

Village of Skaneateles Planning Board Meeting September 29, 2011

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, and Section 225-14(5) Accessory buildings, distance to other structures, to remove an existing house and adjacent patios, and construct a new 2 story single family residence and detached garage on the property addressed as 51 Leitch Avenue in the Village of Skaneateles.

Present: Bruce Kenan, Chairman
Douglas Sutherland, Member
Megan Keady, Member
Toby Millman, Member

Jorge batlle, Clerk to the Planning Board
Riccardo Galbato, Attorney for the Planning Board

Mark Strang, Applicant
Andrew Ramsgard, Architect for the applicants

Tim McNally, Skaneateles

Absent: William Eberhardt, Member

Chairman Kenan opened the meeting at 7:38pm announcing the application of Marc & Shelly Strang for 51 Leitch Avenue.

Andrew Ramsgard, Architect for the applicant made the presentation. He said, "this was originally approved in September 22, 2009. Our window of 2 years just ran out for the project to be completed. Since then, a lot has happened. We've been back to the drawing board a little bit in redesign. We've looked at having the house built as *Quick Build*, semi-modularized by a company in Pennsylvania. The hope is to have Haven Homes basically put the project together. It will come in in 4 big pieces. The foundation will get set – a pre-fab foundation system and then the project goes together in pieces. There's 4 big boxes. 2 for the first floor and 2 for the second floor.

The proposed variances that we are asking for are the same as they originally were. This is going to be very much a Village style Four Square house. Clapboard sided, brackets and pilaster detailing around the windows. A porch across the front of the house. We've actually reduced the house a little bit from the original proposal. But we di put back a porch that goes all the way across the front of the house to keep with some of the comments from bother the

Planning Board and the ZBA had, to keep it in style of a Village house. We also have a porch in the back of the house.

The lots on Leitch Avenue – some of them are narrow. So, we opted for not very many windows at all on the sides to maintain privacy from both sides. We are significantly increasing the side yard on the north side of the property. Currently the existing side yard is only (interference) and a side entry that comes out ...the driveway comes back. The Site Plan is almost exactly the same. The dimensions of the house, is a little bit narrower. We made it a little bit longer. So, we kept as much of the same footprint as we had. Marc and Shelly have talked with all the neighbors. There should be a copy in the file. They have discussed the new plans with everybody. Everyone around, north, south, east and west are supporting it as they did last time the variances for the Strangs.”

Member Sutherland said, “the north and south elevations are really harsh with essentially no fenestration other than 2 small windows. I think that’s a mistake. It’s both the house and living in, I understand, I have a house that’s close to another house and it works out OK with windows on the side. But, I think that for the neighborhood around there to have the blank walls there is not helpful to the sense of neighborhood. I don’t think that you have to have windows all the way back. But it seems that as you round the corner off the front elevation, there should be some articulation that isn’t there now.”

Member Millman asked, “what was the reason why there wasn’t more windows?” Ramsgard said, “yes. It’s a narrow house. We create a bed wall and you’ve got lots of windows up front and lots of windows in the back. You don’t necessarily need windows or want windows on the sides, so you have furniture walls. You gain privacy for everybody on both sides. Same thing with the east elevation and west elevation – those are basically all windows on both those sides. So, there is plenty of light in the house. There’s a lot of windows all the way across the front and all the way across the back. Sure, we could put some more windows in.”

Member Millman said, “I agree with Doug’s assessment. It is hard looking at something in 2 dimensions. When you start to imagine this house in 3 dimensions, the front of the house is so well detailed and articulated. The rear of the house is really nice. There’s a lot of detailing. When you see this house in 3 dimensions’, it’s going to make those sides look even more jarring because it’s so different – so much less fenestration of the sides as there is on the front and rear. So, I agree with Doug’s assessment that even trying to wrap something close to the front of the house on both side could go a long way.”

Chairman Kenan asked, “the variances are percent of open area which – each one of the variances is a non-conforming condition now, right? The open area percentages is reduced further by this application?” Ramsgard said, “not from what was approved.” The Chairman said, “no, from the existing condition.” Ramsgard said, “from the existing condition, yes. If you total it up with the front porch and the back porch, which are open one story structures, that brings you back to the existing conditions.” The Chairman said, “if you were to call those open.” Ramsgard said, “yes, if you were to call those open, right now the house doesn’t have those things. The garage – if you know this house on Leitch, this is the one with the one-car garage that’s all the way up front. It’s way up front. It’s not in a line with all the rest of the houses. So,

where the existing condition is 24 feet, you have a front garage. We are moving the house =back in a line with the rest of them. Then we have a front porch all the way across. So, the additional 3% relates to the 255 square feet of porch that goes across the front with the additional 126 feet of the porch that goes across the back. That's the variance we got before as well but, the house has a significantly less field from what it was before." The Chairman asked, "the width of the house is essentially the same as the existing but shifted to one side so that the combined side yards is the same, although one's greater and one's lesser than existing?" Ramsgard said, "we didn't have a side entry on before which is the side yard set-back is to the edge of the stair. The 2-story portion of the wall is really what the house feels like." The Chairman said, "that faces the new driveway." Ramsgard said, "that faces the new driveway. It makes sense to have a side entry there. So, that side yard goes from that edge. Whereas, if you take it to the wall of the building, that's an additional 4 feet. A significant increase. The shaded area here is where the existing structure is. So the volume of the house is significantly in-board, actually on both sides."

Chairman Kenan asked, "how does the front yard set-back relate to the other structures on the block?" Ramsgard said, "we are lined up with the other buildings, to our front porch. Right now, the edge of the garage is only 24 feet to the street line. Whereas, we are going to go back to 36 for our porch, which is where the other houses are. That was the reason for picking that."

Member Millman said, "I think it's going to be a nice repair of this section of the block – no offense to your house today. Bring the house in line with the other houses. Not having a front loaded garage right off the street I think will be really nice." Member Sutherland said, "the Four Square design works well with the neighbors. I just think you need some more windows."

Marc Strang said, "on the window point, right now there's a shrub line that's between the south house and our house. That really covers that wall up architecturally." The Chairman asked, "how high is the shrub?" Strang said, "Probably up to the second story. It's quite tall – Rose of Sharon I think is the flowering plant." The Chairman asked, "so that's along the line where the house is closest to the line?" Strang said, "yes and then in the back, where there are some small windows, on the north side the architectural element really is going to be that entrance. It has a little roof over it. The way we worked the interior of the design, we were looking for larger wall spaces. I think even with the lack of windows, and with what that lot looks like, it will actually fit in very well both ways. The Didio's on the north side and the Barons on the south."

Member Sutherland said, "the thing that gets me is if you are walking down the sidewalk, there is a rhythm and a pattern that repeats itself with a prominent side window, upper bedroom, downstairs. It happens, I think, pretty much all along that area. It isn't just looking straight on to the house. But, it's how you perceive it from different angles. There is something about design that serves the user of the house itself. But, there's also that responsibility that a house has to be in context. Again, this is leaps and bounds better than what's there now. I think that windows, ground floor, second floor wrapped around the corner, you've got a much stronger design that's a bit more neighborly."

Member Millman said, "and part of it – it's not so much the windows, it's just that overall lack of articulation. There may be other ways to bring in some detailing. When we

approved some homes in Parkside (Subdivision), we agreed to have like the false closed shutter detail where there is no window on the inside. At least it gives articulation to that wall. I think it's going to be jarring three dimensionally, where you have this beautifully detailed front and this beautifully detailed rear, and the side are just flat. They just have a lack of detailing along there. So, there may be other creative ways of introducing some depth and shadow lines and some detailing along there. It could help a lot."

Chairman Kenan asked, "are there any other thoughts, questions? We have to make a recommendation to the Zoning Board with regard to the variances being requested. Does anybody have a motion?"

Member Sutherland said, "**I would move that we recommend approval provided that (we) get some detailing on the side. I would really prefer windows second floor, ground floor in the appropriate spot, back off the front of the house, and perhaps some other kind of articulation further back on the home.**"

The Chairman asked, "when you say *we get* ? Member Sutherland said, "that there is another generation of design that treats the north and south elevations just off of Leitch Avenue with windows with windows and looks at another way of creating interest and articulation further west on the north and south elevations." The Chairman asked, "**is it your recommendation that any variance granted by the Zoning Board be conditioned on that?**" Member Sutherland said, "yes."

Motion seconded by Member Millman. The vote was 4-0 in favor of the motion. Clerk Batlle asked, "it is your intent that you don't want this to come back to this Board?" The Board said that it does not come back to this Board. The meeting was closed at 7:52pm

email to: ZBA, Ramsgard, Galbato