

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, April 29, 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 7:03 PM by Mr. Sampson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, March 25, 2024

Mr. Welch made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. DeSouza Ward 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*)

Armando Plata, Applicant, Bob Bell, Attorney, Meera Cousens, Civil Engineer, and John O'Keefe, Landscape Architect, appeared to present the case. Attorney Bell provided a brief overview of the project; plans include building a single-family house with a parking pad in the right of way. Mr. Plata noted that he does not intend to remove rock from the site. Ms. Cousens explained that plans have been updated in response to the comments from the Department of Public Works. The stormwater analysis shows a minor increase in runoff post-construction, which will be mitigated by installing two, 550-gallon rain barrels that must be dewatered by the homeowner, as detailed in the Operations & Maintenance Plan.

Mr O'Keefe explained that to create a landscape plan in line with the native vegetation, he observed sites in Melrose with similar topography and site characteristics. He noted that the existing flora mostly consists of Norway Maples, eight of which will be removed to construct the house; another eight will be replaced with native species. The plan includes a variety of seasonal plantings to provide year-round color.

Board Members wondered how trees would grow on the ledge. Mr. O'Keefe explained that the replacement trees will be planted in the same location as the Norway Maples so the conditions should not prevent the new trees from growing. He added that the proposed plant varieties, such as rhododendrons and mountain laurels, have shallow roots and can grow on ledge. Some Members were skeptical about the viability of the landscape plan. One Member spoke favorably about the plan noting that the design adds native species and removes as few trees as possible.

Additionally, the plantings will provide a buffer for the neighbors. One Member suggested adding a condition to the decision that the plants will be replaced if they do not survive.

One Member asked if there will be a dumpster on the site during construction and Mr. Plata responded that there will be a dumpster on the parking pad that will be removed daily. It was clarified that the parking pad is built and it will serve as the staging area. Attorney Bell noted that the Applicant seek a variance from the Board of Appeals because parking will not be on the lot. One Member wondered if Mr. Plata considered creating two tandem spaces to provide space for abutters to pass and he responded that he is open to the idea. Mr. Plata explained that the right of way on his side of the street will be 20 ft. wide.

One Member asked where the rain barrels will be located and how they will be drained. Ms. Cousens explained that they will be underneath the cantilevered portion of the house. The barrels will be surrounded by plantings, which will capture the water as it is released. One Member wondered if the water would freeze in the barrels during the winter in the proposed location. It was unclear if the barrels could be connected in the winter.

One Member asked how many yards of ledge removal the plans require. Mr. Plata responded that a minimal amount of ledge must be removed for the site work and utility trenches, but he is not sure how much. One Member wondered how the Applicant will trench the utilities including the proposed methods, the dimensions of the trenches, and the timeline. Mr. Plata responded that he would need to request that information from his consultant.

One Member asked if the house will be built on a continuous wall or on piers, emphasizing that piers would disturb less slope. Mr. Plata responded that the house will be built on cantilevered slab with different heights to disturb as little ledge as possible, but he is open to exploring piers. One Member asked if any of the site has been cleared. Mr. Plata stated that he has only cleared the rock in the right of way for the parking pad.

The Board did not receive any written public comments. Mike Furtado at 21 Montvale St., Mike Fest at 127 Boston Rock Road, Evan Zahner at 32 Wyoming Heights, Emmanuel Andrade at 136 Florence St., Marie Monk-Smith at 40 Wyoming Heights, James Linehan at 3 Wyoming Heights, Ernie Karelis at 25 Montvale St., John Nikou at 16 Montvale St., City Councilor for Ward 7 Devin Romanul, and Leah Fasano at 32 Wyoming Heights, appeared to speak. Those in opposition expressed the following concerns and questions:

- The construction will and has caused flooding of neighbors' properties
- There will not be enough space to maneuver into the parking pad and for abutters to maneuver on Montvale St.
- The rain barrels will attract mosquitoes
- Who will make sure the homeowners are draining the rain barrels?
- The landscape plan is not realistic
- There is not adequate access for construction vehicles or life-saving/public safety vehicles
- The construction will cause damage to neighboring properties
- How will the dwelling be attached to the rock?

- How will the sewer pipe tie into the main pipe if there is ledge?

Comments in support included:

- The impact to the slope is minimal
- This project will add to the City's housing stock
- The design is thoughtful and attractive

Mr. Plata elaborated on how the dwelling will be constructed by pinning it into the rock.

Board Members felt that the submitted materials did not adequately address the flooding and erosion concerns and agreed that using rain barrels as the primary stormwater management system would not be sufficient. Members raised concerns about the circulation on and to the site. Members also felt that more detail was needed around the amount of ledge removal and the construction logistics.

Members requested that the Applicant provide more information and respond to questions around:

- The dumpster location and the plan for construction deliveries and staging
- If the rain barrels would freeze in the winter in the proposed location
- Examples of where the proposed landscaping has been successful
- Information on snow removal for the parking pad
- How the Applicant will plan for unforeseen circumstances if the proposed stormwater system or rock removal by hand is inadequate
- Utility Trench - Board expects that there will end up being one larger trench and not two.
 - a. Borings needed for utility path
 - b. How many cubic yards of rock will be removed?
 - c. How long will it take to excavate for utilities without blasting
 - d. How will the trenching affect stormwater runoff? They will provide a place for stormwater to go and what will happen to the water from there?

Mr. Aveni made a motion to grant a continuance to May 20, 2024. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. By roll call vote, all were in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Updated civil plans and stormwater report

REVIEW OF PLAN MODIFICATION

Case 22-008, 31-39 West Wyoming Avenue, Navem Partners

David Lucas, Attorney, and Kyle Russo, Developer, appeared before the Board to present the case. Attorney Lucas explained that the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals' decisions were appealed by an abutter, but the Developer and the abutter came to a settlement agreement that includes changes to the approved plans. Rather than constructing a five-story building with 26 units, plans now show a four-story building with 27 units. The design of the building changed slightly, as well, and the private balconies and common roof deck were removed. Attorney Lucas clarified that there will still be a retail space on the first floor and the number of affordable units will remain the same.

Members were disappointed over the loss of the balconies and the roof deck but felt that the revised design was acceptable, and the details would be finalized with the Design Review Subcommittee. Mr. Russo added that Juliette balconies are on the rear of the building.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to determine that the changes are minor and to approve them. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Document entitled West Wyoming Ave, Melrose, MA – Design Changes dated April 4, 2023.
Architectural plans and renderings dated December 20, 2023

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Board of Appeals public hearings on May 8, 2024

Case 24-005, 130 Penney Road

Members took no position on the request for variances. Members agreed with the comments in the Staff Brief and emphasized that the stairs leading to the rear yard should be removed.

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

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 24-005

Case 24-007, 59 Ridgewood Lane

Members took no position on the request for variances. Members agreed with the comments in the Staff Brief and felt that the shed should be made smaller and pulled out of the setback. Members also noted that the Applicant should minimize the amount of additional impervious surface on this lot.

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

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 24-007

ZONING SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Lori Massa, Senior Planner, provided an overview of the City's Zoning Recodification efforts. She noted that the City has partnered with consultants from CommunityScale to assist with the project. She explained that there has been one Zoning Subcommittee Meeting where Members reviewed the first draft and provided input on the suggested revisions. CommunityScale is also planning on holding meetings with stakeholders familiar with the zoning ordinance to discuss ways to make the ordinance clearer and easier to follow. A final draft of the recodified ordinance is expected to be ready by the end of May and it will be posted on the City's website for the public to review. Staff will present the recodified code to City Council over the summer.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2024.
The meeting adjourned at 10 PM.