be requested.

Mr. Aveni made a motion to approve the requested waivers. Mr. King seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of approving the waivers, except Mr. Gregory who abstained. None were opposed.

Mr. King made a motion to approve the Site Plan Review. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. all members voted in favor of approving the Site Plan Review, except Mr. Gregory who abstained. None were opposed.

Documents:	Application	June 22, 2023
	Architectural Plans	November 27, 2023
	Civil Plans	November 13, 2023
	Stormwater Report	November 13, 2023
	Memo from Department of Public Works	November 21, 2023

Case 23-003, 12-14 Sylvan Street, Treetop Investments, LLC c/o Siddharth Gehlot (continued public hearing)

Robert Bell, Attorney, Yael Getz Schoen, Architect, Siddharth Gehlot, Applicant, and Eric Bradanese, Engineer, appeared to present the case. Attorney Bell provided an overview of the changes since the last hearing. He explained that the architectural plans were revised to reduce the bulk and the massing of the project. The roofs above the garage were lowered and the structure was shifted towards the center of the lot to increase the side yard setbacks. Additionally, the landscape plan was revised and the civil plans were updated to respond to the test pits results.

Mr. Bradanese explained that the total footprint of the project is 6,300 sq. ft. and each unit is about 1,500 sf. The driveway was reduced to 20 ft. and pervious pavers were added. Mr. Bradanese explained that the Developer hired a landscape designer who visited the site and confirmed that the trees in the front of the lot are not healthy, so they will be removed. Trees will be planted in the corners of the lot and along the sides of the property.

Mr. Bradanese noted that the stormwater system was updated to ensure that there was enough separation between the system and the water table. There will be a 12-inch pipe will be installed along the perimeter of the back yard with inspection ports every 25 ft. Runoff from structure's exterior will be directed to the perimeter pipe and runoff from the interior roof line will be directed into the driveway. The proposed system will store and infiltrate runoff and has the capacity to store runoff levels associated with a 100-year storm event. Mr. Bradanese added that the pervious pavers are modeled as impervious in model calculations. He noted that this system reduces the lot's peak stormwater flow and volume, and the Department of Public Works reviewed and approved this design.

Ms. Getz Schoen reviewed the architectural changes. She noted that the building is setback about 15 ft. from the side property lines and each unit has a front facing dormer. The garage roofs are about 4 ft. lower than the height of the main structures' roofs to minimize the massing and there are less jogs throughout the structure. She also noted that the revised plans altered the proposed color scheme; the garages will be dark grey, and the main structures will be light grey.

Board Members wondered about the proposed arborvitae and asked if they will be able to grow so close to the fence. One Member commented that the Applicant should hire an arborist to assess the existing trees prior to removing them. One Member was concerned that the proposed maintenance budget for the condominium association would not be sufficient to cover the cost of maintaining the pervious pavers. It was clarified that the Operations and Maintenance Plan outlines the methods and the frequency with which residents will need to check and clean the pavers and requires this in perpetuity if the property is sold. Board Members requested the location of the inspection ports for the stormwater system be added to the civil plans.

Board Members asked about the proposed fence. Mr. Bradanese explained that it will be a 6 ft. vinyl fence along the perimeter of the property with a shorter fence in the front, however, the Applicant is open to suggestions from the Board. One Member commented that the driveway is not wide enough for a car to park in front of a garage without blocking the passageway.

Four members of the public appeared to speak before the Board including Dennis Fazio of 10 Sylvan St., Lisa Landry of 24 Sylvan St., Karen Sawyer of 12 Mt. Vernon Ave., and Megan McDonough 185 Main St. Comments and concerns included:

- The building is too large
- There will be flooding
- Sweet Gum trees can be messy
- Tall columnar trees along the property lines may cause more shadow
- They do not want patios on the plans
- There is not enough open space
- There is concern that the soil is contaminated and was not tested
- There was a question on if the units needed to be ADA compliant
- There were concerns about the noise impacts from the HVAC units

Mr. Bradanese responded to the public comments noting that the soil was tested for purposes of the stormwater system design and the results are in the stormwater report. He noted that providing usable outdoor space was requested by the city, but the patios can be made longer rather than wider to minimize impact on abutters. He added that sound attenuation techniques can also be installed around the HVAC units.

Attorney Bell responded that this layout is necessary to make this development financially viable and reducing the size or the density will render the project infeasible. He added that the site's soil is considered urban fill, which is common and there is not reason to believe the site is contaminated. However, if contaminants are discovered during construction, a licensed professional will be hired and remediation efforts will be implemented, as required by the Commonwealth.

Ms. Gaffey provided an overview of the conditions of approval. Most of them are standard, however, she noted that an updated stormwater report, construction management plan, and operations and maintenance plan must be submitted to the City. She also noted that the Applicant is requesting waivers from providing a traffic report and information on signage. Ms. Gaffey posited that due to the size of the project, a traffic report is unnecessary, and the Applicant is not proposing any signage.

Mr. Welch made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Mr. Aveni made a motion to approve the requested waivers. Mr. King seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Mr. Gregory made a motion to approve the Site Plan Review. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All members voted in favor, except for Mr. Bailey and Mr. Gregory who abstained. None were opposed.

Documents:	Application	July 20, 2023
	Architectural Plans	November 17, 2023
	Civil Plans	November 19, 2023
	Stormwater Report	November 19, 2023
	Memo from Department of Public Works	November 22, 2023
	Construction Management Plan	

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Case 23-027, 14 Martin Street

Board Members agreed with the comments in the staff brief about it appearing as though there is sufficient space to locate the new garage in a conforming location so the Applicant will need to explain any challenges to doing this if it is not possible.

Mr. Welch made a motion to send a neutral letter to the Board of Appeals. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-027

Case 23-028, 25 Herbert Street

Board Members agreed with the comments in the staff brief and felt that providing parking on this lot is unnecessary given the number of spaces along Berwick Street. They also agreed that this proposal will significantly diminish the property's open space, which will be a detriment to the streetscape and tenants of the building.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to send a letter recommending that the Board denies the requested variances. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-028

OTHER BUSINESS

453-463 Franklin Street—Transformer Location

Lori Massa, Senior Planner, informed the Board that National Grid is requiring the project at 453-463 Franklin Street to locate a transformer onsite, which was not originally included in the project plans. She explained that there is very little room to do this, so the Developer has proposed extending the building's footprint and placing the transformer in an enclosed room near the trash room in the parking area. This would necessitate relocating the bike parking and reorientating the trash room. Board Members raised concerns about the proposed trash management plan and felt that they needed more detail about the design to make sure that the projection into the rear yard did not look like an after-thought. Members requested that the Applicant attend the next meeting to discuss the plan.

148 Myrtle Street—Design Review Subcommittee Update

Ms. Morelli provided the Board with updates from the Design Review Subcommittee's site visit at 148 Myrtle Street. Members saw materials applied to the building and were given a tour of the interior of the project. The Developer informed Members that the stone wall at the front of the property will be retained and rebuilt by a specialty stoneworker. Members were impressed with the window selection and the materials and were satisfied with the development's progress.

NEXT MEETING

The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for December 18, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.