



CITY OF NEWTON

Planning & Development Board

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 1, 2024

Members present:

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

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Staff present:

Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development
Lara Kritzer, Housing & CD Director
Sharon Cullins, Community Development Planner
Nika Sandal, Senior Community Development Planner
Olivia Ashjian James, Community Engagement Specialist, Department of Planning and Development

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*

1) Annual Action Plan Review Presentation

- Ms. Kritzer opened the presentation of the Annual Action Plan Review
- Ms. Sandal provided an overview of the CDBG program FY25 including the FY25 recommendation of how to allocate funds broken down by project
- Ms. Kritzer ended her presentation by discussing a substantial amendment to the consolidated plan
 - i. She explained that a transitional housing project (Family Aid) is considered by HUD to be “public facilities” and right now the consolidated plan does not include public facilities. In order to get credit from HUD for new units created by this funding the consolidated plan needs to be amended to include public facilities.
- Ms. Kritzer explained that the 30-day public comment is open and ends May 1 before opening up for questions
- Following the presentation the public hearing was opened and public comment was accepted. Ms. Josephine McNeil offered the following comments:
 - i. Suggests putting a copy of the plan in the library
 - ii. For the ESG program can we start compiling info by city and town so that we can see how much has gone to each of the municipalities that are eligible to receive those funds?
 - iii. Heard that some ARPA funds will be taken back by Congress – are we taking steps to make sure these plans will not be derailed by that?
 - iv. Is Newton Thrive program being advised that they can go to various agencies to provide assistance as they implement plans for their individual clients?

1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459
T 617-796-1120
F 617-796-1142

www.newtonma.gov

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- v. The City should reconsider grant to Second Step because they recently closed a shelter location and were a recipient of a \$2 million philanthropic grant
- Ms. Ross (Executive Dir. Second Step) provided clarification that the organization had decided to consolidate their operations and that the CDBG grant was essential to their organization
- Ms. Molinsky made a motion to close the public hearing
 - i. Voted 5-0-1 with Dir. Heath abstaining
- Mr. McCormick opened up for questions from P&D Board
 - i. Ms. Molinsky
 - 1. How is an accessibility project selected – what’s the process?
 - a. Ms. Kritzer answered that the Commission on Disabilities provides recommendations of what projects to consider
 - b. In addition, for example, the intersection that was selected for funding was selected for a variety of reasons, including that they believed the funding would have the greatest impact in this project compared to others
 - ii. Mr. Doeringer
 - 1. Is Newton not running ESG programs?
 - 2. In Human Services program, we can really act as an anti-poverty program (i.e. get kids into camp)
 - a. Should look at how to move people into employment
 - 3. Would like to have a sense of who we are reaching (in terms of income level, racial and ethnic composition, etc). He would like to see data for individual programs rather than aggregated data, specifically the human services programs.
 - iii. Dir. Heath answered
 - 1. Human Services
 - a. EMPATH – ARPA funded project working intensely with 50 low income households
 - i. Vocational skills etc
 - ii. At end of 2 years they will hopefully be in a better position
 - b. After EMPATH we can apply what we learn to future actions
 - 2. Regarding Ms. McNeil’s question about whether Newton Thrive knows about resources available
 - a. Our Human Services Dept. works closely with the Empath mentors
 - 3. Regarding ESG
 - a. Dir. Heath acknowledged that there is some confusion about why ESG funds aren’t going to Newton orgs
 - i. Ms. Sandal replied
 - ii. There are not a lot of Newton organizations that do that work

- iii. Decided that the more sophisticated providers of homeless assistance are located in Brookline and can better serve Newton residents
- iv. Ms. Beckenridge asked whether Ms. McNeil's questions had been regarding
 - 1. ARPA funds being clawed back
 - 2. Whether the \$25,000 awarded to Second Step would be better allocated to another organization
- v. Dir. Heath indicated that staff will get a copy of the Plan to the library
- vi. Dir. Heath explained that the ARPA funds are under contract and it is unlikely to be clawed back
- vii. Dir. Heath addressed Ms. McNeil's question about reallocating the \$25,000 awarded to Second Step since they were recipients of another larger grant
 - 1. He explained that Second Step is still in need of the \$25,000 CDBG funds for essential services
- viii. Ms. Kritzer addressed Mr. Doeringer's question on getting more details of who is being served
 - 1. She explained that there will be that information when they do the CAPER later this year
- ix. Mr. Brown asked
 - 1. What is the timing for the new West Newton Navigator Center – start construction in 2025 Spring and not this year?
 - 2. More detail on Grove Street project
 - 3. Testing program – found that source of income more than race were the basis of instances of discrimination
 - 4. What is a non-congregate shelter that had funds redistributed?
- x. Ms. Kritzer addressed question on Navigation Center
 - 1. The date is an error on slide – construction is scheduled to begin this year and not in 2025
- xi. Ms. Kritzer addressed question on Grove Street Project
 - 1. The portion being discussed is the part that the City owns
 - a. Looking to redevelop as affordable housing
 - 2. The parcel next door was bought by Civico and is likely to be market rate
 - a. This is a completely separate project
- xii. Ms. Sandal addressed question on non-congregate shelter
 - 1. Non-congregate shelters provide private units. The shelter does not have an open floorplan with beds, rather there are separate units
 - 2. Initially proposed funds to be applied to non-congregate shelters however there were no applicants for non-congregate shelters so they moved that money into other categories
 - 3. Ms. Sandal continued that the reason people may not have applied for non-congregate shelter funding was because the amount of funding available was too small to start a project,

and only really applicable to getting projects completed. They explained that there likely were no such projects seeking that amount of funding

- xiii. Ms. Kritzer addressed question on testing
 - 1. There were still discrimination based on race and they have been turned over to state for possible prosecution
- Mr. McCormick recommended that Mayor approve this Plan
 - i. Mr. Doeringer moved and Mr. Brown seconded
 - ii. Final vote 5-0-1 (Dir. Heath abstained)
- Mr. Brown moved to recommend to Mayor that the consolidated plan be amended to set as a goal support for Public Facilities
 - i. Mr. Doeringer seconded the motion
 - ii. Final vote 5-0-1 (Dir. Heath abstained)

2) City Council Zoning and Planning Committee Update

- Public hearing April 8th for retaining walls zoning amendment
 - i. Ms. James explained only update is that a public hearing is set for April 8th
- Public hearing April 8th for zoning ordinance clean-up items
 - i. Ms. James explained only update is that a public hearing is set for April 8th
- Preserving existing homes
 - i. Ms. James explained there is an on-going analysis that will be discussed at May meeting
 - 1. Dir. Heath added that what will be presented is based on data on what homes are being demolished and what factors are contributing to that
- Developing list of ways Council can better support small business
 - i. Ms. James listed a few ways Planning is looking at how zoning could be updated to better support businesses and reduce red-tape
- Inclusionary zoning update
 - i. Ms. Kritzer explained that last update was 2019
 - 1. Currently working with consultants to figure out what changes may be recommended to Council
 - ii. Ms. Molinsky asked whether assisted living will be part of update
 - 1. Ms. Kritzer said they are interested in looking into that
 - iii. Mr. Brown asked about including lower levels of IZ units and Ms. Kritzer said they will be looking into that with consultants

3) Minutes

- Mr. Doeringer moved to accept the minutes from March 4, 2024
 - Vote passed 6-0

4) Staff Updates

- Dir. Heath provided updated
 - i. Planning hired Jenn Martin as new Director of Transportation Planning
 - 1. Ms. Martin was the SRTS coordinator and knows Newton streets well

2. Starts April 22nd
- ii. Offer was made for the Planning Associate Position so waiting for confirmation
- iii. Ed. Dailey joins meeting tonight
 1. Applied to be a member of P&D Board

5) Upcoming Meetings

- Monday, April 8th ZAP Public Hearing on Proposed Zoning Amendment Clarification Items (Required)
- Monday, May 6th Planning Board Regular Monthly Meeting (Required)

7. Adjournment

- Vote to adjourn 6-0 at 8:20pm