

Special Board Meeting, July 31, 2023, 6:30 PM,

Via Zoom

Minutes

Attendance: Justin Berk, Dalia Belinkoff, Guy Costa, Lori Fitzgerald, Heather Graham, Marshall Hershberg, Melissa Hiller, Lisa Murphy, Mary Shaw, Lisa Steidel, David Vatz, Erik Wagner, Mardi Isler Staff: Maria Cohen

Note: Three Board Members had difficulty with the Zoom kicking them out since Zoom had reached a maximum. Heather Graham was in and out, she did manage to give her votes via iPhone. Jon Prince an Joe Ott were not able to get in at all, however Jon Prince did Email his vote.

1. Welcome. Mardi welcomed the participants and asked Maria to call the roll.

2. Mardi introduced Lori Fitzgerald, Built Committee Chair” who briefly described the new information provided by Craft Development to the Built Committee on July 17th. Included is the context information and cost date, Lori stated that everyone had the opportunity to see the slides that depict the new information.

Lori will then read the 4 variances being requested.

1. Type of request: variance code section: 911.02 multi-unit residential is not permitted in the parks (p) zoning district.
2. Type of request: variance code section: 905.01.c maximum building height of 40’ (3 stories) permitted), 87’-10” (8 stories) proposed.
3. Type of request: variance code section: 905.01.c maximum floor area ratio permitted is 1:1, far of 1.33:1 proposed.
4. Type of request: variance code section: 915.02.a.1.e retaining walls must be 10’ or less, retaining wall greater than 10’ proposed.

After reading the 4 variances Lori ended her remarks

3.Mardi thanked Lori and then called on Dalia to describe what she established concerning the grassroots group that collected signatures of individuals who are opposed to this development. Dalia went to two locations to verify signatures on the petitions that had been collected that opposed approval of the variances. Dalia found the more that 2,300 signatures to be valid, many of which were Squirrel Hill residents.

4. Mardi thanked Dalia and then reported on the public comments that were Emailed to info@shuc.org. There were 134 email comments submitted, 133 opposed. 26 comments opposed all the project variances requested. 91 opposed the maximum building height variance, 81 opposed the maximum floor area variance. 2 opposed the retaining wall height variance and 25 commented with specifics as to how the proposed project would negatively change the character of the park. 1 email supported the proposed development.

5. Mardi then proceeded to the motions and discussion for each variance. Mardi asked when there is discussion from board members on each motion that the speaker's remarks be germane and relate to the four variances requested.Lori then one by one moved each variance, first Lori moved to approve variance for code section: 911.02 multi-unit residential is not permitted in the parks (p) zoning district. David seconded the motion,. Most members agreed that to build any multi units on this site this variance would be required. The motion carried. Lori next motioned to approve the variance for code section: 915.02.a.1.e retaining walls must be 10’ or less, retaining wall proposed is greater than 10’, David seconded the motion. Discussion included that no matter what is built, retaining walls, probably higher than 10” would be necessary. The motion carried. Lori then motioned to approve a variance for code section: 905.01.c maximum building height of 40’ (3 stories) permitted), the building is proposed to be 87’-10”, David seconded the motion. Discussion from members concluded that this building was just too high, more than double the allowed height. The motion failed. Lastly Lori motioned to approve the variance for code section: 905.01.c maximum floor area ratio permitted is 1:1, proposed is 1.33:1, David seconded the motion. Members noted that this density is a result of the excessive and therefore should not be approved. The motion failed. Note: There was a minority opinion that all variances should be approved based on the belief that there is a shortage of homes in Squirrel Hill and that this development would provide a choice for those who wanted to live in a setting such as proposed.

Given no further business of the board, Mardi thanked everyone for their participation and moved to adjourn.