



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Commission On Disability

Date: September 7, 2022

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath,
Director, Planning &
Development

Amanda Berman
Director, Housing &
Community Development

Nika Sandal
Planner
Community Development

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- Eileen Sandberg, Co-Chair
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- Matt Volpi

Jason Rosenberg
Chairman Emeritus

Advisor

Sergeant Michael B. Wade
Newton Police Department

Staff

Jini Fairley
ADA/Sec 504 Coordinator
617-796-1253

1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459
T 617-796-1240
F 617-796-1254
www.newtonma.gov

Dear Members of the Newton City Council Land Use Committee,

We are writing to you today to express the Newton Commission On Disability's (COD) strong support of the proposed renovations and revitalization of the Route 9 Dunkin Donuts, at 940 Boylston Street, Newton Highlands, allowing a drive-through/drive up window.

Mr. Alex DiPietro, franchisee of this Dunkin Donuts, presented his proposed plans at the COD's April 11, 2022 COD meeting. He introduced his plans with this statement, "

As with any change, there seems to be mixed feelings on this; however, as I have been investigating and doing the work to make sure that this serves my community well, I kept coming back to how underserved the Disabled and Elderly community is in Newton! When people think of drive-throughs they immediately focus on the negative ideas associated with them...but seemingly miss the point of access for these very important groups!"

From the Minutes of the 4/11/22 COD meeting:

Mr. Alex DiPietro presented his proposed changes to the Route 9 Dunkin Donuts, just east of the Eliot /Woodward Streets intersection with Rte. 9, to include a drive-through for his customers. Alex has been operating this local business since 2006, as he is a franchisee. He would like to reframe/rework the stigma of a drive-through in Newton and is seeking the support of the Commission On Disability, as he has learned from customers with disabilities that a drive-through is most welcome and provides a needed service. Covid exacerbated this need, as he observed the benefits a Drive-Through would have provided during the pandemic, but even now, many customers with disabilities wish not to go inside a restaurant but rather drive up to a window to order and have the least contact as possible. The convenience goes without saying, but for customers with disabilities, a drive-through can be an essential way to get food or drink, without having to find an accessible parking space, or any parking space for that matter, or to struggle to exit their vehicle, using a mobility aid, as they make their way inside. For parents of children with disabilities, young or old, a drive-through is most preferable so that the family member with a disability does not have to be left alone in the car or to have to get out of the car to go inside with the parent. The lack of drive-through businesses in Newton does a disservice for those with disabilities. Given the location of this Dunkin Donuts, being in a commercial and commuter divided highway, for some, not an eye sore, providing this

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missing link and service and access points, lends itself to having a drive-through for Newton customers and those passing through Newton going east into Brookline or Boston.

The presentation shows the building being updated, reworking the entrances and exits, making this Route 9 Dunkin Donuts to include a drive-through, will serve all customers with disabilities, whether driving or as a passenger. and there would not be a backup onto Route 9, based on what is happening in Wellesley with the 2 Dunkin Donuts across from each other further west on Rte. 9. This location in Newton is zoned to allow a drive-through, and except for McDonald's in Nonantum and the Bank of America in Newton Centre, there are no other drive-through establishments, but this lack of drive-throughs is doing a disservice for people with disabilities who may need that type of access. Lucie said she is in full support of this project to create a drive-through, she has attended the City Council Committee meetings and has spoken in favor. She now has to drive to West Roxbury or Needham for a drive-through. This also helps parents with small children or with older children or adults with disabilities. Rob and Sandra spoke of fully supporting the drive-through here, for people like themselves with mobility disabilities, even for people having a zoom meeting in their cars! Eileen said she went out of her way when she had 4 children under the age of 7 to find a drive-through, and went to Wellesley. Councilor Bowman was concerned that there would still be a safe way for pedestrians, including those with mobility disabilities, to get in and out of the restaurant safely and accessibly. Alex did point out some new accessible pathways for individuals walking or wheeling, so they could still get in and out safely, both from Route 9 and the Ramsdell approaches. They are also considering an automatic door opener for the exterior door as it can be too difficult to open for some customers with disabilities. Nancy asked how someone using a power chair would either be able to use the drive-through lane or enter the restaurant. Alex said he didn't recommend wheeling into the drive-through lane, but there are sidewalk and accessible pathways into the restaurant, or if one uses the app, that the order can be placed conveniently for a grab and go service. Jini mentioned how difficult it can be for a customer who uses a walker or crutches to have to park, get their mobility aid out of the car, get into the building, and now how do they carry that cup of coffee back to their car? Many people don't realize how many customers have these types of disabilities and how much easier a drive-through is

Lucie made a motion to have the COD write a letter/email of support to the City Council for a drive-through at this Route 9 Dunkin Donuts and there should be more drive-through businesses as they serve residents and visitors with disabilities. Jane seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of 7-0-1 (Girard abstained).”

The COD's motion was to inform the City Council, especially the Land Use Committee, that the COD favors drive through restaurants and that the COD strongly supports the establishment of a drive-through Dunkin Donuts on Route 9, 940 Boylston Street, in Newton Highlands. This motion passed unanimously.

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We strongly urge you to vote to approve these plans which allow a drive-through at 940 Boylston St.

If you have any questions or would like any clarification, please don't hesitate to call or email Eileen Sandberg, Co-Chair of the Commission on Disability, at sandberg.eileen@gmail.com and at (617) 319-2739.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eileen A. Sandberg
Chair, Newton Commission On Disability