

TOWN OF BELMONT
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
JULY 19, 2022

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: February 15, 2023
TIME: 2:35 PM

Present: Steve Pinkerton, Chair; Matt Lowrie, Vice Chair; Thayer Donham; Renee Guo; Jeff Birenbaum; Karl Haglund

Staff: Robert Hummel, Senior Planner, Offices of Community Development

Mr. Pinkerton called the meeting to order and introduced Planning Board members. He reviewed a summary of the items that were on the agenda. The meeting was held remotely via video conference webinar. The draft meeting minutes were recorded by Kim Beer.

1. Meeting Called to Order 7:00 PM

2. Continued Cases a) PB Case 19-01 – Design Site Plan Review (Amendment #1) Belmont Middle & High School Building Committee – 221 Concord Avenue

Renee Guo recused herself from this case. Mr. Birenbaum also recused himself from this case.

Bill Lovallo, Chair of the Belmont High and Middle School Building Committee, introduced his colleagues-Pat Bruschi, Co-Chair of the Belmont High and Middle School Building Committee; Don White, Owners Project Manager; Brian Spangler, Perkins & Will; Emily Hunt, Landscape Architect Warner Larson.

Mr. Lovallo reviewed the new alignment of the sidewalk by the switchgear equipment and the new configuration of plantings. He presented the solution that shifts the sidewalk, and he described the addition of the bayberries now to be completely surrounding to screen this piece of equipment. He noted that the Belmont DPW, the Belmont Community Path Committee, Belmont Light and the Belmont Police Department have all approved this new configuration. This shift will provide a proper clearance to the intersection, the queuing for the crosswalks and will provide for the screening as requested by the Planning Board.

Mr. Haglund joined the meeting at 7:13 PM.

Public comments-

Ms Wong, Goden Street, would like to see evergreens instead of bayberries for better coverage for all four seasons. Emily Hunt, Landscape Architect, noted that the bayberries typically hold their leaves all season and they would be a mature planting. Bayberry would be very dense and would provide a successful year-round screening.

MOTION to approve the site plan as amended and subject to conditions that were made during the hearings was made by Mr. Lowrie and seconded by Mr. Pinkerton. Motion passed.

Yes votes-

Ms. Donham
Mr. Pinkerton
Mr. Lowrie

Karl.....?????

3. New Cases a) PB Case 22-13 – Special Permit, Applicant Scott Miller – 13 Grant Avenue

Mr. Pinkerton read the public notice.

Ms. Guo and Mr. Birenbaum rejoined the meeting at 7:20 PM.

Mr. Miller, Applicant, explained that the home was a non-conforming single-family home and it was in very poor condition. The existing home needed to come down and he was proposing a two-family home (a 4-bedroom unit of 2,185 square feet and a 1-bedroom unit of 970 square feet). The total proposed square footage was 3,155 square feet. He noted that the parking requirements were met, the plans met the current zoning requirements and the height to the peak was 31.5 feet. He felt that the design of the property was consistent with the neighborhood as a front-end gable. He invited the neighborhood to a design meeting and the neighbors who attended were very supportive. There was a letter from one of the neighbors who was opposed because of density, the size, a possible decrease in property values and less morning light on her property.

Mr. Miller described the parking space arrangement and pointed them out on the site plan. Mr. Lowrie noted that the parking space was not in compliance with the By-Laws because a parking space requires unrestricted access and if you have a parking space behind it is not unrestricted. Mr. Pinkerton noted that there were many parking spaces that were set up this way in the GR District. Mr. Miller reviewed the plans for the proposed two-family home. Mr. Pinkerton suggested that the dormer could possibly be pushed back. Mr. Sanders, noted that the dormer was set back but could be set back further. Mr. Miller reviewed the landscape plan and Mr. Haglund suggested that the tree caliper be at least 3.5-4" caliper.

Mr. Hummel presented the Neighborhood Analysis. Mr. Pinkerton noted that the TLA was at 59%, and the proposed FAR was .55 and this was typical for a proposed home in this area.

Public comments-

Angela Stamoulous, 9 Grant Avenue, noted that her property will be blocked by light, and she would be looking at a wall and windows into someone else's space. The Board reviewed aerial images and the proposed side elevations and discussed the light and privacy issues. Ms. Stamoulous noted that her concerns were privacy, parking issues and there was a density issue.

Rachal Heller, lives on the corner of Grant Avenue and White Street. She noted that the proposed home would fit right in. She lives in a two-family and she feels that it is important that they create more affordable homes. She is in support of this project.

Sheila Flewelling, asked the Board how this complies with the intent of trying to maintain some of these single-family homes in this neighborhood.

Rachel Watson, lives on the corner of Grant Avenue and White Street. She noted that she does not see the neighbors parking on the street and the tandem parking works fine. She thought that the proposed project was exciting, and she was in support of the proposal.

Juan Alejandre, 15 Grant Avenue, concerns were the same as the neighbors at 7-9. Sunlight was an issue and the amount of space of the new house was really going to impact their building. He mentioned that she was concerned about the asbestos roof tile. The former owner noted that the building was going to stay as is and that there would be no future development of the building.

Joe Wall, noted that Scott and Darryl were great people to work with. Mr. Wall said that he lives next to a home that has recently been demolished.

Board Member comments-

Mr. Lowrie noted that the purpose of the amendment to permitting for this type of project where a single family is eliminated and a two-family were to replace it and the desire was not to have a GR district that was just two families. The parking proposed was for three parking spaces for a four-bedroom unit plus an additional one-bedroom unit. Mr. Lowrie noted that the space could not be impeded, and the overflow parking would end up on the street. Mr. Pinkerton noted that the parking spaces had nothing to do with the number of bedrooms, you get two parking spaces per dwelling, except that there could be one parking space allowed for the one bedroom. Mr. Lowrie said that there would be more overflow parking on the street as there were four bedrooms and not enough parking. Ms. Donham noted that if they had four cars for the four bedrooms, they would have to rent two spaces. Mr. Lowrie noted that the floor space was very reasonable for a two-family.

Ms. Donham noted that she was not opposed to the project, but it would be good to move the house forward to create more space in the rear.

Ms. Guo was in support of the project. She was also in support of moving the house forward to create more space in the backyard. She encouraged the developer to use nice materials for the parking lot and she thought that the house size was reasonable. She asked if they could add a parking spot.

Mr. Haglund noted that he was in favor of the project and sympathetic to Ms. Donham's comments.

Mr. Pinkerton said that he felt that he could support his project and would like to see if the house could be moved forward.

Angela Stamoulous asked for plantings to create privacy and to look to see if some of the interior windows could be moved around so that they do not look into each other's windows. Mr. Miller noted that he would consider moving the windows and adding landscaping to create more privacy.

Mr. Pinkerton noted that there were a number of outstanding issues such as the clarification for the parking space requirement, making the house less sheer with landscaping and window alignment. He said it would be great if they could pull the home closer to the front. The Applicants noted that this would not be a problem and they would also look at the possibility for an additional parking spot.

Mr. Birenbaum noted that he was also interested in clarification on the parking requirements.

Conditions-

The house would need to be moved up to a new alignment to match the front setback to the property at 7-9 and 17-19 Grant Avenue.

The special permit would allow three parking spaces in alignment to the extent necessary.

MOTION to approve with conditions was made by Mr. Pinkerton and seconded by Ms. Donham. Motion passed. Votes 4:1

YES votes-

Ms. Guo

Mr. Pinkerton

Mr. Haglund

Ms. Donham

NO vote-

Mr. Lowrie

Associate Member Jeff NO

4. PB Case 21-07 661 Pleasant Street Minor Amendment - Woman's Club

No representatives were available to discuss the plans. They will have to come back to a future meeting.

5. Woman's Club Decision Updates (Landscaping & Parking, etc.)

No representatives from the Belmont Women's Club were available to discuss the plans. They will have to come back to a future meeting. Mr. Haglund asked the Planning Board members to consider the grading plan for the parking spaces. He noted that eleven cars parked on the diagonal will need to be considered.

6. Belmont Skating Rink Preliminary Presentation

Mark Haley, Chairman of the Preliminary Building Committee and Chairman of the Municipal Ice-Skating Rink Committee. He noted that CHA was the OPM and Ted Galante was the Architect.

Mr. Haley noted that the plans that he would present were preliminary and he was there to get feedback from the Planning Board. As per the Town Meeting vote, his committee was charged to design a municipal skating rink with locker rooms for the Harris Field. They have decided on the location for the rink, how to maximize the field and have a preliminary parking plan. The municipal skating rink committee has been asked to maximize the fields and minimize the parking.

Ted Galante, Galante Architecture, presented the plans for ice rink, travel lanes and the parking plans. He noted there would be around thirty-two parking spaces with bus drop off in front. He described the existing ice rink conditions and noted that they were saving part of the building, renovating part of the building and expanding a part of the building. The program in the field house would be consolidated into this one building.

Mr. Pinkerton noted the need for the ninety parking spaces was originally requested by the High School Building Committee and now they have said that they do not need this many spaces. Now, they will need parking spaces for Harris Field, the swimming pool, the library and the ice rink. Mark Haley noted that they were looking to expand the jug handle and there needed to be a bus drop off and Ted and the committee were working on solutions. Mr. Pinkerton noted that the parking would be the issue that the Planning Board would need to work through with the Ice Rink committee. Mr. Haley noted that Harris Field attendees park on Concord Avenue and fields are a premium and between the Select Board, the Planning Board and the School Committee they will need to figure out what is the best thing for the Town.

7. Peer Review Authorization Vote peer review

MOTION to authorize Mr. Hummel to engage a peer reviewer for analysis of the Belmont Hill School application for parking and facilities was made by Mr. Pinkerton and seconded by Mr. Lowrie. Vote was unanimous. Motion passed.

8. Review and Approve Draft Planning Board Minutes - July 5, 2022.

MOTION to approve was made by Mr. Pinkerton. Vote was unanimous. Motion passed.

9. Planning Board Welcome Packet Discussion – Mr. Pinkerton had added a couple of items to the packet, he will distribute it for review.

10. Updates on Existing and Future Cases, Planning Board Projects, Committee Reports, and Administrative Updates

Mr. Hummel noted that the MBTA Community Advisory Committee was planning a meeting next Tuesday. Mr. Pinkerton and Ms. Donham will attend that meeting.

Mr. Hummel noted that there had been a request from Mr. Dawley for a minor amendment.

11. Adjourn 9:19 PM.

The Planning Board's next scheduled meeting will be held on September 13, 2022

