

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
BRONXVILLE PLANNING BOARD
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2004**

Present: Donald Henderson, Chairman
Anna Longobardo, Vice Chairman
Adrienne Smith, Member
Eric Blessing, Member
Robert Underhill, Alternate Member
Maryann Palermo, Counsel

Absent: John Westerfield, Member
Vincent Pici, P.E., Village Engineer

Also Present: Jeffrey Faville, Design Review Committee
Renee Byers, Design Review Committee

1. Call to Order

Mr. Henderson called to order the regular meeting of the Planning Board at 7:30 p.m. He indicated that Mr. Westerfield was absent and Mr. Underhill would function as a voting member of the Planning Board for purposes of the evening's meeting.

2. Minutes

The Board agreed to postpone approval of the minutes of the November 10, 2004 meeting until the next meeting, scheduled for January 12, 2005.

3. Site Development Applications

☐ St. Joseph's School, 30 Meadow Avenue

Architect Maggie Marrone of Marrone Architects represented St. Joseph's School (the "Applicant") at the meeting and stated that the Applicant wishes to construct a playground adjacent to the St. Joseph's Parish Center, which houses the school's gym. She stated that the playground would measure 30' by 74', with the play structure being set back from Meadow Avenue 65'. Ms. Marrone also stated that additional shrubs would shield the playground from the street. Mr. Henderson inquired regarding the existing sidewalk and asked if it would be removed. Ms. Marrone confirmed that a portion of the existing sidewalk adjacent to the Parish Center would be removed and that the spaces abutting the Parish Center would be pushed out toward the center of the existing parking lot. In addition, Ms. Marrone confirmed that the plans had been amended to include an additional handicapped space, as requested by Mr. Pici subsequent to his review of the Applicant's proposed plan. Ms. Marrone stated that four parking spaces in the center of the existing lot would be lost due to the narrowing of the parking area.

Mr. Henderson inquired as to whether there would be a fence surrounding the play area and Ms. Marrone responded that there would be a low brown timber fence, approximately 2 1/2 to 3 feet high, surrounding the playground.

Ms. Smith inquired as to the safety of the children playing in an area adjacent to a parking lot. Ms. Marrone responded that the Applicant's intent is for the St. Joseph's students to use the playground during playtime, with approximately 25 to 30 children using it at a time. As a result, Ms. Marrone stated on behalf of the Applicant, supervision of the children would be manageable.

Ms. Smith asked if the playground would be seen from Meadow Avenue. Ms. Marrone responded that existing and planned additional shrubbery would hide most of it. Mrs. Longobardo stated that the Design Review Committee (the "DRC") suggested that there be hedges planted to shield the playground from the street and Ms. Marrone noted that the proposed plan is to fill in the right side of the Parish Center with shrubbery to match the existing plantings. Additionally, the colors of the playground equipment would be green, blue and off white. At the DRC's request, the canopies of the play structures, as shown in the diagram given to the Board, would be removed so that the structure will blend more naturally with its surroundings. Mrs. Longobardo, reporting as Chair of the DRC, stated that the Applicant had complied with the DRC recommendations and recommended that the Board approve the application.

Mr. Henderson opened a Public Hearing at 7:50 p.m.

Dorothy Brennan appeared as a representative of several property owners on Meadow Avenue. She stated that many of the neighboring landowners thought that the playground was to be constructed on the vacant lot owned by St. Joseph's Church located on the south side of Meadow Avenue. She stated that several neighbors had been given much erroneous information and urged the leaders of St. Joseph's Church to meet with its neighbors to put their minds at ease.

Mr. Michael McGonigle and Mrs. AnnMarie McGonigle, the owners of 19 Meadow Avenue, appeared before the Board and distributed a summary of their views on the proposed playground as well as photographs of the Applicant's parking lot taken the previous weekend. Mr. McGonigle pointed out that the unmarked center spots in the lot amount to 13 spaces, not 4 as the Applicant had indicated on the site plan. Mr. McGonigle is greatly concerned about the impact the loss of these spaces will have on the present traffic and parking conditions experienced by the residents of Meadow Avenue. He stated that the reduction of parking available in the St. Joseph's lot would aggravate an already significant problem. Mr. McGonigle illustrated his points by showing photographs detailing the crowding in the St. Joseph's parking lot on a typical Saturday morning and counted 45 cars parked in the lot. Mr. McGonigle also showed the Board pictures illustrative of the parking situation on Meadow Avenue that same morning.

His photographs showed that at that time there were no available parking spaces on Meadow Avenue.

Mr. Henderson asked if there was any available parking by the St. Joseph's rectory. Mr. McGonigle responded that there was parking by the rectory, but that it was consistently filled as well.

Ms. Marrone indicated that at present, the parking lot had 27 perimeter spaces and that the plan as submitted called for 32 perimeter spaces, thus adding five. Mr. McGonigle stated that even if five spaces were added on the perimeter, the loss of the spaces in the center would still aggravate the conditions on Meadow Avenue.

Mr. McGonigle also noted the possibility that the playground may attract people during the off-school hours and weekends and thus would possibly become a gathering place and pose a nuisance to the residents of Meadow Avenue. Mr. McGonigle noted that the two basketball hoops presently located in the parking lot did attract teenagers to the area as late as 10:00 p.m. on some evenings, and that if the playground were built in this location it would also serve to attract people during non-school hours.

John Mastronardi, an employee of St. Joseph's Church, stated that the parking lot has been used freely by the residents of Bronxville and indicated that neither the Church nor the Applicant had ever asked anyone to remove their vehicle from the lot unless the Church needed the space. He also indicated that despite the fact that the parking lot is private Church property, local business people used the lot to park their autos. He stated his belief that the Church has been very good to the residents of Meadow Avenue and stated that the Church would be willing to remove the basketball hoops if that was a prime concern to the residents.

Mr. Thomas Troja, the owner of 17 Meadow Avenue, appeared before the Board and stated his belief that the residents of Meadow Avenue need more information from the Applicant regarding the construction of the playground. He asked if the playground could be located on the school's vacant area on Kraft Avenue in front of the St. Joseph's School building. He also distributed an old map of Bronxville showing Meadow Avenue, which he marked to show the houses which he states had been purchased and then razed by the Church. He stated that the Church's expansion has come at a price to the neighborhood in terms of lower home values and a lower tax base. As a neighbor to the Applicant, he stated that he accepts what currently exists. However, he requests that further inquiries be made regarding the placement of the playground on Kraft Avenue or other alternatives to the Applicant's current plan.

Ms. Marrone responded that Mr. Pici stated that the Church would never receive approval for a playground on the Kraft Avenue site because under the Bronxville Village Zoning Code (the "Code") the Kraft Avenue site is considered a front yard and no play structure is permitted in a front yard.

Vandy Walker, a resident of 12 Meadow Avenue appeared before the Board. She stated that she lives in an apartment and does not have an assigned parking space. She believes that the construction of a playground in the Applicant's parking lot will exaggerate the parking problem on Meadow Avenue.

Mr. Mark Hider, the owner of 25 Meadow Avenue, appeared before the Board and stated his belief that the residential aspect of Meadow Avenue has been eroded because of the expansion of the St. Joseph's School. His concern is the impact the construction of the playground will have on property values and the existing parking problem on Meadow Avenue.

Mr. McGonigle asked if the playground could be constructed behind the rectory. Mrs. Nancy Langhenning, Principal of St. Joseph's School, stated that that area was unavailable because it was the access point for the priests' garages.

Mr. Henderson stated that the Planning Board does not have jurisdiction to question the decision of Superintendent Pici regarding the Kraft Avenue space. Further, he stated that if the Applicant wished, it could withdraw the present application, speak to Superintendent Pici and have the Zoning Board of Appeals (the ZBA") review the matter.

Mr. Mastronardi stated that he wished to have the Board make a decision that evening. He also stated that the Church would welcome the opportunity to place the playground on the Kraft Avenue space. Ms. Marrone again stated that Superintendent Pici had told her that the Kraft Avenue would not be approved as a site for the playground unless a variance had been granted.

Mr. Henderson closed the Public Hearing at 8:10 p.m.

Mr. Henderson further stated that since the Kraft Avenue is a front yard under the Code, that the decision is Superintendent Pici's. Further, the one route the Applicant could take would be to seek a variance from the ZBA. He further stated that it was not within the authority of the Planning Board to require the Applicant to seek a variance.

Mrs. Longobardo asked that the decision be postponed until the next Planning Board meeting so that Mr. Pici could be consulted regarding the decision.

Mr. Blessing stated that the loss of several spaces on Meadow Avenue would result in those who wished to park near the School merely having to park elsewhere in the Village. Mr. Underhill stated his reluctance to approve a project which will exacerbate the parking and traffic conditions on Meadow Avenue.

Mr. Henderson recessed with counsel to consult. After consulting with counsel, Mr. Henderson stated that further consideration of the Applicant's Site Plan would be undertaken at the January 12, 2005 meeting of the Planning Board.

He further urged the Applicant to open a dialogue with its neighbors in order to improve communication and to educate the neighbors of the St. Joseph's Church and School of its plans for it property.

4. **Kensington Road Update**

Mr. Henderson informed the audience that the Planning Board is awaiting updated plans as well as a Draft Environmental Impact Statement from Spectrum Kensington LLC. Mr. Henderson stated that he intends the Planning Board to review these submissions over the course of four or five meetings. He will establish several "Topic Night" meetings for discussion on the impact of the construction on the project's neighbors and Christ Church, as well as its impact on parking in the Village. He will propose a tentative schedule of these sessions at the next Planning Board meeting.

5. **New Business**

Mrs. Longobardo informed the Planning Board and audience that the Village Cup and Saucer located on Parkway Road has met with the DRC regarding the installation of an exhaust fan which would not be visible from the street. While she advised the assembly that Mr. Pici had suggested a full Planning Board meeting for this matter, she did not think this was necessary. As a result, this matter will not come before the Planning Board.

6. **Next Meeting**

The next regular Planning Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 12, 2005 at 7:30 p.m. at the Library.

7. **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Planning Board, upon motion duly made by Mrs. Longobardo, seconded by Mr. Blessing, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted

Lydia Byrne, Recording Secretary
December 8, 2004 Minutes