

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, March 25, 2024
7:00 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, 562 Main Street, Melrose

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

ABSENT: None

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mr. Sampson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, February 26, 2024

Ms. DeSouza Ward requested that the minutes adjust the prefix in front of her name from “Mr.” to “Ms.” There were no other comments or adjustments. Mr. Welch made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. DeSouza Ward seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Design Review Subcommittee Meeting, February 26, 2024

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

SLOPE PROTECTION SPECIAL PERMIT Case 22-007, Montvale Street Lot D5 0 40A, Armando Plata (continued public hearing)

Bob Bell, Attorney, appeared before the Board to request a continuance to the hearing on April 29th, 2024 to allow the Applicant more time to respond to the memo from the Engineering Department and updated the civil plans.

Mr. Welch made a motion to grant a continuance to April 29, 2024. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all were in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN REVIEW & SPECIAL PERMITS

Case 23-005, 521-529 Franklin Street, 521 Franklin St, LLC Matthew Roman, Manager (continued public hearing)

Bob Bell, Attorney, Matt Roman, Applicant, Peter Quinn, Architect, Ken Crammer, Traffic Engineer, and Will Schkuta, Civil Engineer, appeared to present the case. Attorney Bell provided an overview of the project noting that the proposal is a transit-oriented development in line with the development patterns of the Melrose Highlands. Plans include preserving Corinthian Hall

and adding residential units behind the building. Mr. Quinn continued reviewing changes to the plans since the last hearing. The garage entry is farther back from the property line, which increases site lines and allows for queuing without blocking the sidewalk. This alteration resulted in a redesign of the parking layout and two parking spaces are now located outside of the garage on either side of the entry. Additionally, the two parking spaces within the garage at the end of the driveway are now compact spaces to facilitate cars pulling in and out of the spaces. A traffic sign restricting drivers from making a left turn out of the garage during certain times and a 15-minute loading zone is proposed on the property off Greenwood St. The Board later determined that restricting left turns was likely unnecessary and would not be followed and that the short-term drop was a good idea but that it would probably be used by visitors to the site rather than for quick deliveries.

Mr. Quinn provided more information about the proposed waste management plan. The existing restaurant will use the room at the corner of the building on Greenwood St. for temporary storage and will have access to the residential trash room for trash pick. The residential trash room is in the back right corner of the building with a garage door separating the room from the parking lot, which is where trash pickup will occur. Mr. Quinn responded to a Board Members' previous question about composting and noted that there is enough room in the trash area to set up a designated bin.

Mr. Quinn highlighted the architectural changes made since the last hearing, noting that the mail area in the lobby has increased to accommodate more packages. A separate, fire rated e-bike room has been included in the basement and additional cargo bike spaces have been added. The outdoor spaces will be for visitors and the indoor spaces will be for residents. The plans show the proposed downspouts and include additional renderings of the development in context although colors have not been decided yet; the Applicant is planning on taking color chips from Corinthian Hall to inform the color scheme of the new development. The Applicant has not selected the windows yet, but they will be energy efficient and comply with the stretch code. The dormers on Corinthian Hall were redesigned and the front and rear dormers are identical. The design of the base of the new development was altered and the lap siding extends farther down the building so there is a narrower band of brick around the base.

In response to questions from the last hearing, Mr. Quinn confirmed that the building will be solar ready. He clarified that windows cannot be added to the gray column behind the dentist's office because they would be too close to the property line and would not comply with the building code. The same is true for windows on the yellow column behind the driving school. He added that the proposed material for the column is corrugated metal. The depth of the balconies will be between 5-6 ft., and they will get a typical amount of sunlight. He concluded by stating that the fifth-floor step back reduces the building's massing and the proposed craftsmen design of the new development will complement and not mimic the Corinthian Hall's colonial style.

Mr. Schkuta continued noting that the comments from the Engineering Department have been satisfied. The Board has been provided with turning radii for the two compact parking spaces at the end of the driveway, as well as turning radii for the trash truck in the municipal parking lot and for a larger car within the parking garage. He explained that the garage door will have to open for the cars parked outside of the garage to pull out of the spaces. He added that the 15-

minute parking zone can accommodate a sprinter van and a driver will have to back out of the space to exit. Mr. Roman added that he has spoken with the abutting dentist's office and they have drafted an agreement to protect the office's parking spaces.

Mr. Crammer continued, explaining that a new traffic count was taken at Franklin St. and Greenwood St. and the results showed that the longest cue was about six vehicles during the train crossing. It was reiterated that the traffic projections include seven permitted projects in the near vicinity. He explained that the new counts did not significantly change the findings, but the updated analysis showed more activity during the weekday mornings and less during the evenings. He noted that the proposed parking ratio is similar to other projects around the City and he opined that with the garage door pulled back, there is no need for a pedestrian warning signal. He clarified that the Applicant would request that the Traffic Commission designate a parking spot in front of the property on Franklin St. as a 15-minute spot during business hours for quick deliveries. Move-in and out would be coordinated with the City.

Board Members raised concerns about a delivery truck backing out onto Greenwood St. and agreed that a 15-minute spot on Franklin St. is preferable. Members felt that the updated design of the garage door addresses concerns about site lines and pedestrian safety. Members wondered if the Applicant was proposing any screening for the rooftop condensers. Mr. Roman explained that the units will sit within the sloping roof and will be screened. Members requested that the Design Review Subcommittee review the proposed screening when the project goes for design review. One Member was concerned that there would not be enough airflow for the condenser units. Mr. Quinn explained that they will be set on stands within a holding area that is 3 ft. deep so there should be enough airflow.

One Member commented that the vent for the existing restaurant will have to be higher than the roofline and it will be loud. Mr. Quinn responded that they are trying to fit the restaurant vent within the building rather than on its exterior. One Board Member asked about the distance between Corinthian Hall and the rear building. Mr. Quinn confirmed that there 5.75 ft. between the buildings at the closest point. One Board Member felt that the affordable units were too concentrated in the development and that they would have the least amount of light. Members requested that they be more spread out over the entire development. It was also requested that the bedroom count for the affordable units be revised so that there is one more two-bedroom and one less studio, so the bedroom distribution is more proportional to the overall bedroom count of the market rate units.

Members reviewed the financial analysis submitted in accordance with the density incentive special permit regulations and raised concerns about the Applicant's proposed timeline for installing solar panels. Mr. Roman explained that five years is a reasonable amount of time given the market. Board Members agreed that there should be a mechanism to ensure that the solar panels were installed and requested that the conditions of approval note that within three years of occupancy, the Applicant will provide the Board an update about the solar panel installation.

One Member asked if the proposed windows comply with the building code since the entire building is on the property line. Mr. Quinn responded that he believes the design complies, but a sprinkler head can be located above the windows if it does not. Members requested that the

Architect explore ways to redesign the grey column on the building's façade to break up the massing. Members also commented that more detail could be added to the dormers, and windows could be added to the bedroom of the corner unit on Greenwood St. and on the back left area of the building. It was suggested that unit 212 will not have enough light if the driving school is ever developed into a taller building.

Members commented on the design of the building with some preferring how the base looked in the original plans. Others felt that additional architectural details could be added to create more consistency and flow between Corinthian Hall, the new development, and other permitted developments in the neighborhood, or be more evocative of either the craftsman or industrial style but not a mix of both as it is now. The Board agreed that the design issues could be resolved during design review. It was clarified that the patio shown on the third-floor plans was an error and there will not be a patio in that location.

Ms. Gaffey noted that the Applicant met with the Engineering Department to discuss the proposed public park behind the building and the City Engineer was supportive of the idea. Access to the park will be from Belmont St. and it will be maintained by the City. The City requested that the Developer coordinate with the appropriate City departments when planting and installing furniture so that the City can review and approve the selections.

No one from the public appeared to speak about the case.

Members reviewed the draft conditions of approval and edited them as discussed above to add to the list of Design Review Subcommittee items, change the bedroom mix of the affordable units and fix a typo in the written number of affordable units, and install solar panels within three years or come back to the Board.

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

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to approve the Site Plan Review, and Special Permits for Density Incentives, Reduced Parking, and Number of Compact Parking Spaces with the conditions attached as amended. All voted in favor of the approvals. None were opposed.

Documents: Application Form & Executive Summary dated November 27, 2023
 Letter from Inspectional Services dated October 18, 2023
 Architectural Plans dated March 19, 2024
 Landscape Plans dated February 26, 2024
 Civil Plans dated March 19, 2024
 Construction Management Plan dated November 2023
 Green Building Report dated October 10, 2023
 Turning Radius dated March 20, 2024
 Traffic Impact Report dated February 19, 2024
 Financial Analysis for Density Incentives dated March 22, 2024
 Stormwater Report dated March 19, 2024

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Board of Appeals public hearings on April 10, 2024

Case 24-006, 28 Cumner Avenue

Members had no objection to the requested variances. Members noted that the deck and hot tub would be screened from the rear and left side abutters, and agreed that the project would not negatively impact neighbors.

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

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 24-006

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Ms. DeSouza Ward nominated Mr. Sampson to continue on as Planning Board Chair and Mr. King as Clerk. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. None were opposed and none abstained.

Mr. Sampson, as Chair, reappointed the subcommittee chairs and members—Ms. Morelli as Chair of the Design Review Subcommittee and Ms. DeSouza Ward as Chair of the Zoning Subcommittee. The Board did not change the membership of their subcommittees. Anne DeSouza Ward, Greg Sampson, Beth Delahaij, and Brian Gregory are on the Zoning Subcommittee and Carla Morelli, Tim Bailey, Paul King, Michael Aveni, and Jack Welch are on the Design Review Subcommittee.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2024.

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.