**PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

December 4, 2023

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Ruthanne Fuller

Mayor

Barney Heath

Director

Planning & Development

Joseph Iadonisi

Planning Associate

**Members**

Kelley Brown, Chair

Kevin McCormick, Vice Chair

Lee Breckenridge, Member

Amy Dain, Member

Peter Doeringer, Member

Jennifer Molinsky, Member

Barney Heath, *ex officio*

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**Members present:**

Kevin McCormick, Vice-Chair

Lee Breckenridge, Member

Amy Dain, Member

Peter Doeringer, Member

Barney Heath, *ex officio*

**Staff present:**

Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development

Lara Kritzer, Director of Housing and Community Development

Shaylyn Davis-Iannaco, Housing Program Manager

Joseph Iadonisi, Planning Associate

1. **Community Development Block Grant Substantial Amendment Public Hearing - West Newton Family Navigation Center, 1650 Washington Street, Funding Request**

Mr. Larry Seamans of Family Aid and Mr. Bill Grogan of the Planning Office for Urban Affairs for the Archdiocese of Boston introduced the West Newton Family Navigation Center. Mr. Grogan began by speaking about the Planning Office for Urban Affairs, a mission-driven office for the Catholic Church in the Boston Archdiocese that assists in helping individuals in need find housing. Mr. Seamans continued by discussing the context for the project, the current homelessness crisis, migration, and expensive cost of living.

Mr. Seamans continued that FamilyAid’s request is to improve access to the site. Mr. Grogan added that the building was constructed in the 1960s and that the renovations trigger Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. Given the site grading and location, there must be a switchback-style ramp. The additional funds will be to provide landscaping and other site improvements. Mr. Grogan stated that Family Aid has worked closely with neighbors to ensure that the plans satisfy any of their concerns.

Ms. Davis added that the Planning Department is looking for the Planning and Development Board to vote to make a recommendation to the Mayor regarding the allocation of CDGB funds.

Mr. McCormick confirmed with Director Heath that this is a Public Hearing and that the Board must open the Public Hearing. Mr. McCormick called on Ms. Josephine McNeil to speak. Ms. McNeil advocated for Citizens for Affordable Housing in Newton Development Organization (CAN-DO) and the Eliott Church’s support for Family Aid’s work and urged the City to approve the funds.

Mr. Doeringer moved to close the Public Hearing, and the Board voted 4-0-1 to close the Public Hearing.

Ms. Breckenridge asked about the stormwater considerations for the proposed project. Mr. Grogan said that they have worked closely with their engineer to ensure that the best plan was designed for the site and ensured that the work will meet the City’s Stormwater Ordinance. Ms. Breckenridge asked if the Engineering Department would review the project, Mr. Grogan said that the Building Department will review the project and Engineering will review as necessary as a part of the building permit process.

Mr. Doeringer asked if there are other projects that might be preempted by this project. Ms. Davis responded that the West Newton Armory is the next affordable housing project in the pipeline that might be eligible for such funding in the future, but no projects preempt the current proposal. Mr. Doeringer asked for further information about the type of units at the West Newton Family Navigation Center. Mr. Seamans responded that each room was 250-300 square feet, each including a full bath and could support a mother and two children and would have connecting doors for larger family units. There will be additional ADA compliant units, classroom and play spaces, counseling spaces, a shared kitchen and six instructional kitchens for nutritional instruction. On the residential floors there are communal lounges and study areas.

Mr. McCormick asked about the 55-year lease and why that time, Mr. Seamans said that it was a 15-year lease with four ten year options. This better enabled state and legal compliance. Mr. McCormick asked if any work had started, Mr. Seamans said that work had been delayed because of supply chain issues, but that Family Aid planned on filing for a building permit this week.

Mr. Doeringer moved to recommend in favor of approving the CDGB fund request. The Board voted 4-0-1 with Director Heath abstaining.

1. **Discussion on #376-23 Petition to rezone lot on Dedham Street**

Mr. McCormick clarified the timeline and voting procedure between the Planning Board and Zoning and Planning Committee. Director Heath said that the simplicity of the matter meant that it should be quickly considered by the Zoning and Planning Committee. Director Heath gave a quick background for the request, which was formerly a City-owned water tower. The neighboring property owner purchased the land with the City requiring that the land be used as open space. Mr. McCormick clarified which uses would be considered open space and Director Heath listed the allowed uses per the deed, including various conservational and recreational uses, but not for additional structures. Ms. Breckenridge asked how the rezoning impacted stormwater and Mr. McCormick asked if it would be one lot. Director Heath said it would be one lot. Mr. Doeringer asked about the section about enforcement from the covenants. Director Heath said he would have to consult with the Legal Department.

1. **Discussion of 2024 Planning & Development Board Monthly Meeting Dates**

Director Heath discussed the upcoming meetings, regularly scheduled for the first Monday in the month, recommending moving the January 1st meeting to January 8th.

1. **Minutes**

Mr. Doeringer moved to accept the minutes for November 6th and the Board voted 5-0 to approve the minutes.

Mr. Doeringer moved to accept the minutes for November 13th and the Board voted 5-0 to approve the minutes.

1. **Staff Updates**

Director Heath announced that Mr. David Lewis began work as Chief Preservation Officer and Mr. Iadonisi has accepted the role of Senior Planner but will continue working with the Planning Board.

1. **Upcoming Meetings**

Mr. McCormick confirmed that next Monday, December 11th meeting is required for the Planning Board to vote on the Dedham St. rezoning.

1. **Adjournment**

The Board adjourned on a motion by Ms. Dain with a 5-0 approval.