



*The Macalester-Groveland Community Council fosters citizen participation in government and community decisions that make our neighborhood a great place to live, work, learn, and play.*

## **Minutes - November 2020 HLU Meeting**

### **Housing and Land Use Committee (“HLU”) Macalester-Groveland Community Council (“MGCC”)**

**Date:** Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm  
**Location:** Held remotely via Zoom  
**Chair:** Mike Moore  
**Secretary:** Meg Arnosti  
**Staff:** Alexa Golemo

#### **Attendees:**

Ashley Soukup, Alex van Oosterom, Geoff Marshall, Martin Moen, Ira Kipp, Scott Kipp, Evan Hall, Don Arnosti, Bob Leibman

#### **Committee Members:**

Ann Dolan, HLU  
Cathy Plessner, At-Large Business  
Colin Fesser, At-Large Residential  
Dave Pasiuk, At-Large Residential  
Drew Nelson, Grid 5  
Elizabeth Wefel, HLU  
Gene Johnson, Grid 5, Secretary  
Jack Fei, HLU  
Julie Kaupa, HLU  
Kathy McGuire, At-Large Residential  
Kensley Lipstreuer, At-Large Renter  
Marc Manderscheid, Grid 1  
Meg Arnosti, HLU  
Michael Moore, HLU  
Tom Dietsche, Grid 1, Treasurer  
Wendy Merrell, HLU

#### **Invited Guest(s):**

Jacquie Mercer, Jeremy Exley, Chet Funk, Eli Zmira

**6:30pm I. Introductions**

The chair and staff member explained the Zoom procedures for speaking and voting. All online voting will be done by typing “aye”, “nay” or “abstain” in the Zoom chat window.

Persons attending by voice only over a phone will need to cast their vote verbally.

**6:33 pm II. Approval of November 2020 Agenda**

Motion by Dave Pasiuk to approve the November 2020 agenda.  
Second by Cathy Plessner.

The agenda was approved 12-0-0.

**6:35 pm III. Approval of October 2020 Minutes**

Motion by Dave Pasiuk to approve October 2020 minutes.  
Second by Colin Fesser.

The minutes were approved 11-0-1.

**6:37 pm IV. 1615 Wellesley Avenue Variance Application**

Jacque Mercer, Property Owner

Was a builder. Working on general contractor license, working with general contractor. Wants to keep floor plan, add vertically. Currently half story, wants full story. Requires 4 feet setback from prop line and is already 3 ½ feet. Needs a 6 inch variance to add the second level. Aesthetically would look better to keep wall on top of existing wall. West neighbors are in support, will not obstruct anything. 9 neighbors approved request in letters.

Motion made by Tom Dietsche to approve the variance request for 1615 Wellesley Avenue of 0.5' west side yard setback.  
Second by Dave Pasiuk.

The motion was approved 14-0-0.

**6: 50 pm V. 2132 Grand Avenue Variance Application**

Jeremy Exley, Property Owner

Owns duplex next to 5-story building to the west. Proposes a 3-story building . Existing concrete pad is up to property line. There should be a 4 ft setback, but can only get 1.9 ft. for parking and have the required number of parking spaces. Building

meets all codes and requirements. Should not need any other variance. Has adapted the building to comply with code. Proposes 7 total units, 10 bedrooms. 6 one-bedroom units and 1 four-bedroom unit. Will landscape first 2 feet of parking.

Discussion. Evan Hall 1276 Berkeley. Creates more housing. Supports proposal. Elizabeth Wefel. Proposal fits well with comprehensive plan. Variance is not significant and will not have much effect on other buildings. Drew Nelson Grid 4. Supports variance. Cathy Plessner is very excited about the building.

Motion made by Cathy Plessner to approve the variance request for 2132 Grand Avenue for setback for off street parking of 1.9' on the east property line, for a variance of 2.1'.

Second by Drew Nelson.

The motion was approved 13-0-1.

7:20 pm VI. 1074-1096 James Avenue 3 Variances and CUP Application

Chet Funk, et al., Property Owners & Eli Zmira, Project Manager, DJR Architecture

James Avenue Variance and Conditional Use Permit presentation by Chet Funk, owner, and Eliyahu Zmira Architect with DJR. Both live in the neighborhood. There is no application yet. Site is challenging. It is a 27,000 sf site with a drop of 26 feet from James to the ally. Because of the slope, the 5 story building is 53 feet on one side, 70 on the other. Owner and architect say there is no way to create 5 stories without a variance.

If the building were in compliance, it would have to be a 12,000 sf footprint and 3 stories tall. Without a variance, they would lose upwards of 50% of the volume. It would be 1.33 FAR ratio. Developer is looking at affordability and is proposing a 2.74 FAR ratio with RM2 zoning.

Ann Dolan: The block had 6 single family homes before. There are 90 or 93 units proposed. Believes it would not fit into the neighborhood. Parking with that many beds would create a parking problem. Affordability may mean affordability for the developer but the units are market rate.

Marc Manderscheid. His honest feedback is that he is very disappointed in this presentation. Six months ago the developer asked for rezoning to multiple family. Now they want us to re-zone again so they can make more money. 2.75 is not even allowed under RM3! Marc was supportive of the Grove, but this is on a residential street. Possible okay on Randolph, but not on James. This behavior gives developers a bad reputation. Marc is opposed to rezoning by variance and suggests they go back to the city council and try for R3 zoning.

Drew Nelson. Not out of character. Mt. Calm apartments are 10 stories tall. Location is close to transit.

Elizabeth Wefel. Is supportive. Agrees with Drew.

Colin Fesser. Not entirely sold but notes that asking for a Zoning variance is a normal process.

Gene J. Grid 5. Does not approve. Developer has given vague promise of phase 2 for the second half of the block. Would like to see the whole block developed at once. This is too much too soon. Would like to know what will happen on the other half of the block.

Geoff Marshall: Concerned about traffic onto the highway. Too much too soon.

Alex van Oosterom: Randolph is not a 4 lane road. A 5-story building seems like such an eyesore. It is a square peg in a round hole.

Ann Dolan. You seem like nice guys and I empathize. My family has developed many projects. But as a district council, our job is not to concern ourselves with what is best for the developer or what the city wants. Our duty is to represent the neighborhoods. The Rondo neighborhood was devastated and that is why the community councils were developed.

Tom Dietsch. Could you reduce the front setback by going up another floor?

Martin Moen. Lives on James Avenue. Stated vision is to create a gateway project, but they are only dealing with half the block. Suggests they should set aside to work with the other half of the block before moving forward. Why not wait?

No motion made. Property owners will return after submitting their application to the Zoning Committee.

**8:30 pm VII. Adjourn**

The Chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Meg Arnosti on November 25, 2020.