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MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Planning Board

From: James J. Rafferty

Date: August 25, 2015

Re: PB#304
1718 Massachusetts Avenue

CC: Liza Paden

Background

This is an application by 1718-1730 Mass Ave LLC to construct a 16 unit, multi-family building and an attached two family dwelling at 1718-1720 Massachusetts Avenue. The property currently consists of a single story building containing a mix of retail and office uses, including a bank with a drive-up window. The property also includes a free-standing single story structure in the rear containing a chiropractor's office. The retail building will not be altered as part of this project, but the building containing the chiropractor's office will be razed. The property is located in the Business A-2 and Residence B Districts and is also situated in the Massachusetts Avenue Overlay District.

Parking Analysis

According to the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, the existing retail uses require 27 parking spaces, as shown in the chart below. The proposed 16 unit, multi-family building and 2 family dwelling require a combined 18 parking spaces, resulting in a total parking requirement for the entire lot under the Zoning Ordinance of 45 spaces.

Land Use Category	Gross Floor Area	Minimum Parking Requirement	Parking Spaces Required by Zoning
Bank (1720 Mass)	2,368 sf	1 space per 400 sf	6
Coffee Shop (1722 Mass)	1,029 sf	1 space per 10 seats 16 seats/10	2
Veterinarian (1724 Mass)	1,854 sf	1 space per 300 sf	6
Professional Office(1726 Mass)	794 sf	1 space per 500 sf $794/500=7$	2
Café (1728 Mass)	1,305 sf	1 space per 10 seats 40 seats/10	4
Professional Office (1730 Mass)	3,502 sf	1 space per 500 sf $3,502/500$	7
Total	10,852 sf		27

Requested Relief

The applicant is seeking a Special Permit to allow for a reduction in the required amount of spaces from 45 to 25. Section 6.35.1 of the Ordinance provides that the required amount of parking may be reduced by Special Permit if it is determined by the [Planning] Board that “the lesser amount of parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, substantially reduce parking availability for other uses or otherwise adversely impact the neighborhood”.

The applicant is seeking a Special Permit to allow for the residential parking requirement to be reduced to 9 spaces, resulting in a 50% ratio of parking spaces to dwelling units. Similarly, the applicant seeks a reduction in the required amount of parking for the retail/office building from 27 spaces to 16 spaces, resulting in a ratio of 1.48 spaces per 1,000sf. It is of some significance that the Small Business exemption in Section 6.32 of the Zoning Ordinance waives parking requirements of four spaces or fewer in buildings of less than 10,000 square feet. As a result, if the existing building contained 852 square feet less of gross floor area, the parking space requirement would be considerably less.

TDM Measures

In support of the reduced residential parking demand and in an effort to encourage the use of public transit, the applicant will offer each adult member of each household (up to 2) upon move-in a Charlie Card valued at the cost of a 50% bus/subway pass for two consecutive months.

Criteria

The subject property is located within a ten minute walking distance of two MBTA transit stations (Harvard and Porter). The office and bank uses do not operate in the evenings and have limited weekend activity, thus providing opportunities for shared parking with the residential use when its demand is at its peak.

The proposed multi-family building is located in a section of Massachusetts Avenue where the Zoning Ordinance acknowledges the proximity to public transit options and thus, provides mechanisms for reduced parking for dwelling units (Section 20,600 Basement Housing Overlay District). A Parking Survey prepared in support of a Special Permit application in the area in 2013 and 2014 showed that less than half of the residents in several nearby multi-family buildings own their own car. (A copy of the Study is attached)