

TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON, BERGEN COUNTY
MEETING MINUTES
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MEETING
SEPTEMBER 21, 2021 - 7:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER
SALUTE TO THE FLAG
OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey, notification of this meeting has been sent to The Bergen Record and The Ridgewood News, our official newspapers in the Township of Washington and notice have been posted on the bulletin board at Town Hall.

ROLL CALL

Present: Anthony Capasso, John Callandrillo, Les Hanna, Michael LaGratta,
Sean Mahoney, Dennis Moore, Michael Werfel, Gary Giannantonio, Esq.,
and Paul Azzolina, Board Engineer
Absent: Jeff Roberto, Said Toro

MOTION TO OPEN THE PUBLIC PORTION:

A motion to open the Public Portion of the meeting was made by Mr. LaGratta and seconded by Mr. Mahoney, all ayes.

No one came forward. Mr. LaGratta made a motion to close the Public Portion of the meeting, seconded by Mr. Callandrillo, all ayes.

NEW BUSINESS

APPLICATION OF ANDREW AND JENNIFER GHISALBERTI, OF 407 COLONIAL BLVD.,
BLOCK 4304, LOT 23, REQUESTING A VARIANCE TO ADD A TWO-STORY ADDITION TO
THE EXISTING RESIDENCE

Joseph Bruno, architect, introduced himself, and was sworn by Mr. Giannantonio. Mr. Bruno's business address is 29 Pascack Road, Park Ridge, N.J. Mr. Bruno explained that the applicant proposes to expand the first floor to accommodate a family room and large kitchen in the rear. Applicants are proposing a one story covered porch to be opened on all sides, and attached storage space on the northerly side of the house to avoid a stand-alone garden shed. The second floor will contain 4 bedrooms, 2 baths and a laundry room. A variance for building coverage is being requested. The Township code allows for 20% building coverage in this zone and the applicant is aware that in Washington Township everything covered by a roof is considered to be building coverage. The existing coverage is 14.67%, and with the proposed construction the coverage would be 22.72%. The expanded house would be in keeping with the neighborhood. Mr. Bruno pointed out that he was the architect for the home on the other side of the street, which has a coverage of 27.51%, and is similar in terms of amenities. He said that the proposal will have a positive effect on the street scape.

There is an existing garage at the basement level that is 337 sq. ft. in size. Mr. Bruno said that the applicant complies with the side yard setbacks, which was confirmed by Mr. Azzolina.

Mr. Werfel asked if the applicant would agree to a condition of approval that the additional building coverage would not be enclosed space. Andrew Ghisalberty, applicant, was sworn by Mr. Giannantonio. He agreed that the porch would not be closed in.

Mr. Azzolina stated that if approved, the applicants have agreed to hire a civil engineer who will design a stormwater system, to include grading, and soil erosion measures. He noted that the roof drains must be connected to the system. This is required because the coverage is greater than allowed, and also because the property to the rear is quite sloped. Mr. Azzolina recommended a sewer inspection although it is not required, and Mr. Bruno indicated that the applicant will comply. Upon questioning, Mr. Bruno confirmed that the space underneath the addition will be a crawlspace.

Mr. LaGratta made a motion to open the meeting for public comment. Mr. Capasso seconded the motion, all ayes. No one came forward and Mr. LaGratta made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting, seconded by Mr. Mahoney.

Mr. Mahoney made a motion to approve the application subject to the porch remaining as an open structure. The building coverage will be revised to reflect the agreed number of 22.27%. Mr. Bruno stated that this number will be indicated on the site plan submitted by the engineer. Mr. Werfel seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote

AYES: Callandrillo, Capasso, Hanna, LaGratta, Mahoney, Moore, Werfel

NAYS: None

APPLICATION OF DARIO AND BERNADETTA SFORZA, 664 HICKORY ST., BLOCK 4102.01, LOT 1.03, AND 5 REQUESTING A VARIANCE TO ADD A SECOND STORY TO THE EXISTING RESIDENCE ALSO TO INCLUDE A FRONT AND SIDE PORCH

Caesar Padilla, architect for the applicant, was sworn by Mr. Giannantonio. Mr. Padilla said that the applicant proposes a 10 ft, addition to the north of the existing cape style home, along with an additional 6 ft wrap around porch. In addition, an entire second floor level is being proposed that will contain bedrooms and bathroom space, along with a laundry room and office. The ceilings on the first floor will be 10 ft. high, and on the second-floor ceilings will be 8 ft. high. Several variances are requested which include: minimum front yard setback: 30 ft. required; 20.54 ft. existing; 18.54 proposed. Minimum side yard setback: 15 ft. required; 16.76 to 28.72 (north) ft. existing; 16.,76 ft. and 12.72 ft. (north) proposed. Minimum rear yard: 30.0 ft. required; 24.0 ft. existing; 23.8 ft. proposed. Maximum building height: 30 ft. required; 19 ft. existing; 30 ft. proposed. Maximum building coverage: 20% required; 4.3% existing; 6.1% proposed. Mr. Padilla noted that there are several homes on the street with similar porches and second floor additions.

Dario Sforza, applicant, 664 Hickory St., was sworn and stated that the original home dates back to the 1940s and was built closer to the curb line than would be allowed today. The home is nonconforming due to more recent zoning requirements. Mr. Sforza stated that this

is a large lot and the impact of the porch from the street will be minimal. The porch is basically identical to front porch of a neighbor. He added that appropriate landscaping will be included on the lot and there is no stormwater management necessary for this property because of the conforming building coverage. Mr. Sforza expressed frustration with the application process and he pointed out that his neighbors did not have to obtain a variance even though their porch is quite similar to what he is proposing.

Mr. Azzolina was questioned about this and he said that he did not review the application that Mr. Sforza is referring to. Mr. Azzolina noted that the neighbor may have added the porch twenty years ago when that porch addition was allowed without a variance. Mr. Sforza stated that he submitted a variance application five months ago; however, Mr. Azzolina said he received this application for review six weeks ago. At that time, he called the applicant and asked for additional information topographic information to determine the building height. Mr. Sforza indicated agreement.

Mr. Werfel said that the Board is somewhat disconnected from front end process, and agreed that the process should be streamlined. He stated that Mr. Sforza is not the only applicant who has experience frustration with this process. Mr. Werfel pointed out that zoning laws change over time and this could be the reason that the neighbor did not have to go through the variance process.

Mr. Padilla said a wrap around porch is attractive. He noted that a neighbor has an oversized detached garage adjacent to Mr. Sforza's property that was approved and a variance was not required. Mr. Azzolina said he didn't research the neighbor's drawings and this could have been approved some time ago.

Mr. Azzolina stated that the "L" portion or wrap around portion of the covered porch requires variance relief; however, the covered stairway into basement complies with zoning codes. Mr. Padilla pointed out that the height and several other alterations have been reduced to conform with zoning codes. Mr. Padilla said that the porch juts out to match the roof line. Mr. Sforza said that he intends to preserve as many trees and as much green space as possible even though Mr. Azzolina had noted several trees for removal. At this time, Mr. Sforza has no plans to remove any trees.

Mr. LaGratta made a motion to open the public portion of the meeting, seconded by Mr. Mahoney, all ayes.

Steve Reich, 668 Hickory Street, said he is the neighbor with a shed in the rear. Mr. Reich confirmed that the shed was existing when he purchased the property. The seller said there was no variance necessary for the shed. Mr. Reich asked about the location of the air conditioning units, and he was also concerned about tree branches falling onto his property from a tree on Mr. Sforza's property. Mr. Sforza said he would relocate the air conditioning units to the other side of property. Mrs. Reich spoke about her privacy concerns because the porches are in such close proximity.

Mr. LaGratta asked if Mr. Sforza would consider moving the right or north side of the porch back to 15 ft to satisfy the neighbor. Mr. Azzolina pointed out that a variance would still be required due to the existing front yard setback of 20.54 ft., which is non-conforming because a 30 ft. front setback is required.

There were no further comments from the public. Mr. LaGratta made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting, seconded by Ms. Hanna, all ayes.

Mr. Sforza said he would reduce the side yard setback of the porch to 5 ft., rather than the 6 ft. proposed. This would result in a request for a 1 ft. variance on the right side. Mr. Padilla said that the distance would be 14 ft. from the neighboring property, and not the 12.72 ft. originally proposed. Any change in lot coverage will be noted on the plan. Mr. Azzolina said that this is a minor adjustment and he advised the applicant to examine the existing sewer and to have the architect provide framing details on the plan to avoid height issues.

Mr. Werfel made a motion to approve the application, seconded by Mr. Moore.

Roll Call Vote

AYES: Callandrillo, Capasso, Hanna, LaGratta, Mahoney, Moore, Werfel

NAYS: None

OLD BUSINESS

CONTINUATION OF DISCUSSION REGARDING THE RETURN TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS

Mr. Werfel stated that Mayor and Council meetings are being held in person and the Mayor and Council have indicated that this decision will be left to each individual Board. Board Chairman Said Toro is absent this evening and he had indicated that he would like to be part of the discussions. Ms. Hanna said she could not participate in in-person meetings. Mr. Werfel commented that it is difficult to hold a hybrid meeting consisting of both in-person and Zoom participation. This discussion will continue at an upcoming meeting.

Mr. Werfel asked that Mr. Azzolina and Mr. Giannantonio review the regulations on building height. Mr. LaGratta asked whether a letter had been sent to the Planning Board relative to garage size. Mr. Giannantonio said his letter is being reviewed by Mr. Azzolina and it will be sent to the Planning Board, Mayor and Council and Borough Attorney shortly.


APPROVAL OF MINUTES

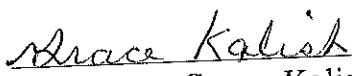
There were no minutes for approval this evening.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Ms. Hanna, seconded by Mr. LaGratta.

ADJOURNMENT - TIME NOTED: 9:29 P.M.

Approved:


Michael Werfel, Vice-Chairman


Grace Kalish, Secretary