



TOWN HALL
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January 3, 2013

DRB Memorandum #2012-10

Memo to: Rob Morra, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Meeting – October 30, 2012

The Tuesday, October 30, 2012, meeting of the Design Review Board began at approximately 6:30 p.m. in the Second Floor Meeting Room/Library, Town Hall.

Design Review Board members Kathleen Ford, Derek Noble, Jonathan Salvon and Michael Hanke were present.

Representing the proposal for 179 Northampton Road were Pete and Harry Wilson of Wilson Properties Group, LLC and Attorney Tom Reidy of Bacon Wilson.

Review and recommendations to ZBA and Applicant (at Applicant's request) regarding:

ZBA FY2013-00009 – Wilson Properties Group, LLC – For a Special Permit to construct a new two family dwelling, under Section 3.321 of the Zoning Bylaw, at 179 Northampton Road (Map 14A, Parcel 100, R-N Zoning District)

Mr. Reidy stated that the applicants were proposing to construct a new two-family dwelling at 179 Northampton Road. They had submitted an application to the ZBA for a Special Permit. [A Special Permit from the ZBA is required for a two-family dwelling in the R-N zoning district, under both the previous and the current Zoning Bylaws.] Although it is not a requirement, the applicants are seeking Design Review Board input on the design of the new building. The Zoning Bylaw requires that the ZBA apply the DRB Principles and Standards to all newly created two-family dwellings.

Mr. Reidy reported that the applicants are proposing a building that is an improvement over the existing building on the site. He stated that the existing house is somewhat hidden from view by the hedges along Northampton Road.

Ms. Brestrup explained that this is an informal review. She recommended that the Board consider the project by looking at the DRB principles and standards and consider especially the issue of compatibility with surrounding structures. She presented photographs of other houses in the neighborhood.

Mr. Harry Wilson stated that the existing building has a roof that has been leaking for years and there is a lot of interior damage. Mr. Reidy noted that the applicants would be filing for a Demolition Permit. The property is not part of a Historic District.

Ms. Ford stated that the issues to be considered were massing and scale. She observed that the building looks like two distinct houses that were put together.

Mr. Salvon asked why the buildings were offset. The applicants stated that the buildings were offset so that the structure didn't look too massive. The porches add character, they said.

Ms. Ford suggested that the applicants should look at the types of houses that were already in the neighborhood. There are mostly small houses along Blue Hills Avenue and bigger houses along Northampton Road. This project is not one or the other. It looks like a kind of townhouse.

The Board members reviewed photographs of existing houses in the neighborhood.

Ms. Ford recommended that the two distinct parts of the house might come closer together and this might help them to fit in better on the site.

The applicants were concerned that if the parts moved and the offset were lessened the decks would need to move and the interior layout would need to change.

Board members commented that it would be better to have the decks in the back of the house, away from Northampton Road.

Mr. Noble suggested that Northampton Road is a "main drag" and that the size of the structure is not out of character, but that shifting the offset would help to lessen its presence on the street. He stated that the two roof peaks made the building look like two buildings. The details (windows) were fine and the porches were good. He suggested that the building would be better designed as one large building. He suggested changes to the floor plan. The fact that the structure is split in half and offset doesn't feel right on the site plan.

Mr. Hanke noted that the original (existing) building, although now an eyesore, was once a sophisticated structure.

Mr. Salvon stated that the original building had one main dominant form. For the new building, there should be one part more dominant than the other.

Mr. Hanke stated that the proposed building was a banal structure that it will not be looked upon positively by the neighbors. He asked why there were large rooms with only one window. The building could be re-designed nicely and would fit in better with the neighbors.

The applicants stated that it would be their preference to rent to families. The Board members recommended that families would prefer to have their decks at the back of the building.

Ms. Brestrup suggested that there be more windows, especially on the west side to break up a blank façade.

Mr. Noble suggested having the building broken up into two parts with one gable end facing Northampton Road and one facing Blue Hills Avenue. Mr. Salvon agreed, stating that the massing would be better if the building presented itself to two streets.

Ms. Ford noted that the existing house looks like one building. Mr. Hanke suggested making the porches broader.

The applicants stated that the materials would probably include vinyl siding because they want a low-maintenance building.

Mr. Hanke suggested that detailing is important. He recommended using Azek for the trim, if vinyl would be used for the siding. He offered the example of 79 Taylor Street, where vinyl siding was enhanced by the use of Azek trim.

Board members noted that there was not a lot of detail on the site plan and that the site plan should include walkways, paving and lighting. Board members encouraged the applicants to create a more developed site plan. They had questions about parking and materials and how the walks will connect with each other.

The applicants stated that the walks will be asphalt and the lights will be flood lights mounted on the building.

Board members asked if the lights on the building will be able to light the site and walkways. People may walk into town from the front doors, in which case lighting in the front yard will be important.

Applicants plan to leave the trees around the perimeter. They do not plan to plant shrubs. Board members encouraged that the applicants consider proposing more planting.

Mr. Reidy stated that the lights would be downcast and sensor activated.

Board members encouraged the applicants to submit cut sheets from online sites for the lighting and to locate the lights on the site plan.

DRB2013-00004 – Bank of America – 1 South Pleasant Street – Review of site improvements related to universal accessibility (ADA) upgrades

Andy Touchette of Adams and Ruxton Construction and Bill Foley of CB Richard Ellis presented the application. The proposal includes only site work. The building is not proposed to be changed. The purpose of the project is to improve ADA accessibility at the front and rear of the building.

The sidewalks behind the building do not comply with ADA requirements. They are not within the grades required for accessibility. The new sidewalk will be flush with the pavement at the door and at the handicapped parking access aisle.

The guardrail will be removed and the proposed work will create a curb line allowing the sidewalk to ramp up and ramp down to the covered walk area.

Railings will not be required for the ramps because they have a less than 6" rise. The ramps will have a maximum grade of 8.3%. The parking lot pavement will be regraded to eliminate the dip in the surface.

There will be line striping added to the parking lot. ADA signs will also be added. There will be a sign indicating "Bank Parking Only".

In front of the building there will be a 2% grade in two directions. The sidewalk has cracks and is deteriorated. The sidewalk will be surfaced with standard concrete.

Condition:

1. Board members recommended that the new concrete in front of the building extend out to the farthest columns.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:35 p.m.

Cc: Jonathan Salvon, DRB
Derek Noble, DRB
Michael Hanke, DRB
Kathleen Ford, DRB
Jim Wald, Select Board Liaison
Jeff Bagg, Senior Planner
Tom Reidy, Attorney for Wilson Properties Group LLC
Javier Campos and Andy Touchette, Adams & Ruxton Construction