



Town of Brookline Massachusetts

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PLANNING BOARD

Steven A. Heikin, Chair
Mark J. Zarrillo, Clerk
Andrea Brue
Shelly Chipimo
Linda K. Hamlin
Blair Hines

Abigail Hiller

BROOKLINE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES By Zoom Event February 16, 2023 – 7:30 p.m.

Board Present: Steve Heikin, Mark Zarrillo, Andrea Brue, Linda Hamlin, Shelly Chipimo
Staff Present: Beccah Mapure

Materials related to each agenda item can be found at:
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/3651>

Steve Heikin opened the meeting.

1) **PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

Steve Heikin informed that starting on April 1st, the Planning Board might be required to have an in-person quorum.

2) **BOARD OF APPEALS CASE** (Tentative Zoning Board of Appeals Hearing Date) and relevant Precinct

9 South Street - Install wooden shed on side yard (3/2) Pct. 15.

Beccah Mapure introduced the case and described the required relief.

Applicant Daniel Sibor presented the plans.

Steve Heikin said the proposal was fairly modest and made a motion to recommend approval. Mark Zarrillo seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Planning Board recommends approval of the site plans by Colonial Land Surveying Company, dated 7/5/2021 and specifications by Eastern Shed Company, dated 8/15/2022, the Planning Department recommends the following conditions:

1. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall electronically submit final floor plans and elevations, and a final site plan, stamped and signed by a registered engineer or land surveyor, to the Assistant Director for Regulatory Planning for review and approval.

2. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall electronically submit a landscape plan , subject to approval by the Assistant Director for Regulatory Planning. The counterbalancing amenities must be executed in accordance with the approved plan.
3. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall electronically submit to the Building Commissioner for review and approval a) the site plan, floor plans, and elevations displaying the approval stamp of the Assistant Director for Regulatory Planning; and b) evidence that the Board of Appeals decision has been obtained from the Town Clerk 's office by the applicant or their representative and recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

116 Columbia Street - Demolish a two-family and construct two attached single-families (3/2)
Pct. 9

Beccah Mapure introduced the case and described the required relief. She noted that the case was postponed on January 19th so the applicant could make changes.

Attorney Jeffrey Allen summarized the proposal and described the required relief.

Architect Tania Carriere presented the plans and highlighted the changes made since the proposal was submitted.

Mark Zarrillo asked why they opted for a mansard roof since the neighborhood has no similar roofs. It could have a peak or hip roof like the rest of the houses.

Tania Carriere replied that on a discussion with Staff, a mansard roof seemed acceptable while providing a living space on the top floor.

Andrea Brue asked about the side yard setback of the garage and if there would be a new retaining wall.

Jeffrey Allen replied that the setback was zero and they were asking for relief. A new retaining wall was being proposed.

Andrea said the type of roof and windows were not in keeping with the neighborhood's character and a double-hung window would be preferred. The roof deck would be nicer on the front of the house.

Tania Carriere said the roof deck was initially on the front and was moved to the middle to allow a real mansard look. Jeffrey Allen added that it was also thought to be better for the neighborhood and future occupants.

Steve Heikin said the proposal represented an unreasonable way to redevelop the site maxing out the FAR. The bottom and top units arrangement with one common elevator and stairs

worked better than the proposed front and back design. The project also failed to meet several zoning requirements. Zoning only allows 360 sf/space to be exempted for parking garages and the proposed garage was larger than that. Therefore, all the additional areas beyond the 1440 sf should be counted even with a low ceiling. The proposed bays and porches projecting into the front yard occupied more than the allowed 50 percent of the façade. The dogwood tree could be easily preserved. The deck above the garage represented an intrusion into the neighbor's yard.

Shelly Chipimo acknowledged the significant revision to the project but echoed the concerns regarding the contextuality of the building that could be further improved.

Jeffrey Allen asked for clear direction from the Board to move forward.

Steve Heikin said that proposals should not be solely driven by FAR and should look into standards of design review, including massing and scale. A more traditional stacked two-family with a gable or hip roof and less waste of space in the garage.

Andre Brue asked if they could work with the existing house. Jeffrey Allen said his team will look into the option.

Mark Zarrillo said opting for a peaked roof would not result in a loss of a unit since the units are behind one another and would help make the units less expensive. The roof style and massing would be substantially detrimental to the neighborhood and he would not support the proposal. Zarrillo noted he had no issues with the type of windows.

Public Comment

Bob Weintraub, 112 Colombia Street, shared concerns about the deck on top of the garage and the size of the house which would block sunlight, was out of character with the neighborhood, and would impact their property values. Taking down the dogwood tree seemed unnecessary.

Diana Lande, 112 Columbia Street, strongly opposed the project due to its massing, style, regrading of the site, and encroachment into abutting structures. The side porch and the front-facing garage were not in keeping with the neighborhood's character. The proposed retaining wall at the back will make the grade of the hill steeper and imperil trees. Brookline Zoning By-Laws stated that developments should minimize soil and tree removal and be in keeping with the general neighborhood appearance.

Sylvia Baldwin, 120 Columbia Street, said the proposed deck would be right on her bedroom window and was not functional as a green space. The depiction of the house did not show its relationship to abutting properties. EV charging was not an adequate counterbalancing amenity for setback relief. She asked why rehabilitation of the existing house was not feasible.

Annie Reed, 108 Columbia Street, agreed with previous comments and said that Planning should visit the site to understand all the challenges presented by neighbors. The applicant should be required to draw a street view showing the elevation of abutting properties and superimpose the proposed structure over the existing house. She added that there was an

existing two-car garage and the size of the proposed garage seemed unnecessary. The house could be renovated and the existing garage reused.

Mari Kotlov, 112 Colombia Street, agreed with previous comments and thanked the Board for their thoughts and concerns. She added that their unit was 1,236 sq, which is smaller than the proposed garage, and her family of four had been living comfortably for the past 12 years. The new design would violate their privacy and block sunlight. She shared support for keeping the existing house.

Jonathan Fine, 112 Colombia Street, said that 116 Colombia has a yard where kids used to play, and with the new project, the yard would be taken away, something that was happening across Town.

Craig Lewis, 120 Columbia Street, also shared concerns about the garage entrance being a couple of feet from their bedroom and asked if the developer could involve neighbors in the discussion.

Judith Vanderkay, TMM Pct. 9 and resident at 16 Columbia Street, was supportive of keeping the house to preserve street cohesiveness and prevent projects similar to 56 Thorndike Street.

Robert Labaree, 85 Kenwood Street, said the applicant should rethink the whole project aiming at a renovation.

Martin Rosenthal, 62 Colombia Street, said that regardless of FAR compliance, increasing the footprint by 50% was unfit for the neighborhood. He hoped there was flexibility in the design review by-law to factor in the purposes of the zoning by-law in giving special permits. The staff report missed the issues resulting from teardowns in north Brookline. Both the staff report and the MBTA community project miss the big picture of what it will do to the Town's character.

Board Discussion

Steve Heikin said that now that TM has expanded design review for any significant structure being demolished town wide, the Board has been reminded about the language in Section 5.09 and is taking that language more strictly as guidance for tear-down projects, especially in two-family districts.

Mark Zarrillo shared that 7 out of 175 jurisdictions have failed to respond to the MBTA Zoning Act and Brookline did not make part of that list due thankfully to the Planning Staff work.

The case was continued.

14 Amory Street - Renovate home with a small addition for mudroom (3/2) Pct. 1

Attorney Jeffrey Allen introduced his team and summarized the proposal and the required relief.

Architect Sarah Segal presented the plans.

The Board found the addition to be modest and fairly straightforward.

Steve Heikin made a motion to recommend approval. Andrea Brue seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Planning Board recommends approval of the site and architectural plans by SLS Architecture LLC , dated 9/1/2022, the Planning Department recommends the following conditions:

1. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall electronically submit final floor plans and elevations, stamped and signed by a registered architect, and a final site plan, stamped and signed by a registered engineer or land surveyor, to the Assistant Director for Regulatory Planning for review and approval.
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65 Alberta Road - Construct rear addition to existing single-family home (3/16) Pct. 15

Beccah Mapure introduced the case and described the required relief.

Attorney Bob Allen introduced his team and summarized the proposal and the required relief.

The homeowners, Alka and Rajat Babbar, explained that the addition would allow them to accommodate family needs. Abutters to the sides have been contacted and they are supportive.

Steve Heikin recommended also reaching out to the abutter to the rear.

Architect Alan Christ presented the plans.

Mark Zarrillo said the addition fitt the terrain.

Steve Heikin said that despite being large, the addition was well done. Heikin suggested the columns would look more integrated into the building structure if made of the same materials.

Andrea Brue asked for a landscape plan and the extension of the pavement in the backyard.

Alan Christ replied that no landscape plan was available at the present but the highly sloped area was not changing.

Shelly Chipimo agreed it was a good addition and shared similar thoughts about the columns.

Steve Heikin made a motion to recommend approval. Shelly Chipimo seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Planning Board recommends approval of the site and architectural plans by SLS Architecture LLC , dated 9/1/2022, the Planning Department recommends the following conditions:

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The meeting was adjourned.