DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting of November 21, 2023

**The DRC meeting was held via Zoom**

# Members Present

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **✓** | Larry McEwen, Co-chair |  | **✓** | Sam Filippi, Business Association |
| **✓** | John Landis, Co-chair |  | **✓** | Matt Rutt, Parking Foundation |
| **✓** | Joyce Lenhardt, LUPZC |  |  | Streetscape Committee |
| **✓** | Camille, Peluso, LUPZC |  | **✓** | Matt Rudd, VP Physical |
| **✓** | Patricia Cove, HDAC |  |  | Laura Lucas, President CHCA (ex-officio) |
|  |  |  |  |  |

##### Others Attending

Mark Ferrante, applicant 7918 Ardleigh

Veronica Ferrante, applicant 7918 Ardleigh

Dawn Tancredi, attorney for 7918 Ardleigh

Anne McNiff, Executive Director CHCA

Celeste Hardester, Development Review Facilitator **and recorder**

Neighbors and Committee Members

Robert Caserio Joanne Miller Jennifer Yusin

Frederica Fissell Margaret Guerra Sarah Moynihan

Stephen Margaree Lesa Stevens Chris Jacobsen

Rob Remus

The meeting was opened by Larry McEwen, co-chair. Committee members introduced themselves. The process was briefly explained. Approval of minutes will be deferred to the end of the meeting.

**7918 Ardleigh St – Short-Term Rental – RSA-3**

•Presentation: The project was presented by Mark Ferrante. The property was purchased in 2019as 3 dwelling units each with two bedrooms with 3 rental licenses. A slide show presentation showed rehab work done to fix structural flaws, numerous leaks, runoff. Work was professionally done by Abitare DeDesign, Huten Engineering, Mulhern Kulp. Property has been operating as an Airbnb since 2021. The new regulation in the City as of this year requires a variance for this use in this zoning district. Rules and Regs are No Parties. (He said for long-term renters, he can’t tell them not to have a party.) No Smoking, No Pets, 3-day minimum stay. Security cameras are on site. Parking – he has never had 6 cars there. Usually no more than 1 car per unit. He gave 5 examples of people who stayed over a few months. Visitors to the Institute for Achievement for Human Potential have done extended stays several times. Of recent, he held a community meeting by issuing 25 flyers and two people attended. They have a petition of support with 7 signatures. They prefer mid-term rentals but need to be able to fill in with short-term rentals.

Committee questions:

• The units are furnished so is there something about that which prevents your renting them long-term? *Yes.* The economics don’t work for long term, as a renter will have their own furniture.

• Have you had written complaints? *No* Have you been cited by the City for trash or to many occupants? *No*

• Do you advertise for more than 30-day rentals, like a year? *We are not looking for that, but it is better for us if stays are not short.* What about mid-term? *Yes, we advertise on typical sites: Airbnb, VRBO, and on Furnished Finder. We rented to nurses during Covid.*

• Have you proforma’d this out for long-term rentals? *No, I never would have put as much money into it as we did if that was our plan.*

• What do you do about bad apple renters? *Not only are Airbnbs rated, guests are rated, too. And we don’t rent to people who don’t have a rental history.*

• If the ZBA denies, what will you do? *I don’t know, I fear the long-term solution. It would have to go to 30-day or more.*

• Do you have other properties in the vicinity? *No, but we own in the Poconos.*

Neighbor responses:

• Parking has increased due to Uber. Cars drive the wrong way. We have loiterers on our steps, trash in our yard. We didn’t know who owns the property or who to call. Nothing guarantees who will own it in the future. We think this use degrades the neighborhood, like a hotel in the neighborhood. There is a reason why cities like New York and Paris have instituted these regulations, for safety.

• Concern about long-term character of neighborhood. Why would we support this? *This provides a service to families in Chestnut Hill to have a place for guests to stay.*

• I don’t support this. I think it is not a good model. What concerns me most is what I heard at LUPZ, that people who are supposed to be thinking about neighborhood concerns are much more in favor of putting these small businesses in our community.

• The back of my property abuts the back of this property. I have noticed a lot of trash in my yard, lids not on trash cans. There have been pets and cigarette butts. When you aren’t on a property, it is hard to manage.

• We know from experience that living next to an Airbnb changes the neighborhood. Concern that it is doing harm to the neighborhood for no compelling reason.

• I am concerned that this takes long-term rental units off the market, and they are needed according to what we hear about the increasing apt buildings on Germantown Ave

• Concern that this variance is into perpetuity. *Dawn Tancredi said her client would agree to a deed restriction to prevent this.*

• (Stated by committee member) You are not contributing to the community with people who are living here. It is a service to people who live outside the neighborhood.

• There is no particular hardship. It’s a business in a residential neighborhood. There is nothing to say most of the rentals won’t be short term.

• I stayed in this Airbnb when my house was flooded out. Also, I walk on Ardleigh a lot. The absence of facts about what this will do to the neighborhood is striking. I f this property was rented long-term, there would be lots of cars. I lived there and didn’t find it to be intrusive. With the property being improved, the neighbor value. In my opinion, it does provide benefits to the community. You can invite people to stay here. I think it is a plus.

• (Stated by committee member) The vote of LUPZ was 6 oppose and 1 not oppose. The reason was because some of the positions expressed by near neighbors that a short-term rental turnover really changes a neighborhood.

• I’m a long time CH resident and Airbnb landlord. Airbnb is a valuable service. I own a lot of properties and I am asked constantly about short term furnished rentals – people say they had a fire, had a flood, or have family coming. Before Airbnbs, I had nothing to offer those people. I think we can embrace Mark and help him make it work. Maybe we can do a trial run with him and reconsider as neighbors. I haven’t heard one concrete concern stated tonight.

• (Stated by committee member) Quality of the work restoring the building. The hardship as I see it is the investment put into this property and then the change in the City rules. But from what I have learned on the Avenue, short term visitors don’t benefit the Avenue businesses. Business owners want long-term renters. This statement met with some disagreement from the prior community member.

**DRC Motion:**

Joyce made the motion to not support this variance because of the erosion that occurs in the neighborhood due to short term rentals. Camille seconded. Discussion asked if just one short term rental would be acceptable. The idea was rejected, saying that the CHCA Board could establish guidelines for how Short Term could be supported, but not do to it as a one-off.  **The motion passed with five votes support, and one abstention**.

**Minutes Approval**

The September and October DRC minutes were approved with the corrections recommended by Celeste.

**Adjournment**

•The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.