

MINUTES
ANC 6A Economic Development & Zoning Space Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting via WebEx
Wednesday, January 20, 2020 at 7:00 pm

Present:

Members: Brad Greenfield (Chair), Nick Alberti, Mike Cushman, Sam DeLuca, Tim Drake, Jake Joyce

Commissioners: Robb Dooling, Brian Alcorn

Brad Greenfield chaired the meeting.

Community Comment

None.

Previously Heard Cases

None.

Old Business

1. 1637 D Street, NE (BZA Case #20414): Application for a special exception pursuant to subtitles E § 205.5, 5201 and Subtitle X § 901.2 from the rear addition requirements of Subtitle E § 205.4, to construct a two-story with basement addition to an existing, nonconforming, two-story with basement, principal dwelling unit in the RF-1 Zone.

Thurston Fisher presented the project, as the owner of the property. Mr. Fisher said that currently his house has a rear deck that is in disrepair, and the project would be to replace that deck with an addition to his house, giving him and his family more living room. Their current lot occupancy is at 62%, and it would not change with the addition.

Mr. Fisher reported that much of the addition will mirror the house that is two doors down, which already extends back 18 feet. The addition would have hardy plank siding, which also matches the addition that is two doors down.

Mr. Fisher reviewed their shadow study, which showed the existing structure, by right, and the proposed 18-foot extension. Mr. Fisher noted that there is an impact on his neighbor's property in the morning, but there is not a difference between a by-right development and the proposed 18-foot extension.

Committee member Sam DeLuca asked if Mr. Fisher had discussed the project with his neighbor, and if there is a letter of support. Mr. Fisher said that he had spoken with his immediate neighbor, and he had not gotten any immediate feedback, but he did not have a letter of support. He does have a letter of support from one neighbor.

Chairman Brad Greenfield noted that there was no neighboring building on the other side of 1637 D Street, and wanted to know if that was an empty lot. Mr. Greenfield noted that if this area was an empty lot, then the windows on that side of the house would be at risk if it is ever developed. Mr. Alberti looked the site up on Google maps, and noted that it does not show up as a property. Mr. Greenfield looked the site up on the DC Interactive Zoning Map and confirmed that this area is not an official lot.

Mr. Greenfield noted that even a by-right development would negatively impact the light and air of 1635 D Street. He stated that he would want to see best efforts to get a letter of support from that neighbor.

Ms. Nathalie Lewis, the neighbor at 1635 D Street spoke during public comment, and expressed her opposition to the project. Mr. Greenfield asked Mr. Fisher if he had looked at doing just a by-right development. Mr. Fisher said that a ten-foot extension would not give them enough space for the bedroom. Mr. Greenfield asked Mr. Fisher if there were any options they could pursue that would mitigate the light and air impact on 1635 D Street. Mr. Fisher said that he had not looked at that with his architect yet.

Mr. Greenfield asked Ms. Lewis if there was any room for compromise with the development. Ms. Lewis said that she did not think there was room for compromise, and worried about her safety, because this is not a safe neighborhood, and the additions on either side of her property would isolate her home more.

Mr. Greenfield asked when the BZA hearing date was scheduled. Mr. Fisher said that it was scheduled for March 3, 2021. Mr. Greenfield noted that based on the special exception criteria, the project does not meet the standard of not negatively impacting the light and air of his neighbor. Mr. Greenfield also noted that a by-right development would have almost the exact same light and air impact on the neighbor. Mr. Greenfield recommended that Mr. Fisher and Ms. Lewis have further discussions to seek a compromise. Mr. Greenfield asked Mr. Fisher if he would be okay delaying his hearing date. Mr. Fisher said that he was fine with that.

Committee member Nick Alberti noted that the 18-foot addition is nearly twice the distance as the ten-foot addition, and that 18 feet would be significantly more impact on 1635 D Street since it would additionally impact the back yard. Mr. DeLuca agreed that the 18-foot extension would have a significantly greater impact.

Mr. Greenfield tabled the request and will add it to the agenda for the February 2021 EDZ meeting. This will give the neighbors a chance to talk and seek compromise. Commissioner Alcorn asked if the ANC should request the delay. Mr. Greenfield noted that the owner can request the delay, and just confirm it with the ANC (the BZA case has been moved to consideration on April 7, 2021).

2. 1300 I Street, NE (BZA Case #20436): Application pursuant to Subtitle E § 5207, and Subtitle X § 901.2, for a special exception under the residential conversion requirements of Subtitle U § 320.2, and the roof top and upper floor restrictions of Subtitle E § 206.1, to construct a third story, with rear and side additions, and to construct six residential units to an existing, two-story, detached building the RF-1 Zone.

Marty Sullivan and Ryan Shaymons represented the project. This project will convert the structure from a place of worship to a six-unit residential building. The building is a detached structure. The existing structure is a Federalist style building. The building envelope will be increased, but will maintain a five-foot buffer with the neighbors to the east, and will maintain a 32-foot setback in the rear. Lot occupancy will be at 59.8%.

The existing bay structure on the west will be removed, leaving a flat structure on that side. The plan is to create 1,300 square foot units with two bedrooms. The new development will maintain the Federalist look, avoiding a more modern style. The window arches and brick facade will be extended for consistency.

Mr. Alberti asked if the existing building will be demolished, or if it will be added onto. Mr. Shaymons replied that they will be adding onto it.

Mr. Greenfield asked where the HVAC systems will be located. Mr. Shaymons replied that they will be located on the roof, set back from the sight lines. Mr. Greenfield asked how garbage will be handled. Mr. Shaymons replied that garbage will be stored in the back of the property, and that they will have a commercial trash service.

Mr. Greenfield noted that there were three (3) parking spots, and asked where access would be from. Mr. Shaymons replied that there was an existing curb cut, and access would be from Florida Avenue.

Mr. Sullivan noted that there were two areas of relief, one for the conversion itself, and the other was for modifying architectural elements. On the latter relief, because they are removing the bay, and removing the cornices on the roof.

Mr. Sullivan noted that while there are windows on the east side of the building, there are no facing windows, so there is no impact on privacy. He said that the building massing was all within the zoning rights.

Mr. Greenfield asked why the bay was removed. Mr. Shaymons replied that the bay was in pretty bad shape and would require extensive work. He said that thought it would be better aesthetically to remove it, while adding two bays on the south and north sides of the building. Mr. Greenfield asked if the bay was originally part of the structure. Mr. Shaymons replied that he was not sure.

Mr. Braynard, a neighbor, agreed that the existing bay looks terrible. He also asked if the new structure will abut the neighboring building to the east. Mr. Shaymons replied that they would be maintaining a five-foot side yard from that building. Mr. Braynard asked if they had spoken with the neighbor to the east. Mr. Shaymons replied that they had sent the plans and a letter by certified mail, but have not heard back. The developer will be following up with them. Mr. Braynard asked what floors on the east side of the building will have windows. Mr. Shaymons replied that all three floors will have windows. Mr. Braynard asked if there was going to be any digging down around the structure. Mr. Shaymons replied that there is currently a crawl space, and that will be maintained, so there will be no substantial digging.

Mr. Braynard also asked why additional parking spaces were not available. Mr. Greenfield said that he thought the ratio required by zoning was one space for every three units; Mr. Sullivan corrected him that it was one for every two units. Mr. Sullivan also noted that he did not think there was space for any additional parking spaces. Mr. Braynard noted that parking in this area was very difficult, so the lack of additional parking spaces was of concern.

Mr. Greenfield asked if the building was going to be condominiums or rentals. Mr. Shaymons replied that it would be condominiums.

Mr. Greenfield asked if there were other three level buildings on the block. Mr. Shaymons replied that there were no other three-story buildings on that block, but in the neighborhood there were, particularly on H Street and further down I Street.

Mr. Greenfield asked if there was a shadow study. Mr. Sullivan said that they had not done a shadow study.

Commissioner Robb Dooling noted that with the removal of the bay on the west side, there was no 71 feet of flat building, and wanted to see if that was a concern for the community. Mr. Greenfield noted that he thought the design was good, and matched the neighborhood. Mr. DeLuca said that he walks by the building frequently, it is not that imposing, and that removing the bay will result in an impenetrable wall of brick. Mr. Alberti noted that there will be a doorway on the west side where the bay was, so that will break up the wall.

Mr. Greenfield noted that he sympathized with the concerns about parking, but he thought a better option would be to add amenities such as a bike rack to make car ownership less necessary. Mr. Sullivan noted that there was parking on the public space next to the building now, which is illegal, but that is also why there are currently more than four cars parked at the property.

Mr. Alberti noted that the proposed density is almost 20% over what is allowed. Normally he would oppose that, but this property is in close proximity to mixed use developments. Mr. Sullivan noted that the lot is quite large, and if they reduced the number of units, they would end up being huge. Additionally, that would not change the massing of the building, it would only change the number of bedrooms.

Mr. Greenfield noted that he thought the EDZ would need to see the developer make best efforts to get letters of support from 1310 I Street and 1311 Florida Avenue.

Mr. Greenfield moved that the EDZ recommend the ANC support the request for relief, with the caveats that the developer make best efforts to get letters of support from 1310 I Street, NE and 1311 Florida Avenue, NE, and that the developer add a bike rack or other amenities to encourage non-car transportation. Commissioner Dooling seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

**Next Scheduled ED&Z Committee Meeting:
Wednesday, February 17, 2021
7:00-9:00 pm
WebEx information to be posted on ANC6A website.**