

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, June 24, 2024
7:00 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, 562 Main Street, Melrose

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

ABSENT: Beth Delahaij

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Mr. Sampson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Design Review Subcommittee Meeting, May 13, 2024

Mr. Welch made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Planning Board Regular Meeting, May 20, 2024

Ms. DeSouza Ward requested that the minutes be amended to include that Board Members pointed out that the case has had several continuances which is burdensome to the neighbors and emphasized that it was important that the Applicant be fully prepared at the following hearing with all the requested materials. Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Zoning Subcommittee Meeting, May 21, 2024

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

MINOR MODIFICATION TO SITE PLAN APPROVAL

Case 22-006, 681-697 Main Street, Green Rise Homes, LLC

Kyle Russo, Applicant, and Ken Feyl, Architect, appeared before the Board to present the case. Mr. Feyl explained that to meet National Grid's requirements, the design for the corner of the building on East Emerson St. needed to be revised to provide additional clearance around the proposed transformer. To achieve this, the stairway on the rear of the building was shifted over and the building's footprint was reduced by 500 sf. The revised plans maintain the same design intent including the vertical element where the stairway was located. Mr. Feyl noted that the unit count remains unchanged and the corner units on East Emerson St. will be smaller.

Board Members preferred the revised plans but recommended adding more details to the first floor façade of the stair tower along the sidewalk to activate the streetscape.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to accept the change as a minor modification to the Site Plan Review and approve it. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Revised Elevations dated April 2024
Revised Architectural Plans dated May 20, 2024

APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED PLAN

Case 24-001 55-79, Dexter Road

Sean Szekely, Applicant, appeared before the Board to present the case. He explained that there are three different plans involved in the proposed lot line adjustments. The first involves land swaps between 55 Dexter Rd. and 79 Dexter Rd. to create a new, conforming lot in between those two lots and a separate lot that will be donated to the Conservation Commission. These lots were the subject of a Slope Protection Special Permit, which the Planning Board approved. As a result of the land swap, 79 Dexter Rd. will have a conforming lot area but will remain pre-existing nonconforming as it relates to frontage. The plan involves purchasing a 30 sf piece of land that belonged to the neighbors across the street, which appeared to be part of the parcel already but there was an error a long time ago that needed to be corrected to incorporate it into 79 Dexter Rd.

Board Members wondered if Dexter Rd. was a private or a public way and if the existing house at 79 Dexter Rd. will remain. Mr. Szekely confirmed that it is a public way and he does not intend to demolish the house. It was clarified that the Board is being asked to approve three different plans including two separate plans for different land court cases and a plan of recorded land.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to endorse the three Approval Not Required plans. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Approval Not Required Application dated June 20, 2024
Approval Not Required Plan of Land dated June 12, 2024
Approval Not Required Plan of Land LC Plan 9072C dated June 12, 2024
Approval Not Required Plan of Land LC Plan 14024D dated June 12, 2024

Case 24-003 31-39, Mt. Zion Road

Jack Sullivan, Engineer, appeared to present the case. He explained that the previously endorsed plan had to be revised because there were slope protected areas on Lot 7 that would not count towards the land area of the parcel so the lot line was moved so both lots have sufficient area and frontage. One Board Member asked if the trees that were removed from the slope protected area should have been reviewed prior to removal. It was clarified that this issues will be reviewed as part of the building permit rather than during the Approval Not Required process.

They had voted that the road provides adequate access at the last hearing for this case.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to endorse the Approval Not Required plan. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Approval Not Required Application dated May 28, 2024
Approval Not Required Plan of Land dated May 28, 2024

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF APPEALS

Board of Appeals public hearings on July 10, 2024

Case 24-012, 264 Upham Street

Members supported the design of the addition and agreed that the shape and narrowness of the lot posed a hardship. Members felt that the increase in the nonconforming dimension was minimal and were pleased that the abutters who would be most impacted by the project submitted letters of support. One Member noted that the distance between the addition and principal structures on the abutting lots is substantial, which reaffirms that the impacts should be minimal.

Mr. Aveni 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 24-012

Case 24-014, 36 Waverly Place

Members took no position on the request for variances. Members felt that the proposed location was appropriate for a two-family dwelling and agreed that the parking plan was sufficient. However, Members emphasized the comments in the Staff Brief regarding the design of the project and felt that the contrast between the mansard and the gable roof was unattractive and should be revised. One Member noted that there were examples in the neighborhood of how mansard roofs are handled, which the Applicant should try and replicate to achieve a more aesthetically pleasing result.

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

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 24-014

Case 24-015, 645 Main Street

Members supported the request for a special permit noting that the space had been previously used in a similar fashion and it did not appear that the proposed use would have negative impacts.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to send a letter in support of the request for a Special Permit. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application Materials for Case 24-015

ZONING RECODIFICATION AMENDMENT

Lori Massa, Senior Planner, provided a presentation to the Board regarding the zoning recodification project. She reviewed the goals of the project and emphasized that the recodification does not change the dimensional requirement or uses. She provided an overview of the process noting that Planning Staff has been working with consultants that were hired through a grant and the Zoning Subcommittee to revise and review drafts of the code. One-on-one meetings with stakeholders were also conducted and the Building Commissioner and Inspector reviewed the proposed changes and suggested others. She provided a detailed explanation of the proposed changes. Planning Staff would like to submit the proposal to the City Council for their July 15 meeting and schedule a joint public hearing for August 19.

Members discussed the proposed changes and had the following suggestions:

- The language around fines for zoning violations should be revised to clarify that the maximum amount allowed by the State shall be imposed if it is legally possible to do so
- Consider if a driveway abuts a right of way, does it need to have a 1 ft. buffer of pervious surface

Ms. Morelli made a motion to send the recodified zoning ordinance to City Council with the amendments as proposed. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

OTHER BUSINESS

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