

BOA Meeting Minutes

November 21, 2024

The meeting faced initial technical difficulties and delays. The main agenda included a review of architectural plans for development at 63-69 Putnam Street. Concerns were raised about parking, traffic, and safety, particularly regarding the adjacent daycare. The proposed project includes fourteen one-bedroom units, with seventeen on-site parking spaces, and meets parking requirements. The applicant requested variances to exceed height and setback rules, citing unique site challenges and historical soil contamination. Despite meeting technical standards, the board expressed concerns about the project's impact on the neighborhood, leading to a denial of the variances.

The meeting discussed the proposed development at 50 Somerset, focusing on its height, parking, and shadowing impact. The project initially planned twenty units, but it was reduced to seventeen, with thirteen parking spaces (14 with stackers). Concerns were raised about the building's height and potential shadowing on nearby residential properties. The board decided to continue the discussion on December 2, 2024, to review a shadow analysis and address parking and esthetic concerns.

The meeting also covered other projects, including a variance for a residential expansion and a special permit for a non-conforming structure, both of which were approved with conditions.

Action Items

- Provide shadow study analysis for the **50 Somerset Street project**.
- Schedule a special meeting for **December 2nd at 6:30pm** to continue the discussion on the **50 Somerset Street project**.

Outline

Meeting Start:

- Darren Baird attempts to resolve technical difficulties with Zoom and decides to use his laptop to host the meeting.
- Darren Baird introduces himself as the Chair of the Board of Appeals and mentions the presence of other board members.

Introduction of Meeting Agenda and Initial Discussions

- Darren Baird outlines the meeting agenda, mentioning three matters to be discussed: continuances of Walden Street, 63 to 69 Putnam Street, and 50 Somerset Avenue, and a new matter for 5 Pebble.
- Darren Baird requests a continuation for the Walden Street matter, which is granted by the board.

Presentation of Revised Plans for 63- 69 Putnam Street

- Originally heard 2 months ago (September 2024).
- Discussion on the 63 to 69 Putnam matter, with Darren Baird mentioning that Mr. Wright is absent, and Mr. Chapdelaine will sit in for him.
- Applicant, Attorney, and Architect present the architectural plans for 63 to 69 Putnam, detailing changes made since the previous meeting, including reducing the apartment count and adding parking spaces.

Public Comments and Concerns

- Abutter, from 88 Putnam Street, expresses concerns about parking and traffic issues, particularly regarding daycare pickup and drop-off times.
- Abutter from 7475 Putnam Street, echoes the concerns about parking and traffic, mentioning existing issues with the neighborhood.
- Another resident discusses the impact of the proposed development on parking for existing residents and the potential for increased traffic.
- Butter from 87 Putnam Street, an online participant, raises questions about the shadow recast from the building and the impact on solar panels.

Board and Applicant Responses

- Darren Baird addresses the public comments and questions, mentioning that the board is not responsible for parking enforcement but emphasizes the importance of parking compliance.
- Applicant, Attorney, and Architect respond to questions about parking, explaining the calculation method and the inclusion of daycare and residential parking spaces.
- Applicant, Attorney, and Architect discuss the architectural design, including the use of fire-resistant glazing and the placement of the garage door.
- Applicant, Attorney, and Architect mention the support from the daycare operator and the Chamber of Commerce for the project.

Further Public Comments and Board Discussion

- Abutter from 14 Putnam Place expresses concerns about the impact on neighborhood traffic and safety, particularly with parking on both sides of the street.
- Another resident raises concerns about potential flooding due to the construction process and the presence of an underground river.
- Another resident discusses the overall design and size of the building, expressing concerns about the height and the impact on neighboring properties.
- Another resident defends the project, mentioning the intent of the CBD zoning and the benefits for the business community.
- Residents express concern about the building being too tall and not fitting the residential neighborhood.

Presentation of 34 Pebble Avenue:

- The applicant explains the initial plan to tear down an existing half-story building and build up to four stories.
- Board Member questions the feasibility of building up to four stories by right.
- Suzanne Swope mentions the confusion and conflicting information received from town officials regarding the site and its zoning.

Challenges and Costs of Project Adjustments

- The shape of the property leads to hardship.

Final Board Considerations and Conclusion

- Board finds uniqueness of lot creates and undue hardship and proposed structure does not negate the zoning bylaws or character of the neighborhood. The board grant relief for side set back. Furthermore, the Board grants special permits to modify existing non-conforming structure and override the denial of the building permit. All voted in favor.

Presentation of Revised Plans for 50 Somerset

- Applicant and Attorneys present the revised plans, including reduced density and increased unit sizes.
- Applicant and Attorneys detail the changes, including additional screening for the transformer and expanded commercial office space.
- Applicant and Attorneys explain the reconfiguration of units to meet zoning requirements and improve livability.
- Applicant and Attorneys address concerns about parking and the use of stackers to maximize space.

Challenges and Costs of Project Adjustments

- Applicant and Attorneys describe the project's challenges and costs, mentioning the need to respond to various concerns from the boards.
- Applicant and Attorneys recall being directed to terrace the third and fourth floors by the planning board.
- Darren Baird clarifies that the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) determines variance cases, not the Planning Board.
- Darren Baird explains the zoning bylaw and the need for a variance to exceed residential zoning limits.

Discussion on Building Design and Zoning Compliance

- Applicants and Attorneys propose tearing down the existing building and terracing the new structure to comply with zoning.

- Darren Baird and Applicant discuss the implications of abutting residential zoning districts.
- Board Members express concerns about the building's height and its impact on the surrounding residential area.
- The applicants and Attorneys and Darren Baird emphasize the need for variances to comply with zoning regulations.

Public Comments and Board Decision

- Residents discuss the challenges of understanding and navigating the town's ordinances.
- Residents share individual experiences with parking and the cultural differences in the town.
- Applicants and Attorneys request continuation to revisit the plans and consider the board's suggestions.
- Darren Baird schedules a continuation for December 19, 2024, to review the revised plans.

Final Board Considerations and Conclusion

- Darren Baird summarizes the board's discussion, emphasizing the importance of balancing the project's impact on the neighborhood with the need for parking compliance.
- Reiterate the hardships faced by the applicant, including the inability to go underground due to soil contamination and the need to meet parking requirements.
- The board discusses the potential impact on nearby businesses and the importance of maintaining a safe and orderly construction process.
- Darren Baird concludes this portion of the meeting, stating that the board will decide on the matter at a future meeting.

Board and Public Questions on 50 Somerset

- Residents raise questions about parking requirements and the impact on neighboring properties.
- Darren Baird and the Applicant and Attorneys provide answers regarding parking, stackers, and the commercial space.
- Residents express concerns about the building's height and potential shadowing of nearby homes.
- Darren Baird suggests continuing the discussion to a future meeting to address these concerns.

Continuation of Discussion and Next Steps

- The board agrees to continue the discussion on December 2 at 6:30 PM to review the shadow analysis and other concerns.
- Applicant and Attorneys commit to providing a video animation to show the shadow impact of the building.
- The board members discuss their availability and confirm the continuation date.

- The meeting is adjourned at 9:13 PM, with the next discussion scheduled for December 2.