

Minutes of the HLU Meeting of Wednesday, July 26th, 6:30 PM

Attendees: Liz Boyer (MGCC staff), Tom Dietsche (acting chair), Jim Mogen, Kathryn McGuire, Wendy Merrell, Kateri Routh, Marc Manderscheid, Meg Arnosti, Michelle Berg (acting secretary), Kieran Wells, Anna Savelsberg, Gretchen Funk, Dave Pasiuk, Kate Hebel

Executive Director Liz Boyer read the HLU rules and considerations to those gathered.

Tom Dietsche calls the meeting to order on behalf of (absent) Sam Walling **at 6:35 PM.**

Introductions of old and new members.

Call for the approval of last months minutes.

Marc Manderscheid moves for approval of the June Meeting minutes. Dave Pasiuk seconds the motion. Tom Dietsche puts it to a vote. Motion for approval is passed.

Call for addition and /or deletion of agenda items. No additions or deletions.

Manager Delorez Houle is called on to present information on request for variance at 1511 Grand Ave. This is a multi-family, residential, number of units variance.

Delorez is the manager. Her son is the owner of the property. Currently there are 18 people who live in the building. The property was built in 1925 and is already grandfathered in at a non-conforming minimum of square feet per unit (13,000 -vs- current required standard of 28,500). She and her son hope to create an additional unit (characterized as a "Garden Unit" as it is 1/2 above and 1/2 below the ground level) which would increase the total residents to 19 or possibly 20. She spoke of the various improvements they have made to the property in recent years including a new boiler, hot water heater, over-flow drain from the roof, new Andersen windows, re-sanding floors and new washer and dryers.

Discussion centered on impact of additional residents on area parking. Delorez indicated that they did have an extra parking space that would be made available. There was some discussion of possible bike racks but she indicated that she didn't think it was advisable based on the potential for theft.

Committee member Wendy Merrell expressed her support of this change.

Michelle Berg asked about the fact that the increase in tenants would be in even further non-compliance in a building that is already outside of the currently recommended square footage per unit.

Jim Mogen felt that the improvements had no real bearing on the real issue at hand of variance on the standard recommended square footage per unit. However, he suggested that there would be a possible letter of support to the city for the development of the proposal as he felt that it helped increase further density on a transit route.

Marc Manderscheid pointed out that the zoning codes are there for a reason and that a variance on a property of this sort, which is non-conforming to begin with, could set a precedent. He pointed out that these variances are not to be granted to property owners simply to increase the income potential of the property owner. Since he could not find where this request met the existing variance criteria, he was unable to support it.

Michelle Berg agreed with this supposition.

Gena Bergland expressed approval via email to Liz Boyer and encouraged that there be bike racks installed.

Jim Mogen moves that MGCC submits a statement of support of this variance.

Dave Pasiuk seconds the motion.

Tom Dietsche calls for discussion.

There is no further discussion.

Tom Dietsche calls for a vote by a show of hands.

Seven vote to approve this motion.

Three oppose the motion.

There are 2 Abstentions

The motion passes.

Below is the motion made by Jim Mogen to present to the City on behalf of Delorez Houle:

“MGCC supports efforts to provide housing, especially affordable housing, as well as the development of housing along transit routes and in denser corridors. While we don't believe that the requested variance meets the conditions of a variance, we do support the development proposal, as it meets the above described goals.”

Committee Workgroup Updates

Tom Dietsche presented a Variance Map that he and Jack Fei worked on. The map itself was created by MGCC intern Eleanor. The map showed which land is receiving the most variances in the area. These areas were color coded to show zoning distinctions (ie: residential or multi-family etc.). It also showed percentages related to the type of variances that were requested (ie: 62% are set-backs, 29% for articulation). The map also indicates information on height, size, lot and so on.

There are also indicators of the patterns of variance approval or disapproval by the HLU -vs- the BZA (Board of Zoning Appeals). Tom said that he and Jack Fei were trying to see if there is a pattern in other communities as well. They have asked both Highland Park and Union Park councils for data to examine but have received none so far.

Tom noted that the BZA grants over 75% of the variances put before them. It was observed that the BZA is not paying heed to the zoning code itself.

Tear Down Data Base

Michelle Berg reports that they have nothing to report as of yet since their first meeting is this coming Saturday, July 29th. She mentions that there is a great deal of data that Meg Arnosti has already accumulated in the way of a library of photos.

Meg mentions her hope that this data base would be a permanent resource for area residents to access to know what to do when there is a tear down on their block.

Wendy Merrell suggests that it might include information about how the tear down and/or rebuild affect the property values of adjacent homes. There is discussion about the complexity and feasibility of this idea. Marc Manderscheid provides context about how Ramsey County sets mass property values in each area based on certain algorithms and that it is not on a block by block basis. It is a comprehensive program and not one built on an individual basis.

Someone suggested that there might be data on how the property was evaluated before and after the tear down.

Kate Hebel asked if there is a tear down, are they supposed to call and notify the neighbors. Meg said that if it is a variance, no but if it is a tear down, yes. Liz added that if it is for over \$25,000 they must notify other neighbors before construction begins. Wendy Merrell asked what is meant by “neighbors” under that definition. Tom mentioned that there was a website of construction standards.

Michelle mentions that they are hoping to include a survey on the website for people to complete if they have experienced a teardown or build-up in their neighborhood. Tom suggests the idea that the survey can be advertised on the Next Door website.

Fix Up Fund is presented by Liz and Tom. Tom suggested that the MGCC apply for a grant from AARP called the Community Challenge Grant Program. They completed the grant proposal and will hear the results on August 7th. The proposal suggested that they would offer a Fix-Up Fund work group that would help “older people” having a hard time to stay in their houses. This funding would protect them from the dangers of a tear down resulting from their inability to care for their property due to personal hardships and age-related limitations. They are establishing criteria for submission requests and volunteers to help them to implement the program if the money is granted. It is a gift that must be spent by November 1st and has other attached limitations as a one-time gift. Discussion and ideas on implementation if the money is granted.

Tom Dietsche asks whether or not we should meet in the month of August. Dave Pasiuk moves that we do not meet in August. Kate Hebel seconds the motion. Vote is taken. Motion passes. We will not be meeting in August.

Liz Boyer presents updates and announcements including reminders of **National Night Out**, the **MGCC Garage Sale on Saturday, August 26th** from 8AM to 3PM (encourages us to please sign up on the web), the **Mac Grove Festival Saturday, September 9th** 2-6PM (please volunteer if you have not already done so).

The **next board MGCC Board Meeting is on Thursday, September 14th** at 6:30 PM
Edgcumbe Community Center

Next **HLU meeting Wednesday, September 27th** at 6:30 PM Groveland Elementary

Tom calls for any new business. There is none.

Tom calls for any old business. There is none.

Meeting is adjourned at 7:52 PM.