

Village of Skaneateles
Zoning Board of Appeals Public Hearing
September 22, 2009

In the matter of the application submitted by Marc & Shelly Strang to vary the strict application of Section 225-A5, Density Control Schedule, for left and right side yard set-backs, both side yards combined, percentage of open area, to remove the existing house and construct a new 2 story single family dwelling with a detached 2 level garage/utility building on the property addressed as 51 Leitch Avenue in the Village of Skaneateles.

Present: Lisa Banuski, Chairman
John Crompt, Member
Larry Pardee, Member
Craig Phinney, Member
Lee Buttolph, Member

Jorge Battle, Clerk to the Zoning Board of Appeals
Riccardo Galbato, Attorney for the Zoning Board of Appeals

Marc & Shelly Strang, Applicants
Andrew Ramsgard, Architect for the applicants

Kevin Gadra, 54 Leitch Avenue
M/M D. Barron, 49 Leitch Avenue
William Ryan, 44 Leitch Avenue
Clark Tucker, 50 Leitch Avenue
Clifford Abrams, State Street

Chairman Banuski opened the meeting at 7:30pm announcing the continuation of the public hearing for Marc & Shelly Strang for 51 Leitch Avenue.

Andrew Ramsgard, Architect for the applicants made the presentation. He said, "the Strangs are proposing as said, to remove the existing 2 story wood frame house and construct a new house in place along with it a carriage house at the rear of the property as per the recommendation of the Planning Board. Also proposed is to relocate an existing slate patio which is on the back of the house.

The proposed structures would also include updating the first and second floor and the carriage barn will provide access for parking 2 vehicles, all of which are needed for their family. Currently, as you know, the garage at the existing house is a one car garage, where 2 parking spaces are required.

At our first meeting we took a hard look at the proposal and your suggestions. We tried to revise the plans to incorporate all your thoughts. We've reduced the overall size of the house

and have increased the open space on the lot. The second floor also no longer extends over the front porch, as was a recommendation by the Board. The architecture is similar to other structures in the neighborhood.

The site as we know is pre-existing, non-conforming as most of the sites within the Village are. We are requesting several variances as required by the pre-existing, non-conformity. We feel that there is no detriment to the nearby properties in granting of any of the requests nor is there an undesirable change in the character.

We are now proposing that the overall lot coverage is in character with a lot of the houses. We were originally believe and that was the last time we were proposing numbers in the sixties. What we are proposing now is approximately 73.32 percent coverage, which is in character with a lot of the homes around in the area. The benefits of having the 2-car garage and more living space can't really be achieved by any other means other than pursuing the variances. The existing house has 2 side yard non-conformities which are pre-existing. The Planning Board had recommended and requested that we remove the garage from the front of the house and create a new detached 2-car garage at the back of the house, which forces us to get a driveway along the side. It opens up one of the side yards but keeps one of the side yards pretty close to what the existing is.

The proposed variances, we feel none of which are significant or more substantial than the previous variances for the existing house. The proposal includes a more conforming side yard to the north and a more conforming combined side yards set-back. The proposal also includes a more conforming front yard as we are pulling the house back to line up - on your plan you can see that we've added a dashed line that connects the 2 adjacent houses. It is sort of an imaginary line and the determining factor for setting of the front of the house.

We also feel that the proposed variances would not have an adverse impact on the physical or environmental conditions of the neighborhood because it's within the existing character of other homes on the street. The proposed open space is inline with a lot of properties, even around the corner on Leitch Avenue. We looked at some of the densities around similar properties and many of them are 73, 74, 75. It's very similar. There was some discussion last time about what adjacent properties are. So, we took a little analysis and tried to use that as a guiding factor for creating a coverage that's in character with the adjacent properties.

Marc & Shelly have been back in touch. One of the things that you asked us to do that we hadn't had a chance to do, was the last time is to sit down with the neighbors and talk to them about the proposal. So, I want to give you copies of all the adjacent neighbors, the north, the Didio's, south which is the Barron's, the east is the Tucker's and the west is the Soderberg's. Then we have also quite a few people around on Leitch Avenue that has also seen them - the project and support the variances being requested. (presents list to the Board)

We are proposing a 2 story sort of a 4 square Italianate style house. Clap board siding and shallow sloped roof with cupola. Porch all the way across the front as well as a small porch along the back side. The house is going to have shutters and architectural shingles to keep in character with the adjacent properties in the neighborhood. We have reduced the footprint of the

floor plan which is approximately 1532 square feet, which is not out of character with a lot of homes. I know the foot print of my house is slightly bigger than that, which is not a large house and is in character with a lot of the homes in the area.

Member Crompt asked, “do you have a copy of the bottom right – it is very small.” Ramsgard said, “yes. I meant to hand it out. My printer is very light so I bought extra copies of the floor plan so you can see it.” Chairman Banuski asked, “is there a third floor usable space there? Is that why there’s a clerestory there?” Ramsgard replied, “there’s going to be some storage area and a little bit of usable space. But the roofline doesn’t get us a full area up in that section. We can get headroom around the staircase. So we get about a quarter of the area from the second floor up as usable area. One of the things that I know that a lot of people experience in the last couple of rain storms that we had - there was a suggestion that we utilize the basement space. They have been flooded out a couple of times. Lisa you said that you’ve got flooded out . A lot of people on Leitch and on Academy have that problem.” The Chairman said, ‘the RotoRooter truck is a fixture on Leitch Avenue. Since that big rain, it is.” Ramsgard continued, “so we are kind of apprehensive about placing habitable space in at the lower level.”

Member Phinney asked, “is the front porch – when we look at the overhead, with the rectangle that’s indicating the size of the house - are both the front and back porches included as part of that rectangle?” Ramsgard said, “yes. You can see the indent of the other one.”

Member Crompt asked, “did you include in there any air conditioning pads?” Ramsgard said, “we didn’t include them but, we figured that we’d be putting them underneath the porch. We didn’t want to use any extra space. Normally we’d put them on the side yards. But we really don’t have the room. To put them in the side yards. We don’t really want to put them in the backs. So it is under the porch.” The Chairman asked, “can you put them under a porch?” Ramsgard said, “yes They have side discharge air conditioning units. They are a little more expensive but it’s worth it because you don’t have to look at them.”

Member Phinney asked, “is it also showing too that you basically increase the open space by 5% from the existing?” Ramsgard said, “yes. The only other way to get a reasonable amount of use for the house and to increase the open space more would be to take out the front porch. But I don’t think that that’s the right thing to do for this particular project.” Member Crompt asked, “how many bedrooms in the existing house?” Marc Strang said, “we have four.”

Member Buttolph said, “the problem with the rain, is there anything that’s being done for that.? I know when I was up there that was one of the comments that was made - that there are problems. Wet basements – is there anything that you are doing in particular to help their basement but also not to hurt the basements of the neighbors.” Ramsgard said, “the one thing that we are going to be able to do is to tie in with the storm drain in the street on Leitch Avenue. I met with Bob (L.) to go over the location of it. Currently right now it’s not connected in. So, it doesn’t allow us to get the water out of there other than when it floods and have the Fire Department come up.” The Chairman said, ‘the problem was that it was the storm sewer that was the issue. I know at my house that was the problem anyway. It wasn’t just that water was coming in from the basement. It was that the storm sewer was completely filled.” Member Phinney asked, “is that in the south side too, of the property? Will you tie in south of Barron’s?”

Ramsgard said, ‘the storm is out on Leitch. So, that’s on the east face.’ Member Phinney said, “but when you pull it from as you tie into it, are you going to tie into it on the south side of the house, as far as setting your drainage up to have it head out toward the storm drain?” Ramsgard replied, “probably, because that’s the low side of the property.” M. Strang said, “actually in the last 2 weeks there was actually a new drain surface level grate put in the side yard.”

Chairman Banuski said, “the only other thing I need to bring up because I have some questions for counsel and for our Codes Enforcement Officer, that the last drawings and they are not on these floor plans, included the ‘studio.’ It had a conference area. I am curious about the nature of the home occupation and whether that’s requiring a Special Use Permit. Obviously, it is not a big terrible interfering to the neighborhood business. I live there and I don’t see that there’s a lot of traffic. But it would be remiss of me to just overlook that. I would like it if you would explain the nature of your business and studio.”

S. Strang said, “it is not a retail type of operation. I design, and I free lance. So I work for other companies designing. I do everything via computer.” The Chairman asked, “but you would occasionally have someone maybe come to your house?” S. Strang replied, “no, never.” Ramsgard said, “maybe you could explain what type of design work you do.” S. Strang said, “right now I work mostly in children’s products, designing decorative accessories – things ???might like – wall art.”

The Chairman said, “the public hearing on this has been continued so, I will open up for comment from anyone who’s here. If you intend to speak, I do need you to stand so that you can be heard, come forward and stand, state your name and address if you wish to speak. Is there anyone here who would like to speak in favor of this project?”

D. Barron, neighbor to the south – “we looked at their original plans. We really didn’t have any problems with the original plans. I guess somehow garages facing the road has become a bad word around here. That being said, we didn’t have an issue with that. Their changes - I think if they are satisfied with them, and fits their needs, we are pleased with them. Shelly made a point of making sure that we were advised and had a chance to look at everything. It looks nice. I think I was somewhat taken out of context in the last meeting when I – Craig and I are old baseball fathers – I ran into him during sidewalk sales and we were just batting the breeze and speaking in the vernacular, and I stated then that I didn’t really care what they built as long as they stayed in the neighborhood because they are fine neighbors. I’ve lived in my house for 60 years. We’ve had neighbors and we had people who have lived down the street. These are neighbors. These are good neighbors and I would like to see them be able to remain there and continue to be our neighbors. Shelly is one of the few that’s been able to come back to her home. That’s what Skaneateles needs is the ability for people to come back to their home. Her father is here. I know her father and her grandfather and grandmother. I think that this is an important consideration, although it doesn’t fall anywhere in the bailiwick of what you are doing. But, to keep these fine people in my neighborhood is important to me.” Member Phinney said, “well said, Dee.”

Bill Ryan said, “I’m their neighbor across the street. Come hell or a little high water. Which we have had some, I think what they are going to be doing here, addressing the water

issue, is going to greatly improve the area and their own living conditions. Talking about the water, maybe this isn't the time to talk about it, but when you see the water boiling out of the storm drains, as opposed to going down, you know there's an issue with volume. And the volume comes from the High School up in that area. As a matter of fact, there's a parking lot up there that they may return it to a parking lot - that should probably be put into grass. Anything to make or gets some perk going there. Because we need more retention. That's what it was, I believe, a retention basin where that parking lot is."

Barron said, "that was a skating rink." Ryan continued, "now it's a skating rink and that's how it was." Barron said, "it was a skating rink for many, many years. We went up when the temperature got right and we opened up the hydrant and flooded the rink, and we skated. In the Spring, the drains that were placed in that area that was our skating rink, took the water away. It was going to be a temporary parking lot while the school project went on. I had my doubts. I spent my childhood playing in that field. It bothers me to see it as what it is now."

Ryan continued, "I think these are lovely plans." The Chairman asked if there was anyone else who would like to speak?

Kevin Gadra said, "I'm actually going to have to look at their house more than they will because I live across the street. Much as Mr. Barron said, I saw the original plans. I thought they were great. I see these plans and I think they are also great. Also as Mr. Barron said, my daughter has watched their kids for many years. I'd hate to see them move anywhere out of the neighborhood. They have been great neighbors. I think the drawing is very sympathetic with everything else that has happened on Leitch Avenue in the distant past. I think it would really bring a lot to that end of the street. It is really what that end of the street needs. That's really all I have to say. I hope you approve it."

Clark Tucker, 50 Leitch, said, "my wife Mary and I looked at the plans and are very impressed with what they intend to do with the property. We think Andy has made a significant contribution to this community and this is another step in that direction. We admire his work and his taste. So in spite of living across the street from these people, been pleased to see the house remodeled."

The Chairman asked, "is there anyone here who would like to speak in opposition to this project?" No one spoke.

Member Phinney read the following letter from the file. *Dated September 15, 2009 We have seen the plans the Strangs are submitting and support all the variances.* Dates and names from 42, 45, 54, 44, & 59 Leitch. Then a second one *Dated September 15, 2009 We have seen the plans the Strangs are submitting and support all the variances.* Looks like the Didio, Barron, Tucker and Soderberg families."

The Chairman moved to close the public hearing. Seconded by member Crompt. The vote was 5-0 in favor of the motion.

The Chairman called for a motion. Member Phinney said, **I move that we approve the application submitted by Marc & Shelly Strang to vary the strict application of Section 225-A5, Density Control Schedule, for left and right side yard set-backs, both side yards combined, percentage of open area, to remove the existing house and construct a new 2 story single family dwelling with a detached 2 level garage/utility building on the property addressed as 51 Leitch Avenue in the Village of Skaneateles. This is a Type II SEQR. Based on plans updated on 9-10-2009. Project to be completed within 2 years of this date.”**

Seconded by Member Pardee. The vote was 5-0 in favor of the motion. The motion was declared approved. The meeting was closed at 7:52pm.