



**TOWN OF WINCHESTER**  
**Design Review Committee**

Town Hall, Winchester, Massachusetts 01890

Juli Riemenschneider, RLA, ASLA, Chair  
Ellen Spencer, Vice Chair  
Adrian LeBuffe, LEED  
Eileen Casciari, RA  
Mary Grassi  
Tracy Burhans  
Jamie Devol, AIA

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, August 29, 2022, 7:30 pm – Meeting by Zoom**

**Present:** Riemenschneider, Casciari, Devol, Grassi, Spencer,  
Recording Secretary Nancy Upper

**1. Open meeting. Vote to approve August 3, 2022, minutes** - All in favor.

**2. Washington and Swanton Streets, Winchester MA – Response to RFP**

Guest presenters: Mark Vaughn, attorney for proposer Bryan Melanson of the Melanson Development Group, Inc.  
Lawrence (Larry) Reeves, architect with Reeves Design Associates and advocate for proposer Melanson

A letter dated August 4, 2022, from Acting Town Manager Beth Rudolph, to the chairs of ten Winchester boards and committees, stated:

On Monday, August 1, 2022, the Winchester Select Board received one response from Melanson Development Group, Inc. to the Request for Proposals (RFP) for redevelopment of the parcel located at the corner of Washington and Swanton Street.

August 29, 2022, Design Review Committee members viewed and discussed conceptual design drawings of the building Melanson proposes for the site.

Architect Larry Reeves explained each slide.

**DESIGN CONCEPT**

- The proposed building will contain 60 rental units, with 16 units, to quote the proposal, “affordable to families earning between 60% (2 units) and 80% (14 units) of Boston AMI” (Area Median Income).

- Units will range from 400 sq. ft. one-bedroom types to more than 1,400 sq. ft. two-bedroom types.
- As to the building's design, Reeves said:
  - "We tried our best to be sympathetic to the surroundings" with respect to height and materials.
  - Our approach was to create a façade that had a "real residential feel," with traditional forms, style elements, and bays kept to the size and proportions of a home.
- The Washington-Swanton corner of the building will be rounded, with an entrance at ground level and a turreted roof.
- Reeves said, "We will do something fun" with the northeast corner of the building "to animate it." Plantings planned for the Swanton Street side help to give the building a welcoming feel.

#### MAIN LEVEL

- The ground floor will be mixed-use, with commercial and residential units. A central courtyard will feature 16 parking spaces for the patrons, residents, and guests of these units.
- Along Washington Street, a southbound parking lane will hold four to five vehicles.
- The proposal states: "The building faces will be set back in order to maintain the nine-foot sidewalk width along Washington Street and Swanton Street."
- Reeves said that along Washington Street, the "plaza" width of the sidewalk will be conducive to outdoor café seating.
- "Pocket parks" along Swanton Street and at the building's corners will enhance the neighborhood.

#### BASEMENT

- The basement will serve as the garage for the building's residents, with one parking space per bedroom.
- The basement will also hold work spaces for residents.
- Shared parking could be arranged where some residential spaces are made available for retail use.
- The development will provide bicycle parking for long-term and short-term needs
- Vehicles access the garage by two entrances, one on Washington Street and one downhill on Swanton Street. Both entrances are situated away from the intersection.

#### FIRST FLOOR

- On the Washington Street side, the first floor features an open central courtyard. Residential and commercial units wrap around the courtyard in a U-shaped arrangement.

- Architect Larry Reeves said, "The courtyard will be planted very nicely."

#### SECOND FLOOR

- Balconies for units at the periphery, and patios for interior units, will give each residence views of greenery.

#### THIRD FLOOR

- Features balconies for each residential unit.

#### **DRC Comments**

- Eileen Casciari asked Reeves to talk about the building materials. Reeves said they will use:
  - New England brick and yellow Hardie Board plank.
  - Composite shingle roofing.
  - [Azek](#) composite white trim.
  - Mostly Hardie Board in the courtyard, but "will bring brick around."
  - He said, "We work hard to accommodate real New England design details."
- Ellen Spencer questioned the yellow color of the exterior Hardie Board. She said, "I think the color could be improved upon."
- Jamie Devol noted the contrast between the perspective drawings and the elevation drawings. "I very much like the concept shown in the perspective drawings, but the elevation drawings do not carry that forward."
- Devol said that in the perspective drawings and in the overall floor plans:
  - "I like how the building reads as a series of connected houses of varied forms and heights — a wide, taller house topped with four-sided gable, then a terraced flat-roofed house (which reads a bit like a triple-decker), then a narrow, taller gabled house, and, finally, at the corner, a larger gable-roofed house with a rounded corner that sweeps around to Swanton Street, where the variety of house forms continues."
  - "I like many other architectural features such as the two-story bays below the triangular gables; the many large windows; the true balconies and patios."
  - "I like the commercial space along Washington Street."
  - "I like how the lower-level parking is naturally accessed downhill, on grade, on Swanton Street; and how the upper-level parking is naturally accessed off of Washington Street, both drives situated away from the intersection. I also like how the parking is hidden from the street, but how the upper level is open to the outdoors, and the lower level is partially."
  - "I like the sunny (almost south-facing) courtyard."

- "I think the building proportions will allow for nice, daylit living units with no deep space far from windows."
- Devol said the elevation drawings:
  - "Do not show the variety of house forms — especially the chunkier houses, essential for such a long run of building — or the variety of heights."
  - "The elevation drawings present a building that appears too busy, fussy, and too relentlessly small-scaled for such a large building."
  - "The perspective drawings, in contrast, show a building that is self-assured, welcoming and fun, with building forms evocative of neighborhood houses and terraced apartments."
- Casciari suggested that, on the third floor, wider gable forms could be achieved by lowering the eave height and incorporating dormers, to avoid exceeding the allowable building height..
- Reeves agreed: "We would love to see a mix of bay and gable elements."
- Spencer complimented the building design as not just a "great start" but "well along the way."
  - "I like the white 'bump-outs' [on the Washington Street façade]. They add a human, residential feel."
  - Spencer suggested surrounding the second-floor patios with privacy screens or privacy plantings.
- Casciari observed that the "delicateness of the banding" [trim] works well on the first floor but looks heavy and out of scale on the second floor.
- Spencer said the banding could be minimized by making the trim a color other than white.
- Juli Riemenschneider:
  - Agreed that the architecture as shown in the rendering is preferable. In the elevation, the rhythm of the windows is too regular.
  - Liked the plantings along the Swanton Street façade.
  - Suggested, on the Washington Street side, making the blocks of brick at the bases of the columns shorter.
  - Riemenschneider encouraged the developers to add trees to the Washington Street sidewalk.
- Reeves said, "The northwest corner of the building sits at a 45-degree angle on a north-south axis. Swanton goes northwest, and Washington goes northeast, so two-thirds of the walls are southern exposures."
- Riemenschneider concluded: "Looks nice. We look forward to seeing the building evolve." DRC members agreed.

### **3. Preliminary Subdivision Proposal for Rocky Ledge Terrace, Winchester MA**

Review requested by Winchester Planning Board

Guest presenters: Richard (Rick) Beliveau, developer and real estate investor

Brian Timm, civil engineer and planning consultant with RJO'Connell & Associates

The development team proposes a subdivision of new residential lots at the top of the existing Rocky Ledge Terrace cul-de-sac.

The proposed development will extend into the woodland at the top of Rocky Ledge Terrace to turn the blunt end of the road into a circular cul-de-sac.

Rocky Ledge Terrace goes up a hill. Preliminary plans show retaining walls 5 feet to 11 feet tall.

- Juli Riemenschneider said that subsequent drawings should include a plan for street trees, to moderate climate changes.
- Riemenschneider suggested:
  - Hiding the retaining walls with plantings.
  - Breaking the 11-foot wall into two 5-foot walls with plantings in between.
- Brian Timm said they are planning a center island for the Rocky Ledge Terrace cul-de-sac.
  - He mentioned Pilgrim Drive as an example of a circular cul-de-sac with a tall tree on an island in the middle of the circle.
  - [Another example of a round cul-de-sac with a tree-filled island is Fieldstone Drive off of Ridge Street.
- Riemenschneider said a planted center island would reduce the percent of impermeable surface. She suggested cobble stones or paving stones as an additional way to reduce impermeable hardscape.
- Timm said he would check with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to learn what surfaces are permissible for snow plows.
- Rick Beliveau said they would be back with a "detailed plan for the landscape."
- Ellen Spencer approved of the project's progress as conceived.
- Riemenschneider agreed. DRC members approved of going ahead with the subdivision.

### **4. Petition 3976 – 36 Salisbury Street, Winchester MA**

That of LORI S. and RICHARD L. EVANS concerning the property at 36 SALISBURY STREET, WINCHESTER, MA. The petitioners are seeking a Special Permit under Section 3.5.5 of the Winchester Zoning Bylaw in

accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to construct an addition that will be located closer to side property line than permitted as of right. The property is located in the RDB (Single Residence) zoning district and contains 9,644+/-square feet.

Guest presenter: Lori Evan, property co-owner.

DRC members viewed photos of the existing house and neighborhood, and drawings of the proposed addition.

- Juli Riemenschneider noted that the house and the neighborhood have historical significance.
- Ellen Spencer pointed out that the addition:
  - Is in harmony with the existing architecture.
  - Cannot be seen from the street.
- Jamie Devol agreed. "I like how the small addition is sensitively tucked behind the garage and adds significant utility to the existing cape house."

**Ellen Spencer moved to recommend favorable action.**

**All in favor — Vote: 5-0.**

## **5. 478 Main Street, Winchester MA – WUS Sign Permit Application**

The Winchester Unitarian Society seeks to place a single-sided, three-panel sign next to their driveway on the Mystic Valley Parkway side of the church property.

Each panel is black with carved gold lettering. Squared granite posts with peaked tops hold the panels sturdily in place.

The sign's purpose is to indicate the drive as the entrance to the three organizations that use the church building:

- Winchester Unitarian Society
- Winchester Cooperative Nursery School
- Winchester School of Chinese Culture.
- Ellen Spencer's initial reaction to pictures of the sign: "I think it looks nice."
- Jamie Devol said, "It seems big, competing with the main sign that faces the corner of Main Street and Mystic Valley Parkway."
  - Devol suggested they may not need the top panel that says Winchester Unitarian Society. Signs on the grounds and church already say this. They may need only the panels that announce the nursery and Chinese culture schools.
  - She further suggested they make the sign double-sided.
- Juli Riemenschneider advised WUS to think about the directions that travelers are approaching the sign.

- Eileen Casciari agreed with Spencer that the sign is nicely designed, and with Devol that the sign could be smaller and double-sided.
- Casciari and Riemenschneider suggested that, if double-sided, the sign could be placed perpendicular to Mystic Valley Parkway.

## **6. Old Business – Petition 3972 - 11 Mystic Avenue, Winchester MA**

Guest presenter: Allison Kangas de Bellalta, co-homeowner

[Design Review Committee minutes of the August 3, 2022, meeting](#) detail the Committee's discussion of the addition proposed for the Bellalta house at 11 Mystic Avenue.

At their August 3 meeting, the DRC agreed to favorable action with five conditions:

- Resolve the awkward roof lines ("corner condition") on the east elevation.
- Lessen the impact of the three-story block-like massing on the back side, which is wider than portions of the house and topped with a low-slope wide gable. To achieve this:
  - Consider making the pitch of the gable roof steeper on a narrower portion of the addition;
  - Or consider constructing a simple hip roof over the entire addition. The hip roof would lessen the impact of the massing and would resolve the awkward roof line at the corner.
- Continue stucco around the base of the addition in line with existing stucco. (The stucco can be applied to an insulated stud wall; no need to use a full-height concrete foundation wall above grade at this walk-out basement.)
- Match trim on the addition to trim on the existing house.
- Use windows with real or simulated divided panes to create shadow lines.

At their August 29, 2022, meeting DRC members viewed drawings of the Bellalta's revised plans for their addition.

Allison Kangas de Bellalta appeared at the August 29 meeting to explain the revised drawings.

The homeowner Diego Bellalta had addressed all five DRC conditions. (His wife Allison mentioned that he is an architect, although Bellalta is not the project architect.)

- Ellen Spencer said, "These are great improvements. The revised addition looks good." DRC members agreed.
- Juli Riemenschneider summarized: "The Committee is pleased that the petitioners met all of our conditions and are happy with the redesign. We are pleased to see the project go forward."

**Ellen Spencer moved to recommend favorable action.**

**All in favor – Vote: 5-0.**

**7. New Business – 600 Main Street, Winchester MA –  
Playa Bowls Sign Permit Application**

What is Playa Bowls? The answer to this [FAQ](#) on the Playa Bowls website says:

Playa Bowls is New Jersey’s Original Acai Shop™ with over 150 locations nationwide. Our mission is to bring superfruit bowls to the masses using only the freshest, highest quality ingredients while providing an amazing in-store brand experience.

DRC members viewed photos of the proposed sign and the Pairings sign it replaces in this location.

- Ellen Spencer: “The wider frame on the Pairings sign looks much better. The proposed frame is too thin.”
  - [The Playa Bowls sign specifications state frame thickness is one inch.]
  - “I recommend a 2-inch frame, or a width similar to the Pairings sign.”
- Eileen Casciari recommended at least a 2-inch frame.
- Mary Grassi said, “A wider frame better defines the sign.”
- Jamie Devol asked: “Is the new sign flat white?” [DRC members concluded it was.]
  - Flat white “pops” on the building’s gray clapboards.
  - White matches other signs on the building.
- DRC members’ conclusion: The frame around the Playa Bowls sign should be the same width and depth as the Pairings frame.
- The lights above the Playa Bowls sign will remain the same as they were.

**8. Adjourn.**

<b>SUMMARY of Design Review Committee VOTES – August 29, 2022</b>			
<b>Minutes #</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Vote</b>
<b>4.</b>	Petition 3976	36 Salisbury Street	Favorable action 5-0 with no conditions
<b>6.</b>	Petition 3972	11 Mystic Avenue	Favorable action 5-0 with no conditions

**Next meeting: Wednesday, October 5, 2022, 7:30 pm.** Location to be announced.

Respectfully submitted by Recording Secretary Nancy Upper.