



TOWN OF JAMESTOWN

P.O. Box 377
93 Narragansett Ave.
JAMESTOWN, RHODE ISLAND 02835

Approved as written
Technical Review Committee Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2025
10:00 AM

Planning Office (401) 423-7210

Town Hall – 1st Floor Meeting Room
93 Narragansett Avenue, Jamestown

I. New Business

- 4. 121 Walcott Avenue, Plat 9 Lot 339, owners 121 Walcott Avenue, LLC.
Development Plan Review for Garage/Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in front yard,
per Zoning Ordinance Section 82-700 and 1201, 13 feet from front property line
where 40 feet is required. Variance required by Zoning Board. Action and
Recommendation to Zoning Board of Review. Review, Discussion, and/or Action
and/or Vote.**

Technical Review Committee (TRC) members present:

Dennis Begin, Building Official
Jean Lambert, PE, Environmental Scientist
Lisa Bryer, AICP, Town Planner
Mick Cochran, Planning Commissioner

Representing the application: Christian Infantolino, Esq, Mike Darveau, PLS, Darveau Land Survey, Jamie King, Builder, Tristan Welch, LA, Christopher Thorp Landscape Architects.

Attorney Infantolino represented the application: they are here because they are proposing an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in a new accessory structure. They need zoning relief for front and side setbacks; front, 13.3 where 40 feet is required (under permitted uses), and side yard, 10 feet where 15 feet is required (under accessory structure).

Cochran noted that ADUs are not permitted in the front yard under Section 1201.2 D3: "Except that in no case can an ADU be located in the front yard. ADUs are not eligible for the special permits described in Sec. 82-700.D. Accessory structures". Discussion ensued regarding whether the applicant would like an ADU or just have it as living space as accessory to the primary dwelling unit. The accessory unit will be occupied two months out of the year by staff while the owners are in the home, which has a full kitchen. They would have to remove the full kitchen in order to not be an ADU.

Discussion on the viewscape from the street. There is a hedge but it does not obscure the view of the home. King said that they chose this location for the accessory structure because it fits into the

existing topography and it is shielded from the street by the hedge. The owners interest is to restore the house to its original historical condition; new windows, façade etc.

Discussion about taking down all the trees behind the garage because of the driveway. Welch described the placement of the building. They wanted to create a meaningful courtyard between the house and the garage and create the turn around radius required to park in the garage. They did not locate the garage on the north side of the property because of the topography and access to the house.

Bryer asked whether they looked at turning the short side of the garage to the street, making it less intrusive to the street view. Welch explained that it would not provide the same courtyard experience. Welch and Darveau explained that the parking would require more grading and filling and be more visible to the street. It would require more parking in front of the house. They would have to grade 2-4 feet to accommodate the parking. Much discussion about this occurred. Bryer asked what the purpose of the “courtyard” is besides vehicle maneuvering and parking? That was confirmed by Welch and he noted that it will be landscaped on all sides. Bryer noted that the west elevation as proposed does not provide a great façade with no windows on the first floor and small windows on the second floor.

Discussion about the side setback. There seems little justification to not meeting the side setback. They considered meeting that setback but that will move the structure further in front of the house. Welch described where the plantings will occur around the garage and “courtyard”, which are not shown on any of the plans. Bryer is not in favor of the 13-foot setback. King explained that it was in keeping with the other two homes on the street. Cochran explained that using surrounding precedence is not a justification for the variance.

Retaining wall is required on the northern property line to accommodate the new structure. Darveau explained that if you turn the structure, more fill and retaining will be required. It was noted that a lot of earth moving is being done on the property already. It is a very sloped lot. Bryer would like to see how it would work with moving the structure with the small side to the street.

Infantolino stated that they would not to be here if they are not doing an ADU. The ordinance was read and it would still require TRC approval per 82-700 D. Discussion of whether an ADU is a use variance or a dimensional variance. Infantolino said it is a permitted use in the use table so it is not a use variance, it just needs zoning dimensional variance approval.

They took a recess to discuss how they want to proceed.

Infantolino, they want to remove the ADU and keep it as living space and just go to Zoning for the variance. Bryer clarified that they still need TRC approval per 82-700 D. Bryer can not provide a positive recommendation at this point because she does not have enough information. She would have liked to see the other design options that they said they have gone through so that they can all understand why they came to this option as the best one. She also does not like how it appears from the street, small and few windows. It seems lacking in architectural design. Welch noted that architectural renderings would help to show the structure and also explained that it would be nice to have a landscape plan because that will help to conceal the structure. All agreed that would be helpful but it was not provided. Rendering would also be helpful to show how it appears from the

street with landscaping. King explained on the street elevation which windows are there, and which are wooden decorative panels. It is not clear or shown as a detail.

Bryer explained that the setback for the front is not shown because accessory structures are not permitted, so we look to “other permitted uses” which is 40’, consistent with the primary structure setback.

Begin asked them to explain again why rotating the structure would not work; he needs a visual. Darveau drew out on the plan how that would work. This would shift the parking to in front of the garage, still leaving room to maneuver in and out of the garage. One parking spot will still be available beside the garage by the house. All the parking would then be in front of the house and require more grading, from 78.5’ to 76.5’ which will need to be retained. This could be buffered with vegetation. King mentioned trying to save the white oak tree, which is not shown on the plan. it may be in the parking area since it is not shown. The trees will be taken down in the “courtyard” area as proposed.

Begin noted that he believes the original plan is less visually impactful since the parking is more hidden. They need 8+ parking spaces for guests.

Discussion of where the real front door is. It is in the middle of the house. King explained that the main functional door to the kitchen and that part of the house is to the north. There is no way to get to kitchen area from the front door unless you go through the rest of the house. This house was built in a time when they kept the staff apart from the owners hence the garage near the north side of the house is important for that reason. The main entrance is a vestibule and living area. It was agreed that this is very important information that was not provided in the plans or narrative. Bryer noted that it is important as the decision makers to understand the “why”

Infantolino has letters from 3 surrounding abutters supporting the project and are waiting on the 4th to the south. Begin noted that is important information also that was not provided in the narrative or other. Cochran said if the neighbors like this configuration, they should also be shown the sideways configuration. King noted that they did design it turned at first and they realized it works better the way it is designed.

Bryer noted that the landscaping plan is critical and it was not provided. She noted that the only way she can provide a positive recommendation is to see the landscaping plan. It can be done administratively after the zoning approval.

Cochran does not feel that shifting or rotating the structure is not significant given all the work that is being done on the property including land disturbance around the back side of the home. He does not feel the 5-foot relief on the side is not a hardship.

It was agreed that it would be difficult to setback the structure 40 feet anywhere on the lot.

Begin reiterated that it is all about the “why” this is the best alternative. It includes how the house is set up and how it all operates. He thinks any positive recommendation should be contingent upon the landscape plan being presented and approved.

Accessory structure meets the size requirements in 82-700. The accessory is 650 square feet and 850 is permitted. Infantolino explained that they cannot come back with a different configuration of the structure after they receive Zoning approval.

Utilities. Water connection should be after the meter. They have already replaced a new water main and the connection to the accessory will come from the house. The sewer is old and they will completely replace that and it will come from the main house also. Electric also will come from the house.

Bryer asked if they have to re-advertise if it is not an ADU? Infantolino said no.

Bryer noted that right now two members are not in favor of the relief required. Begin note that if the garage is spun you are still not going to meet the front yard setback. He is OK with the visual appearance but it may need a few more windows and façade treatment and landscaping.

Darveau noted that the front yard setback will be less if they rotate the accessory structure. It will be one foot less. He asked whether it is better to ask for two variances or one. Bryer noted that the front yard setback is more critical.

Begin noted that now that he knows the function of the house, it makes sense to locate the accessory structure to the north side of the property. The house to the south was originally the stables to this house. It is occupied as a house now. The history of the area was discussed.

Cochran noted that the current proposed configuration blocks more of the house from the street. King noted that you see the garage doors when you drive in the driveway, The Town is concerned about the view from the street not from driving into the property. King noted that they are moving the driveway to the south and eliminating the current driveway.

Bryer noted that several members would like to see the alternatives and she would like to see the renderings of the current configuration. She would like to put a condition, if she recommends approval, that it be conditional with future TRC administrative approve including renderings, landscape plan, water and sewer plans and other alternative orientations. Infantolino explained that once they receive Zoning approval, they cannot change the orientation of the building.

They would like to move forward to Zoning on Tuesday and they can receive a conditional approval with things that be submitted for a future TRC approval.

Changing the driveway location will require a RIDOT Physical Alteration Permit.

King noted that the owners and the property to the north are concerned about the condition of the sidewalks in front of their house and would like to talk to the Town about what they can do. Bryer noted that they applied to the STIP for the sidewalks and it was not listed. The Town now has an approved Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan that shows a sidewalk and bike path on the west side of the street she believes.

Bryer made a motion to **conditionally approve the plan with the conditions that a landscape plan comes back to the TRC for approval, and Sewer and Water plans are approved by Public Works and PAP approved by RIDOT.**

King said that if the state does not approve the curb cut, that they still be able to build. It was noted that you could not get in the garage if they utilized the existing curb cut. Darveau explained reason why RIDOT would not approve a curb cut. It does not seem that this request would have a problem. It may be adjusted due to telephone pole but it should be approved.

Infantolino clarified that it is a conditional approval where they need to come back to TRC for approval of the landscape plan. Bryer said yes, and the landscape plan should be stamped by a registered landscape architect. He is concerned that the Zoning Board will not accept this approval since it was not in the packet. Bryer noted that is why they generally do not put applications forward to Zoning until they have all their preliminary approvals.

Seconded by Begin. All in favor.

Motion to Adjourn by Begin, seconded by Lambert at 12:30pm. All in favor.

Attest: Lisa Bryer