

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Regular Meeting
Monday, June 23, 2025
7:00 PM
Remote

PRESENT: Gregory Sampson, Anne DeSouza Ward, Beth Delahaij, Steven Barron, Michael Aveni, Paul King, Carla Morelli, Brian Gregory, Tim Bailey

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Maya Noviski, Senior Planner, and Adam Forrester, Assistant Planner

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

MINOR MODIFICATION

Request to amend condition of Site Plan Review decision, Case 25-001, 15 Green Street, Matthew O'Reilly (c/o Melrose Wakefield Healthcare, Inc.)

Maya Noviski, Senior Planner, explained that the Applicant requested that the Board strike Condition 6 of the decision requiring them to plant ground cover in the space between the bollards and the retaining wall along Main Street. Members noted that the Applicant has planted grasses in that space and felt that the condition was satisfied and no further action was needed.

RECOMMENDATION FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT APPLICATION

ZBA Case 25-010, 554-556 Franklin Street

Jesse Schomer, Attorney, and Sean and Laura Szekely, Applicants, appeared before the Board to present an overview of the proposed project at 554-556 Franklin Street. Attorney Schomer presented the following:

- The project is in the Highlands neighborhood in an area that has a mix of residential and commercial uses, and has been the center of development activity for a number of recently permitted projects that are in different stages of construction.
- Site has good access to public transit and has a high walkability score.
- Vehicle access to the site will be through the municipal lot that abuts the building on the left.
- The proposed building will be 5 stories with 60 residential units. The fifth floor will be set back. Parking will be on the ground floor in a covered garage and will be unbundled from the rent.
- The building will be all electric.
- There is an area of unutilized land located between the property line and the fence on the adjacent municipal lot and the project includes improving this area with four public parking spaces, a publicly available loading zone, and landscaping. This proposal will require an easement from the City. All improvements will be accessible to the public.

- The shadow study shows that the building's shadows will mostly be cast onto Franklin Street and not on abutting properties, except during the winter.
- The front yard has a variety of landscaping including a mix of trees and shrubs. Green giant arborvitae will be planted along the rear yard to provide a green screen. There is a common patio on the second floor with planter beds and a seating area.
- A traffic impact study was conducted showing that the project will generate minimal additional traffic. Signage for Belmont Place and Belmont Street will be updated to help with traffic flow.
- The developer will work the Engineering Department and the Traffic Commission to install pedestrian safety measures along Franklin Street including a driver feedback radar sign, a rectangular rapid flashing beacon, and a raised crosswalk.

The following questions were raised by Planning Board Members. Answers are indicated underneath the question.

- Will there be a loss of spaces in the municipal lot?
 - No spaces will be lost rather there will be an addition of four parking spaces.
- Are there any time limits for the loading zone and new spaces in the municipal lot? This will be determined by the City, however, the development team is proposing that the loading zone be short term.
- Will the rapid beacon be installed near the existing crosswalk on Franklin Street?
 - Yes.
- Will there be an increase in runoff with the added impervious surface?
 - The plans show no increased runoff. A stormwater management system will be located underneath the garage that will capture the runoff with a controlled release.
- Where is the transformer located?
 - In the southeast corner. It will be accessible from the municipal lot.
- Did you consider adding a commercial space?
 - Adding a commercial space was not considered in the initial proposal. This was discussed during the initial Board of Appeals hearing and the public reaction was mixed.

Members had the following comments:

- Members supported the proposed vehicle access to the site via the municipal lot rather than Franklin Street.
- Members agreed that the project aligns with the City's Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, and transit-oriented development goals.
- Members appreciated the proposed design and materials.
- Members supported the inclusion of a public loading zone and felt that the size of the trash room was appropriate, although the number of doors will reduce the functionality of the space. It was suggested that the glass for the trash room be frosted.
- Members appreciated the level of detail included in the Operations and Management Plan.

- Members recommended that the Applicant provide a rendering showing the building from farther down Franklin Street in both directions to make sure the solar arrays and condensers are not visible.
- One Member voiced concern about the number of developments in this area and the impact on traffic.

Ms. DeSouza Ward made a motion to send a letter in support outlining Board Members' comments. Ms. Morelli seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: ZBA Application materials, case 25-010

OTHER

Recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals - ZBA Case 25-012, 482 Swains Pond Ave
Members requested to discuss the design of the proposed dormer to send a recommendation letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Members felt that no attempt was made to comply with the zoning regulations and suggested incorporating a continuous eave on the back of the dormer and setting the dormer in 2 ft. from the edge of the roof. Members also recommended exploring whether smaller dormers could be added on the front and back of the house to comply with the code. One Member recommended shifting the bathroom to the lower left corner and sliding both bedrooms towards the middle to reduce the overall size of the dormer.

Mr. Gregory made to send a letter recommending that the Board of Appeals deny the request for a variance. Mr. Aveni seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

The next regular Planning Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 28, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.