

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, January 27, 2025
7:00 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, 562 Main Street, Melrose

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

ABSENT: Paul King

STAFF PRESENT: Lori Massa, Director & City Planner & Maya Noviski, Senior Planner & Adam Forrester, Assistant Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Mr. Sampson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planning Board Regular Meeting, December 16, 2024

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

SLOPE PROTECTION SPECIAL PERMIT

Case 24-002, Beech Avenue (G6 0 44 & 53), Szecon Development Inc. (continued public hearing)

Jesse Schomer, Attorney, and Rich Williams, Engineer, appeared before the Board. Attorney Schomer noted that since the last hearing, several Planning Board Members conducted a site visit, and the Applicant met with several neighbors whose feedback is incorporated into the revised plans. Attorney Schomer reviewed the updated plot plan, elevations, and landscape plan. Additionally, information on blasting and a cross-section plan was provided. Mr. Williams reviewed the updated mitigative drainage analysis and confirmed that the sewer on Oak Street is operable and pipe sizes were added to the civil plans.

Lori Massa, Director and City Planner, noted that the plot plan still needs to identify that the driveway will be constructed with pavers. Additionally, a limit of work plan was requested and has not yet been submitted.

Board Members discussed the site visit and the updated plans. Many felt that creating access to the house from Oak Street would be more appropriate and less impactful to the natural environment and abutters. One Member requested that the Applicant provide a plan showing access from Oak Street with information on how much blasting would be needed to accommodate this configuration. It was confirmed that abutters will have 30 days to claim any

damage incurred from the blasting and Members requested that a seismograph be located on each abutting house. Members raised concerns about the impacts of the project on the slope protected areas around the property and requested that the plot plan include the contours of the abutting properties. One Member also requested more information on how the undisturbed slope protected areas on the property will be protected during construction.

Members discussed the design of the house and felt that it did not respect the topography and natural characteristics of the site. One Member wondered if the house can be pinned to the ledge rather than cutting into the rock to reduce the amount of blasting. One Member noted that the proposed boulders along the side of the driveway were insufficient and additional safety measures were needed to protect the abutters on Mt. Hood Terrace. One Member wondered how water will be directed so it does not flow outside of the driveway. Mr. Williams noted that the driveway is designed to be perpendicular to the contours and pavers and gravel along the side will help contain the water onsite.

Attorney Schumer reiterated that in order to use Oak Street for frontage, a variance would be needed. Additionally, the part of Oak Street in front of the property is a paper street and the Developer would have to improve the road before it would be passable.

The Board received four public comments with concerns about the impacts of the blasting on neighboring properties and the potential for flooding and water runoff onto neighboring parcels.

Renee Sousa of 305 Beech Avenue, and the owner of the property, appeared before the Board in support of the development. She provided a brief history of the parcel noting that two lots were merged in the 1970s and the Planning Board approved an ANR in 2001 with frontage on Beech Avenue.

Mr. Welch made a motion to continue the case to February 24, 2025. Mr. Gregory seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed

SITE PLAN APPROVAL

Case 24-003, 40 Vine Street, 140 Tremont Street, LLC

Gregory Antonelli, Applicant, and Rick Salvo and Eric Bradanese, Engineers, appeared before the Board. Mr. Salvo explained that this site was the subject of a previous proposal, which was granted Site Plan Approval in 2021, to construct a four-story multifamily building with eight residential units and eight parking spaces. The updated proposal includes demolishing the existing structure and constructing nine units with nine parking spaces.

Lori Massa, Director & City Planner, noted that a Department Head Meeting was held and the Applicant was asked to provide more information on the items documented in the memorandum from the Engineering Department and in the Staff Report from the Planning Department.

Board Members agreed that the new design is more appropriate for the neighborhood and were supportive of the changes from the previously approved plans. One Member wondered how the

building would be ventilated and Mr. Salvo responded that there will be a Life Breath system. There will also be plumbing vents on the roof. One Member wondered if there will be a fence along the right-side yard. Mr. Salvo noted that the Applicant will consult with neighbors on Essex Street and will either construct a fence or plant vegetative screening depending on what the abutters prefer.

Members also had the following comments:

- The trash should be relocated to another area onsite because it is in front of the window for the ground floor unit and it will be very impactful for the resident in that unit
- The Applicant should explore other options for the HVAC units including separating them or locating them on the roof.
- The Korean Dogwood at the back of the property should be replaced with a tree variety that provides more shade
- The fence should stop at the front yard setback and its height should be tapered

Members requested the following:

- A cut sheet of the proposed type of HVAC with decibel levels should be provided
- A roof plan showing the extent of pipes or vents
- Information on how deliveries and a trash truck will maneuver onsite

The Board received one written comment that expressed concern with the design of the project and noted that every effort should be made to preserve and renovate the existing building rather than demolish it. Additionally, Nancy Clover of 185 Essex St., Houghton Young of 220 Essex St., and John and Kerri Garofano of 163 Essex St. appeared before the Board and had the following comments:

- The size and design of the project fits within the neighborhood and will improve current conditions
- Street trees should be added where possible
- The parking ratio is appropriate for the site
- A wider drive aisle between the parking spaces should be provided

Members agreed that the two parking spaces closest to the rear lot line will be difficult to maneuver in and out of and suggested creating a small backout space at the back of the lot.

Mr. Gregory made a motion to continue the case to February 24, 2025. Ms. DeSouza Ward seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

SITE PLAN APPROVAL & SPECIAL PERMITS

Case 24-004, 186 Tremont Street, Ronen and Nir Drory

Ronen and Nir Drory, Applicants, David Lucas, Attorney, Douglas Annino, Architect, and Eric Bradanese, Engineer, appeared before the Board. Attorney Lucas presented an overview of the project. The site currently consists of a car wash and the abutting land uses include residential across the street and automotive repair/service stations to the right and left of the property. The

proposal involves demolishing the existing infrastructure and constructing a five-story, mixed-use building with commercial on the ground floor and 52 residential units above and 61 parking spaces. Commercial tenants have not yet been identified. The proposed use is expected to result in a less vehicular activity than the current use and the Applicant is requesting a waiver from providing a level of service analysis for nearby intersections. Additionally, Attorney Lucas noted that the Applicant held a neighborhood meeting, and neighbors were very supportive of the plan. He also commented that the project will require a variance from the Board of Appeals for density and a special permit for reduced parking.

Mr. Bradanese provided an overview of the site plan. There are two infiltration systems proposed consisting of culvert chambers underneath the parking lot, which were designed for a 100 year storm event. The building will tie in through a roof drain. Mr. Bradanese also noted that the site is relatively flat but there are grade changes along Tremont Street, so the proposal includes regrading along the front of the building for ADA access. Additionally, the ADA parking spaces are located close to the building to facilitate access. He also noted that trash will be handled onsite.

Mr. Annino presented an overview of the building design. He noted that the base of the building will be constructed from concrete and steel with a wood frame on top. The design incorporates different colors and materials, including brick around the base of the building, Hardie Panel with reveals, and Hardie Board and Batten siding. There will be storefront windows along the front of the building and a variety of landscaping, public benches, and bicycle racks in the front yard. Each unit will also have a balcony. The building will be fully electric with individual heat pumps for each unit.

Lori Massa, Director & City Planner, noted that a Department Head Meeting was held and the Applicant was asked to provide more information on the items documented in the memorandum from the Engineering Department and in the Staff Report from the Planning Department. She highlighted that there is a city-owned clay drainage pipe that runs through the property and under the existing and proposed building that the Engineering Department requested the Applicant to replace. Attorney Lucas noted that the Applicant will discuss this issue with the Engineering Department and the City Solicitor.

Board Members discussed the proposal and wondered if any soil testing had been done. Mr. Bradanese explained that because the car wash is still operating, soil testing has not been conducted but the Applicant will test during demolition. One Member asked for more information about the stormwater system. Mr. Bradanese explained that it is an infiltration system. Grates are proposed to pre-treat runoff from the driveway area. One Member asked if there was going to be a basement. Mr. Annino explained that the building will be slab on grade and there is no basement proposed. One Member wondered about the market for one-bedroom units and Mr. Annino responded that they will be marketed to young professional and older adults.

Members also had the following comments:

- The Applicant should consider designing a trash room so tenants would not need to walk to the dumpster to take out their trash

- The Applicant should consider adding usable outdoor space and/or have the balconies project more than 2 ft.
- The design could be refined including altering the roofline & jogging the façade on the norther side to break up the massing
- Pedestrian safety measures should be considered at the driveway entrance
- The transformer should be relocated
- The Applicant could consider removing the three parking spaces along the left side of the building and extending the commercial space
- The commercial spaces should have more frontage and the resident amenity space could be located behind the commercial space
- Consider using a central water heater because it is more efficient than individual water heaters
- Consider the students from the middle school and high school when thinking about the tenant space because it would be nice to provide an amenity to this demographic
- Visitor, commercial, and residential parking should be designated

Members requested that the Applicant provide the following:

- A shadow study at 9AM, 12 PM, and 3 PM during the winter that shows the projects' impact on the surrounding buildings
- Real traffic data from the existing use

Houghton Young of 220 Essex Street and Ellen and Rich Connelly of 7 Union Street appeared before the Board and had the following comments and questions:

- Will the commercial space be fitted for a restaurant?
- The size of the residential units is appropriate
- There is not enough parking
- Accurate traffic data is needed
- The building is too tall
- Rodent control measures should be implemented during the construction
- Will the affordable units be identical to the market rate units?

Ms. Massa explained that the design for affordable and regular residential units will be the same. Attorney Lucas noted that while commercial tenants have not yet been identified, the space will not be designed for a restaurant.

Ms. Morelli made a motion to continue the case to February 24, 2025. Ms. DeSouza Ward seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT PROPOSALS

Ms. Massa explained to the Board that the State released draft guidelines for the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulation and Planning Staff are reviewing the proposed zoning amendment to ensure that it complies with the guidelines. If changes are required, an updated proposal will be sent to Planning Board Members and the City Council prior to the joint public hearing. Members also reviewed the Basement Height zoning amendment.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to send the zoning amendments to City Council as proposed. Mr. Welch seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

OTHER BUSINESS

A joint public hearing with the City Council will be held on February 10, 2025.

The next regular Planning Board meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 PM.