

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, December 18, 2023
7:00 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, 562 Main Street, Melrose

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

ABSENT: Jack Welch

STAFF PRESENT: 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, November 27, 2023

Board Members had no comments or adjustments to the minutes. Ms. Morelli made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All voted in favor, except for Ms. DeSouza Ward who abstained. None were opposed.

SLOPE PROTECTION SPECIAL PERMIT

Case 23-004, Dexter Road Lot H3 0 12, Szecon Development, Inc.

Sean & Laura Szekely, Applicants, Rich Williams, Engineer, and Jesse Schomer and Jim Mitchell, Attorneys, appeared to present the case. Attorney Schomer explained that Mr. and Mrs. Szekely purchased 79 Dexter Rd. and the adjacent vacant land, which is 5.3 acres, and consists of steep slopes and a large pond at the back of the site. Attorney Schomer explained that the Applicants have filed a request with the Massachusetts Land Court to adjust the property lines of the vacant land, 79 Dexter Rd., and 55 Dexter Rd. to create more conforming lots and square them off. He noted that if the request is approved, the Applicants will come back before the Board for approval of the Approval Not Required process.

Attorney Schomer reviewed the proposal, which includes disturbing 2,300 sf of the slope to build a single-family house with a garage underneath and a terraced patio in the back. The house will be built at the front of the site where it is the flattest to minimize the amount of slope disturbance. As a part of the project, the Applicants will also donate 4.9 acres of the vacant land to the City.

Mr. Williams continued noting that the garage doors and the dwelling's front entrance will face the street. There will be a small retaining wall along the front yard that will be about 4 ft. tall by the road and 6 ft. tall at the base of the structure. The patio in the back will be built into the outcroppings and a landscape wall will be installed to terrace the yard. Runoff from the roof will be discharged into a subsurface infiltration system in the front yard where test pits confirmed that there is sufficient soil depth for the system. Mr. Williams noted that the stormwater calculations

show a similar rate of runoff pre- and post- construction. The side of the house will be mulched and landscaped with shrubs; the front yard will be lawn.

Board Members wondered how many trees the Applicants will clear. Mr. Szekely explained that trees will be removed up to the landscaped wall. Members asked if there will be any blasting. Mr. Szekely noted that he is not sure yet, but he intends to hammer if possible. Mr. Szekely confirmed that the land will need to be excavated to construct the basement. Members asked if the house can be shifted further forward. Mr. Szekely responded that he wants to maintain a conforming setback and moving the house forward would also create a steeper slope for the driveway. It was clarified that if the width of Dexter Rd. changes with the Land Court proceedings as there are discrepancies with the recorded plans for the area, the position of the dwelling on the lot may change and the change would need to be reviewed with the Board.

Members discussed the proposal. Some felt that the design is not innovative and does not respect the slope. Some felt that it was oversized for the lot and the neighborhood, and that the dwelling would be out of place. One Member suggested that the house could be narrower, so the foundation is less in the slope. Lori Massa, Senior Planner, noted that this proposal is less impactful than the initial plan that Mr. Szekely reviewed with staff. It minimizes the slope disturbance by incorporating a patio into the ledge and building the garage underneath the house, which will result in less land alteration than the original design with a level backyard and parking accessed from the side yard. Some Members felt that the disturbance is small and the donation of 4.9 acres is a valuable part of the proposal that offsets the proposed slope disturbance.

Two people appeared to speak in support of the project. Lance Chip of 95 Dexter Rd. and Lynn Stanley of 91 Dexter Rd. supported the development and the proposed land donation. Mr. Chip requested that construction vehicles be managed to avoid impacting Dexter Rd. Ms. Stanley was glad to see that a large portion of the site will be restricted as conservation land.

Board Members commented that more architectural detail would be helpful and requested a building section to see the amount of proposed excavation. Members requested a site walk to view the property and scheduled it for Thursday, December 28, 2023, at 9 AM.

Mr. Aveni made a motion to continue the case to January 22, 2024. Ms. DeSouza Ward seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the continuance. None were opposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Case 23-029, 3 Nordic Way

Board Members agreed that the proposed location will not impact neighbors or the streetscape but felt that this site was large enough to build an addition without creating a new nonconformity.

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

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-029

Case 23-030, 40 Rivers Lane

Board Members discussed how the addition follows the shape of the driveway and agreed that the placement was logical.

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

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-030

Case 23-032, 142 Laurel Street

Board Members had no comments or concerns.

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

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-032

Case 23-033, 15 Faxon Street

One Member commented that the design may not comply with the building code and the Building Inspector should review the plans. Members did not have any other concerns but noted that input from abutters will be important given the proximity of the addition to the property line.

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

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 23-033

OTHER BUSINESS

453-463 Franklin Street—Transformer Location

Robert Johnson, Developer, and Ryan Chess, Project Manager, appeared before the Board to discuss changes to the architectural plans to accommodate a transformer onsite. Mr. Johnson explained that the transformer vault must be an enclosed room measuring 15 sf by 15 sf. To make this fit, the trash room within the garage is proposed to be smaller and another ADA compliant trash room will be located inside the building. The trash room in the garage will have five trash totes—three will be used for trash and two for recycling. Trash will be collected twice per week with more pickups as necessary. The indoor trash room will have one trash and recycling bin. Additionally, the two parking spaces next to the trash room will be compact spaces. Mr. Johnson explained that the back projection of the transformer room will be a continuation of the first-floor façade.

Board Members requested that the screening for the trash room continue so that the bins will not be seen from Marvin Rd. Members wondered if trash compactors could be added either within the units or in the trash room to reduce the volume of waste. Members requested that the

Developer install safety measures in place for exiting cars to alert pedestrians and to ensure that the bike parking along the back of the garage is effective with the proposed clearances. Members suggested adding a Juliette balcony and a planter on top of the portion of the transformer room that extends beyond the line of the rest of the building to make the space appear more purposeful and visually connected to the building.

NEXT MEETING

The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2024.
The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.