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Cc: Kelly Lynema <KLynema@town.arlington.ma.us>
Date: Sun, 24 Jul 2022 12:42:55 -0400
Subject: Re: Docket #3704, 18-20 Belknap Street - Further Comments

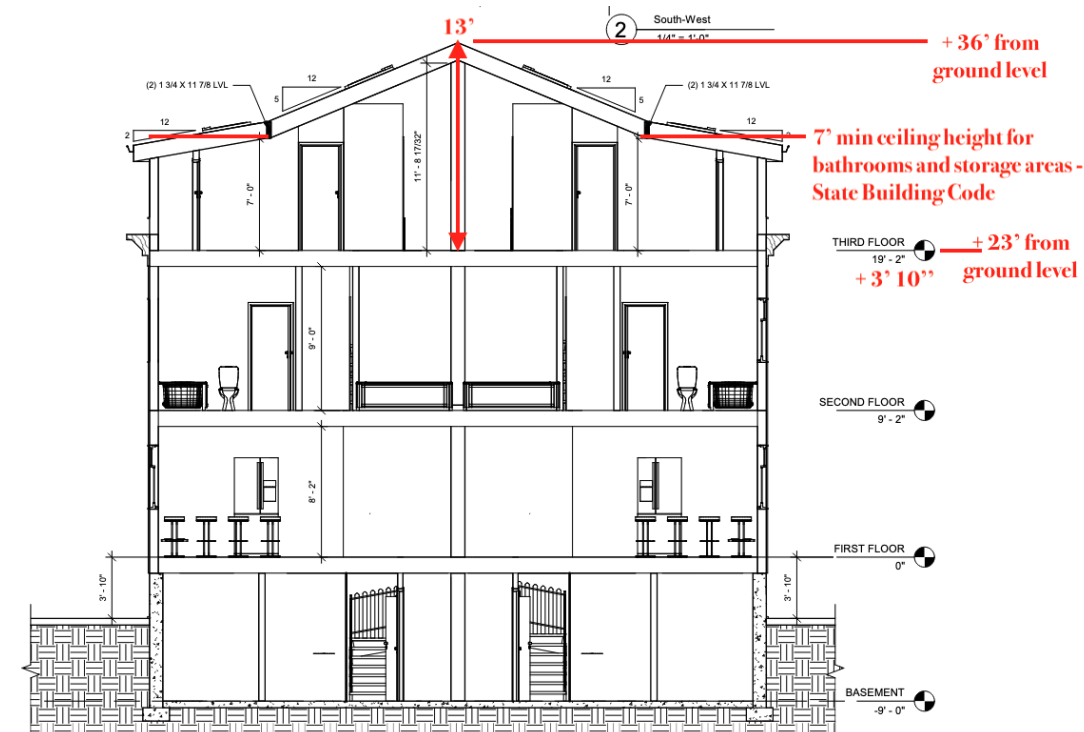
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To: Arlington Redevelopment Board

I offer these observations on the issues raised at the July 11 hearing and the applicant's revised plans to address these.

Height - It is odd that the initial drawings failed to provide the key dimension of building height. The revised drawings submitted this past week continue to omit this dimension, despite the specific request of the Board to provide it. This should immediately raise a red flag.

From the scale of the applicant's drawings, it can be determined that the height of the third floor from floor to roof peak is 13', give or take a few inches. The elevation of the third floor is 23' from ground level, giving a total building height of 36', exceeding the bylaw maximum.

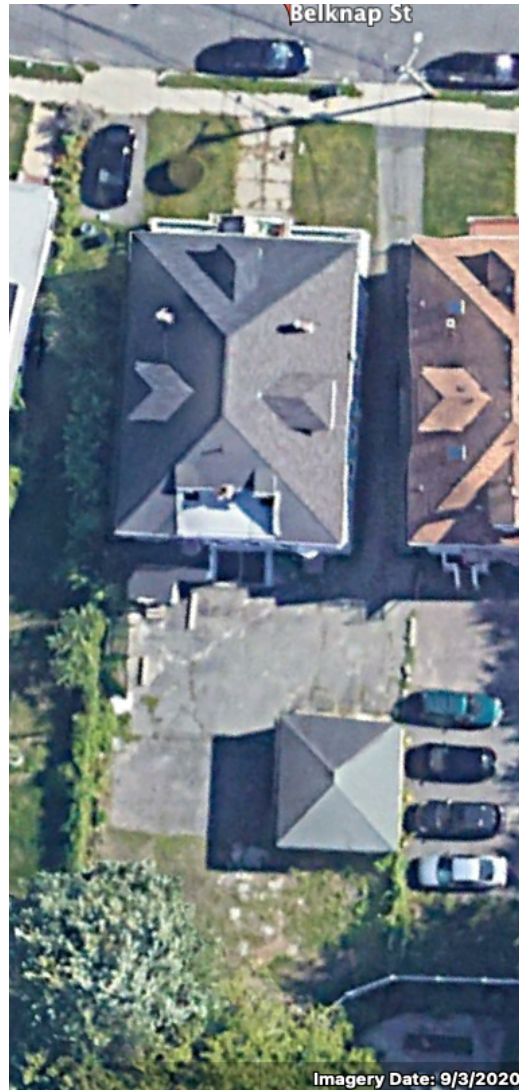


Third Floor - In an attempt to comply with the requirements of a half story, the applicant has changed the roof pitch and created third floor areas for which the ceiling height is less than 7'. In doing so, he has run afoul of the State Building Code. The four bathrooms and the walk in storage closets on this floor are required to have a ceiling height of 7' or greater. The four corridor spaces leading to the roof decks are required to have a ceiling height of 7' 6". The applicant cannot simultaneously comply with the State Code and the definition of half story without making significant design modifications.

Usable Open Space - The applicant is claiming that the prior condition of the lot had zero usable open space, and that the new plans show 2376 sf. In order to come up with that figure, the applicant is claiming that more than 900 sf of the front yard is now usable open space, but was not under the previous owner. The applicant has in fact reduced the possible open space in the front by moving forward the building wall and enclosing the open front porch. In the latest revised plans, the applicant has further reduced the usable open space by converting it to a crushed stone extension of the parking area.

It is also worth noting that the long term prior use of the rear of the lot was as landscaped space qualifying as usable open space. This Google aerial view on Sep 3, 2020 shows that some 1500 sf in the rear of the lot was vegetated and had qualified as existing

open space. It was some time in the following months that the prior owner paved this section over in preparation for the sale to the applicant, without any permits and in violation of the bylaw.



Parking - The newly submitted plans do nothing to address the serious parking issues. Some of the violations:

6.1.11 C All parking and loading areas containing over five spaces, including automotive and drive-in establishments of all types, shall be paved and subject to the following:

(2) A substantial bumper of masonry, steel or heavy timber, or a concrete curb or berm curb which is backed, shall be placed at the edge of surfaced areas except driveways to protect abutting structures, properties and sidewalks and screening materials.

6.1.11 D. All parking and loading areas containing over five spaces which are not inside a structure shall also be subject to the following.

(1) The surfaced area shall be set back at least 10 feet from front lot lines and from all lot lines of abutting property used for residential purposes; however, for side and rear lot lines the setback need only be five feet if the setback includes a solid wall or solid wooden fence, five to six feet in height complemented by suitable plantings. In no case shall the paved area be set back from the front lot line a distance less than the minimum front yard setback for the district, nor from a side or rear lot line a distance less than the minimum buffer width required in the Density and Dimensional Regulations

of the district. Where deemed appropriate by property owner, acceptable to immediate abutters, and approved by the Building Inspector, another wall or fence height or fence type may be substituted for the required wall or fence.

(2) The area shall be effectively screened with suitable planting or fencing on each side that faces abutting lots used for residential purposes. The screening shall be within the lot boundaries and at least five feet and not more than six

feet high. Parking areas and access driveways accessory to any multi-family dwelling shall be separated from the building by a buffer strip of green open space not less than five feet wide and suitably planted.

(5) Parking and loading spaces other than those required for single-family and two-family dwellings shall be so arranged to avoid backing of vehicles onto any street.

This lot could easily accommodate the bylaw requirement for open space, but the applicant is instead asking permission to convert some of this open space into excessive parking.

Don Seltzer
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