



# CITY OF NEWTON

## Planning & Development Board

### MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 4, 2024

Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

Barney Heath  
Director  
Planning & Development

Olivia Ashjian James  
Community Engagement  
Specialist

#### Members

Kevin McCormick, Chair  
Amy Dain, 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, Chair  
Amy Dain, Vice-Chair  
Lee Breckenridge, Member  
Kelley Brown, Member  
Peter Doeringer, Member  
Jennifer Molinsky, Member  
Barney Heath, *ex officio*

#### Staff present:

Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development  
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Development  
Zachery LeMel, Chief of Long Rang Planning, Department of Planning and Development  
Olivia Ashjian James, Community Engagement Specialist, Department of Planning and Development

#### 1. Site Plan Review Workshop with Utile

- Loren Rapport from Utile presented about how the Site Plan Review will work in the Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)
- Mr. LeMel discussed the role the Planning Board will have in site plan review, such as new development on lots between 15,000 sf and 30,000 square feet and reviewing parking waivers
- Ms. Caira discussed the review process for ensuring compliance
- Mr. McCormick asked for clarification on the timeline for when a public hearing is opened
  - i. Ms. Caira clarified that a public hearing is opened within 45 days and from whatever date that is there are 120 days to close the public hearing
- Mr. Doeringer asked whether shadow studies are required
  - i. Ms. Caira answered that shadow studies are not required per the ordinance
- In Ms. Rapport's presentation she analyzed a case study of a project proposal in Newton Highlands that compared current plans to develop and how those plans would have related to VCOD standards

#### 2. City Council Zoning and Planning Committee Update

- Presentation on Issues with Grade Changes and Retaining Walls
  - i. Ms. James described that the Planning Department presented to ZAP about proposed updates to the grade changes and retaining wall ordinance

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1. She explained that ZAP is interested in moving forward with a simple update that would require a special permit for all retaining walls over four feet
- ii. Ms. Cairra added that the Planning Department will ask ZAP to set a public hearing for April 8
- Possible Amendments to Preserve Existing Homes
  - i. Mr. LeMel discussed the plan to gather more data to inform possible amendments to preserve existing homes. He explained that the Planning Department presented a variety of considerations in February to ZAP and noted that there are numerous consequences to be aware of when, for example, reducing FAR or other solutions.
- Key Metrics and Reporting Process on Planning Projects
  - i. Ms. James described the ZAP meeting on February 15<sup>th</sup> where Councilor Oliver brought up the issue of key metrics. The Planning Department requested a list of metrics he is interested in keeping track of which the Department is still waiting for.
  - ii. Ms. Cairra added that we are currently exploring adding census data on the Planning Department's website and possibly tracking affordable housing
- Proposed Zoning Amendment Clarification / Small Business Items
  - i. Ms. James explained that the Planning Department will speak at ZAP's upcoming meeting about two docket items that are both regarding cleaning up the zoning ordinance
    1. The two items are strictly clarifying items and items that help incentivize small businesses

### 3. Minutes

- February 5, 2024
  - i. Mr. McCormick asked members at the beginning of the meeting to review the minutes
  - ii. Mr. Doeringer moved to accept the minutes of February 5 and the Board voted unanimously 4-0 (not all members were present yet)

### 4. Staff Updates

- Dir. Heath provided an update on the two open positions in the Department
  - The Department has made offers for both the Planning Associate and Director of Transportation Planning positions

### 5. Upcoming Meetings

- Monday, April 1<sup>st</sup> Planning Board Regular Monthly Meeting (Required)
- Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup> ZAP Public Hearing on Proposed Zoning Amendment Clarification Items (Required)

### 6. Adjournment

- Mr. Doeringer made a motion to adjourn with a 7-0 approval