

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

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ROBERT W. LEVY
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June 28, 2018
7:30 pm
Juliani Meeting Room
Town Hall

Zoning Board of Appeals Members Present: J. Randolph Becker, Acting Chairman
David G. Sheffield
Robert W. Levy

ZBA 2018-28, WAYNE & JAN JOHNSON, 11 FIFE ROAD

Mr. Becker summarized the proceedings of the two previous hearings for 11 Fife Road. He said that the lot is 10,000 square feet, which is smaller than required in an SRD 15. He said that it is one of eight lots out of nine lots on the street that does not meet the size requirement. He said that the proposal before the Board is to tear down and rebuild.

Presenting the case at the hearing were Robert Ouellet, A. Francis Contracting, Jan and Wayne Johnson, the Petitioner.

Mr. Ouellet said that they went with the same theme as at the last discussion with the Board. He said that they redesigned the roofline so that it will be much more conforming in terms of height in the neighborhood. He said that they reduced the square footage on the second floor, the first floor and the basement. He said that the original TLAG was 4,280 square feet and 4,300 is the acceptable TLAG in a SRD 15. He said that the TLAG is now proposed to be 3,055 square feet, which is 1,100 square feet under the original TLAG. He said that considerable effort was made to reduce the size of the house in terms of its volume and height. He said that the second proposal was for square footage of 3,979 and that was reduced to 3,200 square feet. He said that height from average grade was reduced from 35.1 feet to 29.4 feet.

Mr. Ouellet said that they removed the stone at the front and brought the clapboard down. He said that there was some concern at the previous hearing about drainage from the next door neighbor. He said that they added an additional drainage line before the garage. He said that they will pick up another gutter to another drywell. He said that they will capture all of the water from the roof and the driveway.

Mr. Levy asked if the plans that Mr. Ouellet was discussing at this hearing are the ones that were submitted to the Board. He said that his plans show the stone at the front of the house. Mr. Ouellet said that the only difference is that they removed the stone.

Mr. Ouellet displayed a GIS map that shows the outline of houses in the neighborhood. He held up a cut out of the proposed house and compared it to other houses in the neighborhood. He said that they feel that what they are now proposing will fit in with the neighborhood.

Mr. Ouellet discussed topography. He said that a portion of the house currently sits at street level. He said that they wanted to bring the elevation up, similar to the next door neighbor at 153 feet. He said after 11 Fife Road, the slope goes way down. He said that they would like to lessen the grade of the driveway so that there is nothing more than a 10 pitch.

Mr. Ouellet said that they looked at the mass of the other houses from the street. He said that the ridge at 7 Fife Road is higher than the proposed ridge for 11 Fife Road. He overlaid cutouts of the houses at 7, 10 and 15 Fife Road. He said that this house will fit within the realm of the neighborhood. He said that square foot wise, it will be slightly larger than other homes in the neighborhood but it will fit in.

Mr. Ouellet said that the house at 15 Fife Road has an 8 pitch roof at the front. He said that the back of the house is three stories.

Mr. Ouellet said that a lot of effort was made to reduce the size of the house to conform with the neighborhood. Mr. Sheffield said that the effort has paid off. He said that they appear to be taking advantage with the great room of a view down the hill. He said that the house is well organized and is perhaps down to the minimum that one might expect for a four bedroom house. He said that the scale has been greatly improved and fits in the neighborhood. He said that he thought that they had done a nice job. He said that it would be nice if many of the proponents would go to the effort that Mr. Ouellet has to explain the scale and topography to the Board.

Mr. Becker said that the new TLAG is not only below the trigger for a SRD 15, it is below the trigger for a SRD 10. He said that that this is a 10,000 square foot lot. He said that there is no issue of whether the house fits on the lot, even though the lot is undersized.

Mr. Levy asked if a TLAG Affidavit had been submitted. Mr. Ouellet said that they had not submitted one. Mr. Becker said that the Board would insert conditions requiring submittal of a TLAG Affidavit and plans that show the house without the stone.

Mr. Becker asked if there was anyone present at the public hearing who wished to speak to the petition.

Mr. Sheffield said that Elevation Sheet A4 should indicate the height from average grade. Mr. Levy said that it is measured from current grade, not the proposed grade.

Mr. Sheffield moved that the Board approve a special permit, subject to conditions that the Elevation Drawings be corrected show removal of the stone, that the Elevation Drawings show a height from average grade that will exceed 29.4 feet, and that a TLAG Affidavit concluding that the total living area plus garage is 3,055 square feet or less be submitted. Mr. Levy seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to grant a special permit.

The continued hearing for 11 Fife Road was closed at 7:26 pm.

ZBA 2018-25, NORTHLAND RESIDENTIAL LLC, 135 GREAT PLAIN AVE

Present on behalf of Northland Residential LLC were Peter Tamm, Esq. and Peter Crabtree.

Present on behalf of the Town of Wellesley were Tom Harrington, Esq. and Judi Barrett, Consultant.

Christina Carlson, Architect, Union Studio, discussed architectural plans. She described the units that are arranged in three tiers that correspond to the topography. She addressed comments about density, size of units, scale, uniformity, and impact on abutters.

Alan Aukeman, Landscape Architect, discussed street trees, privacy between homes, and buffers. He said that a decision has not been made whether to leave the two existing stone piers at the entrance in place or to move them.

Mr. Levy said that a portion of the site is located within a town right of way. He asked about the health of the vegetation there. Mr. Aukeman said that trees of 10 inches or greater were surveyed. He said that the area is best left altogether.

Mr. Sheffield and Mr. Adams asked about setback distance from the property line to the units and the town property between the site and Great Plain Avenue.

Mr. Adams asked about accessible routes throughout the facility. Mr. Tamm said that Northland is comfortable committing to accessible routes that are compliant.

Mr. Levy asked about if access to the site by the general public will be allowed. Mr. Tamm said that these are home ownership units and it is not a public way. He said that Northland would consider some reasonable condition for limited public access.

Mr. Levy asked about guest parking. Mr. Aukeman described the location of parking spaces.

Mr. Adams confirmed that there will be an irrigation system for the landscaping.

Mr. Sheffield asked about on-site maintenance staff. Mr. Aukeman said that on-site maintenance will be handled by a company that will come to the site. He said that the details will be worked out with the Homeowners' Association. Mr. Crabtree said that Northland will stay involved through completion of the project and will transition to a property manager before the units are completely sold. He said that it will transition to a board of trustees for HOA six months prior to turn over.

Mr. Sheffield asked for a description of the hardscape.

Mr. Levy asked about snow storage. Mr. Crabtree said that snow will be stored on the edge of the road and will be moved, if necessary.

Cliff Boehmer, David Square Architects, performed a peer review of architecture on behalf of the Town of Wellesley. He said that he did a site visit, met with the architects and developers, reviewed the first set of drawings, wrote some preliminary comments and received a response. He discussed responses to his comments including accommodation for children on the site, inadequate scale of common space, location of affordable units, moving and preservation of the stone house and stone piers at the entrance, landscape

screening for mechanical equipment, density, lack of open space, better insulation from the neighbors, high percentage of paving, approval of proposed landscaping, accessibility, standing space for children at a school bus pick up area, resolution of trash and recycling issues, bicycle parking, maintenance shed, transformer locations, emergency generator, recommendation for sprinklered buildings, coordination of drawings, 3-D model, scale of the building facades at Great Plain Avenue, entry connections, sidewalk, street wall, prevention of damage to mechanical space at the lower level due to 100 year flood, and tagging trees that are to remain. He said that he had concerns about bottled up parking drives and view corridors blocked but the project has been well thought out. He said that an issue is the intensity of the use.

Mr. Sheffield said that there is no open space that ties the project together. Mr. Boehmer said that continuity of green space would help. He said that 3-D models are a good tool. He said that projects where the site is worked out and then the buildings follow usually works out better. Ms. Barrett said that the lack of playground space is an issue.

Mr. Adams suggested that the developer come back with another approach to re-orient the design. Mr. Boehmer said that there has to be circulation on the site. He said that the biggest problem could be alleviated by opening up Tier 3 where it is too tight a fit for connection from passive recreation to pond skating and access to the trail system. He said that fewer units and alternative transportation plans that include shared car services and bicycles would help.

Victoria Ostler, 115 Great Plain Avenue, expressed concerns about planting close to the road and safety of sight lines for traffic, frequent deliveries, health care workers parking on-site, height of the buildings and the view for the neighbors, permeable paving, and access to green space.

Mr. Sheffield asked about mail delivery. Mr. Aukeman said that mail will be delivered to kiosks.

Tom Ahern, 145 Great Plain Avenue, said that he hoped to continue to work with the Developer. He expressed concerns about traffic data points, lack of weekend gap study and impact of RDF and flow into Babson Skating, sight lines, projected number of trips generated, size of proposed community green, the retaining wall, tweaks to the landscape plan, drainage, runoff, and setbacks. He said that he spoke with most of the neighbors and they generally support the project if it is done right.

Catherine Johnson, Planning Board, said that the project originally came before the Planning Board as a subdivision. She discussed the trail from Great Plain Avenue that would connect to the aqueduct trail. She said that the plantings in front of the stone piers are on a town right of way. She said that the piers are owned by the town. She said that the Historical Commission is working with the Board of Selectmen to memorialize them and the history of the site. She said that they are not being moved.

Mr. Levy said that a curb cut will have to be approved by DPW to locate the new driveway.

The Board discussed issues that it wanted Northland to consider including open space, a stronger landscape presence, density and unit reductions, and distribution of affordable units.

Mr. Tamm discussed meeting with Town Counsel, Ms. Barrett and Mr. Zehner to review issues that were raised at the hearing.

Mr. Levy said that the general feeling is that the project is too dense. He asked that consideration be given to reducing the number of units or the size of the buildings or increasing the setbacks.

Mr. Levy asked about a waiver from the 500 Foot Rule. He said that the Board is concerned about a large project in close proximity to the neighbors.

Mr. Tamm said that Northland is willing to consider adjustments to the buffer, setbacks and unit types.

Ms. Barrett said that a meeting is in order soon. She said that the statutes are clear in that the Board cannot require anything that is not required for other projects. She said that conversations should be continued about how the units relate to the surrounding residential areas. She said that deeper setbacks may be appropriate. She said that the goal is to get the best development for the community.

Ms. Barrett discussed reasonable distribution of the affordable units.

Ms. Barrett said that she has done consulting for other Zoning Boards. She said that having 3-D models is helpful. Mr. Tamm said that they can present a 3-D model if the Board feels that it would be productive but the Developer feels strongly that they have adjusted the setbacks and there is a high level of details in the plans, far exceeding what the Board normally sees. He said that the Developer is looking for closure in a timely way.

Mr. Adams said that he was less concerned about the compactness of the site and sight lines because people who buy will know what they are getting into. He said that he is concerned about buildings adjacent to the property lines and that is where a 3-D model could be helpful. He asked that the model incorporate the neighboring properties so that the Board can see the impacts. Mr. Crabtree said that he would make a decision on whether to commit to a 3-D model after meeting with Mr. Harrington, Ms. Barrett, Mr. Zehner and Mr. Boehmer.

Mr. Sheffield asked that the Developer give further consideration to open space.

Mr. Crabtree said that the Planning Board and MassHousing found the density levels to be acceptable.

Ms. Barrett said that this is a 40B project where 25 percent of the units will be restricted to moderate income and the choices are not the same as for the buyers of the market rate units. She said that beyond consideration of impacts on the neighborhood, the Board should look at livability of the project. She said that amenities such as playgrounds are important.

The Board further discussed having a 3-D model. Mr. Boehmer discussed other options such as fixed perspective views and eye level perspectives. Mr. Levy said that he would like to see a perspective of what the project will look like from the street. Ms. Carlson said that the existing buffer is thick.

Mr. Levy said that it is not obvious where the town right of way ends on the site. Mr. Crabtree said that they can mark it.

The Board discussed issues that it would like to have addressed at a continued hearing.

Mr. Sheffield moved and Mr. Adams seconded the motion to continue the hearing to July 17, 2018. The Board voted unanimously to continue the hearing.

As there was no further business to come before the Board, the hearing was adjourned at 10:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lenore R. Mahoney
Executive Secretary

DRAFT