

# TOWN OF BELMONT

## PLANNING BOARD

### MEETING MINUTES

April 20, 2021

**RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: May 18, 2021

TIME: 9:57 AM

Present: Steve Pinkerton, Chair; Thayer Donham; Matt Lowrie  
Absent: Karl Haglund; Ed Starzec; Renee Guo  
Staff: Ara Yogurtian, Assistant Director, Office of Community Development

#### **1. Meeting Called to Order at 7:00 PM**

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.

#### **2. Continued Cases**

##### **a. CASE NO. 20-08 – One Special Permit** **30 Newcastle Road – Mari Deranian**

Mr. Lowrie noted that the meeting continuation notice should have been made public well ahead of time so that the neighbors know within 48 hours-notice. There should be a procedural change for this to take place in the future.

**MOTION to accept withdrawal of application without prejudice was made by Mr. Pinkerton and seconded by Ms. Donham. Motion passed.**  
**VOTE - unanimous**

##### **b. CASE NO. 21-06 – Three Special Permits** **201 Lexington Street (GR) – Christine Arthur and Eugene Klein**

Mr. Pinkerton noted that the revised plans clarified the heights and the areas. He presented the neighborhood TLA graph and noted the impact on the abutters in terms of size and mass. The before and after red bars show the existing structure as 3,099 square feet and the proposed structure at 5,682 square feet. He noted that this would be the largest structure in the entire GR district. He added that the application definition of a duplex was that it shared a common vertical wall and shared roof but there was no shared roof. The real concern was the size, the Planning Board had to consider the size relative to the neighborhood whether or not it was appropriate in size and this was troubling, it would be a super structure inside this lot. He reviewed the FAR as existing .32 and proposed at .59, it would be one of the densest lots in the neighborhood and not typical of the neighborhood.

Mr. Lowrie noted that this would look like an enormous one family and it would not fit into the

neighborhood. They were essentially subdividing the property without complying with the Zoning Bylaw. It would be exceedingly difficult to get to a yes vote without a new and substantially smaller design.

Ms. Donham noted that the garage was attached to the old house and was large and both garages push this into being too much mass on the site. If the height could be lower on the super insulated house, it would be more acceptable. On corners you cannot screen with landscape and fencing as there needs to be space left open for the corner setbacks according to the Zoning Bylaw. If it was possible to move the house closer to the existing house and reduce the volume of garages, then it might get towards something more acceptable. Both driveways were bigger than what was permitted in the GR district.

Mr. Pinkerton noted that the impact on immediate abutters would be an imposition given the sheer mass of the height of the wall.

Christine Arthur, Owner-Architect, joined the meeting and noted that this was an ode to the existing home. She explained that the design was a site that was developable through the special permit process, and how this works to keep its bones and beauty with the existing structure. This was the simplest design that allows another dwelling unit that allows the size with separate garages. This works within the environment and she not that they were trying to create two dwelling units and it was not cookie cutter and it was interesting. It was not a giant side by side thing and it compliments what was there and adds value. It was interesting and cool and that was the type of thing that they are looking at. She presented a neighborhood map that showed her lot and the proposed buildings in perspective with the other buildings in the neighborhood. She noted that her plans were fitting within the size of other structures in the neighborhood. Most houses in the neighborhood were two and a half stories and she presented many images of houses in her neighborhood and the GR district that were large buildings. She asked what was the TLA and the height that the PB is looking for and what does she have to do to get this to move forward.

Mr. Lowrie noted that it must be redesigned and must fit into the neighborhood.

Mr. Pinkerton noted that many of the structures were built before the law was changed. The Bylaw does not allow for massive structures in the neighborhood.

Ms. Donham noted that the PB is not insensitive to the tear down of historic buildings and that this is a scale issue and they want to preserve the character of the existing house but they need a way to make the barn addition feel like a barn and to make the other pieces smaller. She mentioned that she felt they were headed in the right direction. The shadow studies show that they will not be creating a ton of shadows on the neighbors. The existing house with a barn addition would be heading in the right direction and the garages muddy it up a little bit. The lot may not be able to handle this much density. She noted that in this case perhaps they could consider removing the garages to allow for the other livable space.

Mr. Pinkerton noted that perhaps making it a one-story barn would be a good idea. These two

design styles were not working well together and the lot was too small. The new structure was a boxy barn with big dormers and they did not blend with each other, it was two different single families on the same lot and the lot was not big enough and these were not working together and relative to the neighborhood not fitting in. To have a working group, the applicant would need to come back with a different design that was smaller and addressed the PB's concerns.

Ms. Donham noted that she would be happy to be on a working group for this project.

Mr. Lowrie explained the options for the Applicant to proceed through the process. Ms. Arthur decided to come back with a revised plan that she could take through a working group process.

**MOTION to continue until June 1, 2021 was made by Ms. Donham and seconded by Mr. Pinkerton. Motion passed.**

**YES votes - unanimous**

### **3. 91 Beatrice Circle, Zoning Board of Appeals Comprehensive Permit**

Mr. Pinkerton presented a brief overview of the project on the screen and walked the PB through the site plan.

Ms. Donham's concerns: She noted that she was concerned about the entrance location. She wondered where the entrance was located. She wondered about where you would enter when you arrive on the site, where was the front and where was the rear. She also noted that they should have material samples. The Zoning Board needs to ask for material samples and color samples. In regards to the landscaped piece that belongs to the Town, the Applicant needs to work with the Town to figure out what to do with that piece. There is an opportunity for Arlington, Belmont, the State and the Applicant to get together to talk about what the road should be, it should be more of a residential street and someone from a planning perspective needed to look at both sides of the street on Route 2 and start thinking about how to make it a lot more pedestrian friendly. She suggested looking at traffic calming, street trees, lighting, sidewalks and looking at the big picture. They need to find ways to make it a lot nicer for pedestrians and bikers on both sides of Route 2. As it is currently it is tough and there needs to be a planning effort to make it better. It should be a nice street to be nicer for the residences.

Mr. Lowrie noted his concerns as:

The style of the homes does not fit into the neighborhood of the 2.5 story colonial homes. Could it be made to fit in? Probably not because of its size.

Mr. Pinkerton read Mr. Haglund's comments:

His general thoughts were that a fully interactive scaled model needs to be submitted by the Applicant to get a sense of how large it was in context with the smaller buildings around it. The reduction of units did not significantly change the proposed mass and pedestrian access of the proposed multifamily proposal. The architectural style did not fit in and the slope and site work were inadequate. There needs to be more information regarding slope work and stabilization as requested by Mass Housing before the project has met the standards as proposed.

Mr. Pinkerton's concerns were:

The two mismatched style of homes blocked together at the back of the property and awfully close to the neighbors. There was a lot of glass included as windows, there was something that it turns it back to the neighborhood as the front of the building is to the back. There was no way that this size and design fit the neighborhood. It was a foreign structure that would be dropped into the neighborhood. It looked like an office complex, he noted cheap construction, the color scheme was very stark and the ZBA should get samples of the materials. There needed to be a proper landscaping plan. The shadowing would be tremendous and there was no architectural communication between the buildings. There was no creative effort or attempt to fit in in any way.

Mr. Lowrie noted that the screening by the side of the parking would cause headlights into the neighbor's house. Plus, there would be light pollution on the neighboring home from the site lighting.

Mr. Yogurtian asked for the comments of the Planning Board be submitted in a letter form to the Zoning Board.

Mr. Lowrie noted that he would draft the letter of PB opinions. The comments from Mr. Starzec and Ms. Guo should be included in the draft.

Mr. Yogurtian noted that the public comments should be directed to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**4. Public Hearings:**

**a. CASE NO. 21-07 – Design and Site Plan Review**

**661 Pleasant Street (SRA) – Belmont Woman's Club, Wendy J. Murphy, President**

Mr. Lowrie noted that it would be more appropriate to wait for a full Planning Board to discuss this matter.

**MOTION to continue to May 4, 2021 was made by Mr. Pinkerton and seconded by Ms. Donham. Motion passed.**

**VOTE-unanimous**

**5. For the Board to review and vote on recommendation for favorable action to Town Meeting on ATM Article 4. Amend General Bylaws; Section 40-405 A Capital Budget Committee**

**MOTION to recommend favorable action to Town Meeting for passage of Article 4 to have a citizen on the Capital Budget Committee instead of a Planning Board member was made by Mr. Pinkerton and seconded by Ms. Donham. Motion passed.**

**VOTE - unanimous**

**6. Updates on Cases and Planning Board Projects, and Committee Reports**

There were no case updates.

**7. Minutes Review and Approval: Minutes Review and Approval: April 8, 2021**

Postponed until next meeting.

**8. Adjourn 8:37 PM**