

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2012

Present: Ald. Johnson (Chairman), Baker, Danberg, Sangiolo, Kalis, Swiston and Yates

Absent: Ald. Lennon

Also Present: Ald. Merrill and Hess-Mahan

Others Present: Seth Zeren (Chief Zoning Code Official), James Freas (Chief Long Range Planner), Chris Steele (Chairman, Economic Development Commission), Karyn Dean (Committee Clerk)

FAR Working Group Members: Alan Schlesinger, Peter Sachs, Henry Finch and Chris Chu

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#309-12        JESSICA ALPERT, 14 Fuller Avenue, West Newton, appointed as a member of the URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION for a term to expire September 17, 2015 (60 days 12/14/12). [10-03-12 @12:17 PM]

**ACTION:**     **APPROVED 7-0**

**NOTE:** Ms. Alpert addressed the Committee. She explained that she has been a life-long resident of Newton. After studying Industrial Design at the University of Syracuse, she returned home. She felt the Urban Design Commission fit her interests and abilities. She is currently working at a real estate company as a rental agent, renovation designer and graphic designer. Ms. Alpert has been able to attend two meetings of the Urban Design Commission. Ald. Sangiolo asked what was on the agenda for the UDC. Ms. Alpert noted that there was sign review and fence reviews. There were also proposals from the Chestnut Hill Mall for renovation designs. She would like to see more sustainable design issues continued in the City. Ald. Danberg moved approval and the Committee voted in favor.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#389-12        ROGER WYNER, 16 Pettee Street, Newton Upper Falls, appointed as a member of PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD for a term of office to expire October 18, 2017 (60 days 01/18/13). [11-01-12@4:28PM]

**ACTION:**     **APPROVED 7-0**

**NOTE:** Mr. Wyner addressed the Committee. He explained that he served on the Planning & Development Board from 1985-2005 and was Chairman for the last few years. He had moved away from the area and has recently returned. As a developer and a lawyer, he handled much of the issues in the role of Board of Survey. Ald. Yates asked if the model that was used to keep sexually oriented businesses out of the City could be used with the new legal medical marijuana allowance. He thought it could be an interesting model. Ald. Yates moved approval and the Committee voted in favor.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#326-12      FRANK McGEHEE, 20 River Street, West Newton, appointed as a member of THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION for a term to expire October 18, 2015 (60 days 01/04/13) [10-22-12 @3:17PM]

**ACTION:**      **APPROVED 7-0**

**NOTE:** Mr. McGehee explained that he has lived in Newton for 7 years. He moved here after spending several years in the gaming industry. Currently, he is running the loyalty program at Eastern Mountain Sports. He thinks it's important to think of the mix of residents and businesses in the City and what makes for a balanced life. He believes Newton has great diversity and would like to continue working to keep that balance. Ald. Baker noted that Mr. McGehee has some background and interest in exercise and wellness. He feels this is an area that can be expanded and local businesses could use some help with managing health care costs. The Committee voted to approve Mr. McGehee's appointment.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#327-12      ROBERT FINKEL, 6 Stearns Street, Newton Centre, appointed as a member of THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION for a term to expire October 18, 2014 (60 days 01/04/13) [10-25-12 @4:14PM]

**ACTION:**      **APPROVED 7-0**

**NOTE:** Mr. Finkel said he has been a life-long resident of Newton. Professionally, he is a business and real estate attorney and works with many small and emerging businesses. He is on the Board of Directors of his temple and has been successful as a community builder there. He feels his community and professional background make him a good fit for the EDC. The Committee voted to approve this appointment.

Appointment by His Honor the Mayor

#390-12      CHARLES RUDNICK, 41 Lombard Street, Newton, appointed as a member of the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION for a term to expire October 18, 2015 (60 days 01-18-13). [10-25-12 @4:14 PM]

**ACTION:**      **APPROVED 7-0**

**NOTE:** Mr. Rudnick said he has been deeply involved in the community through youth sports, the schools and his temple. He finds the EDC appealing because he has spent a considerable amount of time in the private sector at Boston Scientific and is involved in the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce as well. The Chamber is involved in issues related to economic development, including the economic climate for the entire region. He would like to bring that relative experience to the EDC. He has also been involved in local politics. Ald. Yates asked what the Boston Chamber was working on. Mr. Rudnick replied that talent development and retention is a key issue at the Great Boston Chamber of Commerce. They also deal with the high cost of doing business and work on improving the climate by reducing the tax burdens on businesses, etc. The Committee voted to approve Mr. Rudnick's appointment.

Ald. Yates asked all the members to familiarize themselves with the Main Street Program. Ald. Danberg informed everyone that Newton Centre was having a Shop and Stroll event this weekend. She asked the appointees for assistance with filling the empty retail spaces in Newton Centre. Ald. Baker said the Chamber of Commerce is promoting shopping locally. Ald. Johnson explained that she would like the EDC to look at best practices in other communities that have vibrant downtowns with good mixes of businesses. And, she would like to know how Newton can attract the right kind of businesses and considering that the Planning Department is taxed in terms of personnel, she feels the input of the EDC is vitally important.

#49-11      ALD. JOHNSON, Chair of Zoning and Planning Committee, on behalf of the Zoning and Planning Committee requesting that the Director of Planning & Development and Commissioner of Inspectional Services review with the Zoning & Planning Committee the FAR data collected during the eight months prior to the new FAR going into effect and the 12 months after. This committee review should occur no less than bi-monthly but could occur as frequently as monthly, based on the permits coming into the departments. [02-15-11 @8:44AM]

**ACTION:**      **NO ACTION NECESSARY 5-0-2 (Ald. Johnson and Sangiolo opposed)**

**NOTE:** Ald. Johnson explained that this item was discussed about a month ago. At that meeting, several questions were raised by the Committee for the Planning Department.

Seth Zeren, Chief Zoning Code Official, provided a PowerPoint presentation to address the issues from the previous working session. Please also refer to the Planning Department memo dated November 21, 2012.

#### Impact on Development of Two-Family Condos

##### *Market Considerations*

The Planning Department wanted to better understand the overall real estate market and obtained information from the Multiple Listing Service. (Please see hand-out 1. Attached). The chart show the average sale price, number of sales and number of days on the market for single family homes. There has been a steep increase in housing prices in Newton over the 14 years shown, with a drop from 2006-2008 during which time the country was experiencing the economic recession. There is a recovery after that with a supply and demand response as values increase. Days on the market responded in a similar fashion.

There is a different trend with two –family condos, however. This chart shows a bit of a boom, then the recession hit which resulted in a fall off in all areas. The recovery seems to be taking longer in terms of sale prices, number of units being sold, and number of days on the market, however. The final numbers for 2012 are not available, but they believe that activity is starting to pick up. They are trying to understand how much of the slow recovery is due to changes in the FAR regulations and how much is related to overall market conditions. Mr. Zeren said they think the market is a much more significant factor than the change in regulations.

### *Supply of Lots*

In addition, the Planning Department also looked at the number of available parcels on which to build these units, by-right. They broke down the number of parcels in MR1 and MR2 districts which were between 7,000 square feet (which is the minimum required for 2 units) and up to 15,000 square feet. They also looked at parcels built prior to 1990 as newer construction would unlikely be torn down to build new units. They found that there were relatively few parcels available, with 250 at around 7, 000 square feet and 85 that meet the 10,000-15,000 square feet threshold. This suggests that along with smaller demand for these units, there is also maybe a limit to the supply of parcels that are appropriate for this type of development.

### *Impact of FAR on Unit Size*

Mr. Zeren explained that they also looked at pre-October 15 rules, the new rules, and their impact on construction of these units. Using a 10,000 square foot lot model, the by-right allowed area of each unit has declined by 250 square feet under the new regulations. An additional .02 FAR would raise the maximum area of each dwelling unit by 100 square feet. (See Page 4 of the Planning Department Memo). Mr. Zeren said he did not see a significant impact on the these units in sales or production under the new regulations. It's important to note that the number of condos that were built last year were permitted the year before and therefore represent the interim rules, not the new rules.

### Additional Data on Permitting and Fees

#### *Building Permit Revenue*

Mr. Zeren noted that two more years of building permit data have been added to the information from last month's meeting. The larger number in FY12 is mainly from several large projects, in particular, Chestnut Hill Square, and Chestnut Hill Shopping Center. They do not expect the same number of large commercial projects in the near future. (See hand-out 2. Attached)

#### *New Construction/Additions*

Research was also presented on the number of additions by zone and new construction by zone. There are significantly more parcels in the SR2 district than in the SR1 or MR1 districts and over the last 3 years approximately 1% of parcels in each district has been developed with a new house. There was an increase in new construction in the SR2 zone, and that was only area where there was a trend. It has upwards of 400 parcels in it, so any small changes in the system are likely to be propagated out more significantly. For additions, there was a change in about 2% of the parcels.

#### *Assessed Values*

The changes in property assessments were also analyzed and there were very minor changes. One big fluctuation was in condos in the MR2 zone with a change of value of about 24%. That seemingly large change is driven by the small population of condos and the fact that there were 2 significant new developments of higher price than the existing developments. This spiked the average quite a bit. One key component to keep in mind is that all of the data points trail the present by one to two years. Property assessments look at sales from a year or two back to set their baselines and building permits were issued in that timeframe as well. Building permits issued under the new regulations are for projects that have not been built yet.

#### Determine Neighborhood Appropriateness

Mr. Zeren noted that the Land Use Committee has expressed concern that perhaps they don't have all the information necessary to determine when an FAR Special Permit should or should not be approved. An item has been docketed before Land Use to discuss whether they needed additional criteria, etc. to determine whether the "proposed structure is consistent with and not in derogation of the size, scale and design of other structures in the neighborhood." The Planning Department will be helping the Committee figure that out. It could be something that is done administratively and would not necessarily have to go into the Zoning Ordinances, but that is something that will need to be determined.

#### Comprehensive Revision of Residential Zoning

Mr. Zeren explained that the best way to address larger concerns about neighborhood appropriateness is to take a more comprehensive approach. There are several tools they could recommend, however, these would have to be taken into consideration as a whole. In doing this, they looked at the work of the FAR Working Group, the Comprehensive Plan and the work of the Zoning Reform Group.

#### *New Zoning Districts*

Creating new residential zoning districts is one tool. This would provide greater flexibility and specificity so that you have a zoning district that relates to the architectural style and lot characteristics of a particular area of the city. One of the challenges of Newton is that it's older and more organic which makes things fairly inconsistent and fairly difficult to govern. By creating a broader array of choices or tools, and then applying them in a way that more closely fits neighborhoods, the zoning ordinances can be made more specific. The advantage of that is reducing the potential for unintended consequences. For instance, having a small ranch on a big lot, and large Victorian on a small lot will look very inconsistent in a neighborhood if only FAR is taken into consideration.

#### *Pattern Book*

The idea of a Pattern Book was presented. Mr. Zeren said this is an old historic tradition of showing people architectural styles that are desirable and suitable for neighborhoods. It's not meant to be restrictive, but informative and illustrative.

#### *Specific Neighborhood Plans*

Mr. Zeren said that by going from big policy visions to a specific neighborhood vision, there tends to be more buy-in to get there. It creates clarity and predictability and then developers have a sense of what people are looking for.

#### *Form-based Standards*

The emphasis here would be on the bulk, the location on the lot, and the relationship between the house and other houses on the street. This is not to govern style, but to govern the public experience from the street. Because there could be widely varying lot sizes in a row on a street, taking this kind of approach would provide a more coherent public experience. This provides for less of a discretionary review process since the guidelines are more specific to begin with.

### Recommendation

Mr. Zeren said the Planning Department recommends carrying this forward into Phase 2 of zoning reform. This approach needs to be comprehensive and resources could be allocated for these efforts in Phase 2 to get this done right. The Planning Department would like to continue looking at the new FAR regulations and the effects it has had. Mr. Zeren did not feel there was sufficient data at this time. They also recommended voted No Action Necessary on this item at this time. There is another item on the agenda regarding the issue of FAR, so the opportunity to discuss this further will be preserved.

### Committee Response

Ald. Kalis wondered if there was any way to know which projects had to change mid-course due to the new FAR regulations. Mr. Zeren said it was difficult to determine what did *not* happen. He knew there were some projects that rushed to get in before the rules changed, and some that purposely waited for the new rules.

Ald. Danberg asked what the square foot requirements were for the districts. Mr. Zeren said that SR1 has a minimum of 15,000-25,000; SR2 10,000-15,000; SR3 7,000-10,000 as well as the MR1 and MR2. Ald. Danberg liked the idea of the Pattern Book and wondered if it would have an effect on what was being built. Ald. Johnson said she was looking at design guidelines at one time and a local magazine interviewed her on the topic. She received a very visceral reaction from her neighbors and residents of the City. They felt like they were being told what they could or could not do and were quite offended by this.

Ald. Baker said he had a couple of reservations. One element of the Comprehensive Plan that is still an unfulfilled opportunity is to look at the idea of neighborhood plans as opposed to a citywide plan. Some of these changes are perhaps helpful on a macro level, but the micro scale really needs to be looked at for making choices in the zoning framework. And it may be different for different parts of the city. It is important to keep distinct what the process produced and what the Board adopted, which is a different dimensional control with a better measurement system and a set of changing calculations, which according to the Planning Department, seem to be within the range of reasonableness and not worth trying to change right now. He thinks the Working Group should be thanked and the Committee should move on.

Ald. Baker went on to say that by definition, the Special Permit process is discretionary. He said they could try to get some guidance from previous decisions but it is not automatic and that is inherent in the process.

Ald. Yates was concerned with a house on Fuller Street that is large scale, seems to be mounded, and is using many different materials for facade. Mr. Zeren said it was not a Special Permit project and that mounding has not been a particularly large problem in the City.

Ald. Swiston would like to find out for sure which permits got issued in the last year and take a look at the projects. Mr. Zeren said if they were permitted in the last year they would still be in construction. He would provide that information. Ald. Sangiolo asked how the data was gathered. She said it seems that bigger houses are being built and bigger additions. Mr. Zeren said that they looked at permits between the old and new regulations, and two years prior to the

old regulations as well. He noted that housing sizes have been increasing in the country overall and that Newton typically has had larger than usual house sizes. Mr. Zeren said he didn't feel there was a significant increase in the number of additions, however, the square footage data is on the permit, but not on the summary data his department has.

FAR Working Group

Ald. Johnson invited the members of the FAR Working Group for their input.

**Alan Schlesinger** said that the FAR regulations are having some effect. The constraint that people used to bump up against when planning a building was traditionally yards and height, not FAR. One of the changes that the new regulations created were that FAR now comes into play in more cases. It's a more relevant tool. It became clear to everybody that there is no substitute for good design, which cannot be legislated. There are plenty of wonderfully designed buildings that are totally non-conforming per FAR. The complexity of it is enormous. He felt that the current scheme is more rational. It is complicated but it is more rational than it was and therefore an improvement. The numbers the Working Group came to were a compromise and it was not easy to get to. And then the Board did not accept them, but, he said that was their choice. He noted that the Board has been quite liberal in granting exceptions via Special Permits.

**Henry Finch** said he was not excited about FAR in the beginning, but he was OK with it at the end. By that he means he was not excited about measuring it for additions for existing houses because of expectations that people had when they bought in previous years. The part of it that brought him over was the Special Permit considerations. And there has been past discussions regarding what the criteria are for Special Permits and that they have been quite liberal to date on what's being approved. It's not clear what those rules are. He thinks they could be described better. The process so far, however, has been much faster than a regular Special Permit process and homeowners can deal with it better. It is less negative. The preliminary presentation to the Planning Department and getting a ruling from them on what the likelihood is of getting a Special Permit has been very helpful. He said the process has made the difficulty of inconsistency in zoning districts easier to deal with by special case. He said they would prefer to deal with this with zoning changes but that is a dramatically difficult process. As long as more time is spent on criteria for Special Permits, he would feel much better.

Mr. Finch said the way they measure now is much more consistent, but there are still some inconsistencies. A 7 foot 2 inch ceiling height would be given the same FAR for square footage as a house with a 10 foot ceiling height. A house that has a certain amount of mass below the first floor, would also have the same as a raised ranch with a slab that is right on grade. These could account for a difference in 30%. For that reason, he thinks the more restrictive FAR is the direction to go in, as long as the Special Permit process does the job of equalizing and making the decisions based on what the neighborhood is like. So the criteria for choosing what gets passed in the Special Permit process, is for him, the most important issue.

He went on to say that he does not like most of the spec houses that have gone up, even though he is responsible for two of them. He's learned that developers often don't use the plan they are

given. People buy the houses because they like them, and other people would not buy the same houses because they don't like them. It's completely subjective.

Mr. Finch said there are some criteria that can be used right away for Special Permits. For instance, look at neighborhood with small lots with large Victorians on them. The current FAR would define a house to be built on an empty lot in that neighborhood as much smaller than the houses that already exist there. To him, it is a clear example of what can be done and it seems objective, not subjective. The second argument is whether a committee of experts should be deciding the Special Permits and not the Aldermen.

**Chris Chu** said from her point of view, she had one project that she could have pushed it past October 15 or done it before and it did not matter much either way. One thing that has come up is the definition of the attic space and that is still very confusing. The issue of existing houses that have attic spaces that are used against them should have a little more leeway. Her impression is that part of the reason they wanted the FAR to be abandoned on the existing houses is because people were gaming the 50% rule. She said it seems like there are still a lot of "McMansions" being built but she doesn't know the data. She thought that maybe on the smaller lots they were doing fine, but the larger lots may need more fine tuning. Ald. Swiston said that perhaps, as Mr. Zeren has noted, some of those projects were from a couple of years ago.

Ms. Chu said that there is so much diversity within neighborhoods so trying to impose any kind of suggestion of styles or designs is difficult. One of her pet peeves is houses that have so many different gable forms that are fake and only a foot deep or so. The massing is huge because everyone wants a 9 or 10 foot first floor. Showing gables or certain roof designs in a pattern book may cause some people to believe they are using that particular style, when in fact the design is not authentic.

**Peter Sachs** noted that the Working Group broke up into groups to study different neighborhoods biometrically and by square footage. Some of the focus he had was to try to examine a more neutral approach to the change. By neutral he means reflecting a fair change without giving up a tremendous amount by going to the new FAR as compared to the old. As a group, he said they came up with several sets of numbers. One particular number they all agreed on was just slightly less than what they had talked about. Then, the number that the Board ultimately approved was different from even that. He thinks that without doing a parallel study of any kind, the Board did not really have reason to make up a new number. So if someone were to question the numbers, he thought they would be reasonable in doing so because there is no substantial basis for the numbers to be less than what they approved.

In his work since the change, Mr. Sachs said he noticed a number of things going on. He said that there are an awful lot of gambrels appearing, and with reason. It's a second floor structure that captures 100% of the square footage. The idea of designing an attic space with a taller roof has been dispensed with because people can't use it, it can't be sold, or people can't build the kind of square feet that they want on the first and second floor, so they don't build attics anymore. He said this is somewhat irreconcilable with the historic fabric in the City. The City has an ordinance that is for 2 and half stories, but there are plenty of examples of 3-story



buildings in the City that are beautiful. Three-story buildings in America are common, historic and beautiful. He said it's a struggle to keep the roof shapes in character.

He also noticed from talking to Ald. Hess-Mahan that no Special Permits have been turned down thus far by the Land Use Committee. He wonders if that means those special permits would not have been necessary if the number the Working Group had recommended had been used. There have been 3 Special Permits for new construction in the last year. Mr. Zeren said that one of those would not have needed a Special Permit if the Working Group's number were used. He also reminded the Committee that Special Permits are reviewed by the Planning Department and pulls those that are most unlikely to be approved.

Mr. Sachs wondered what professionals are supposed to extract from the fact that Land Use approves on average .41 above FAR. Should he assume that that is some sort of precedent and endorsing an average? Is it really specialized per case, or is it a general precedent? Ald. Kalis felt it was an individual process. Ald. Baker believes that the Land Use Committee is looking at many aspects of a project and certainly not just FAR. So he did not feel that could be used as a template to advise clients in any way. He would look more at non-numeric dimensions that seem to be important in making a determination. Ald. Yates added that the Land Use rulings are not precedents, but context in the neighborhood is the issue. Ald. Hess-Mahan explained that many of the Special Permits that come in are for very minor additions like mudrooms. They have been seeing lately, and they expect to see more, new construction applications wherein people want to exceed FAR as well as significant renovations, demolitions and rebuilds. Many times, throughout the Special Permit process, the plan that may go through the Design Review Team process and get filed and docketed with the Board is not necessarily the one that gets to Land Use. A lot of changes get made and there are subjective changes, so there is a certain amount of subjectivity in what gets decided in Land Use. He would feel much more comfortable to have a definitive number or measure, and then if someone comes in for a Special Permit they need some criteria.

Mr. Zeren noted that no matter what the limits are, there will always be someone who will want to exceed it. A big goal of the Working Group was to have the calculation be more consistent and rational and the Planning Department agrees that that goal has been very well achieved. But there are always challenges in any calculation method. One reason they refer to a more form based model is because the number isn't necessarily as important as how the building relates to the street. Often these houses have issues with FAR because, for example, they have a lot that slopes down to the rear which is imperceptible to the street perhaps, but the house is much larger than it looks on the front. The Planning Department thinks the regulations are working pretty well and Inspectional Services agrees that the building community seems pretty comfortable with them and have caught up to how they work. Changing them now would result in a larger administrative burden than any benefit they could get through marginal improvements in how the regulations work. Again, taking a more comprehensive approach down the line is more desirable. He also noted that there is only 1% turnover in housing stock every 3 years, so they do need some more time to look at projects to see the impact since the pool is so small. Furthermore, the question of neighborhood appropriateness is very subjective. There is no

agreement on what is “too big” or “ugly”. They can only try to provide criteria that encourage a good public realm and fair options for homeowners.

#### Special Permit Responsibility

Mr. Zeren explained that the Working Group also talked about ways to expedite the Special Permit process as well as perhaps giving the Special Permits to different bodies to determine or administrative review in certain cases. Mr. Finch said they have all discussed the possibility of removing it from the Aldermen. Ms. Chu said it was a parallel to the historic review process. Now that is being handled by Brian Lever administratively, and the process is much smoother and takes the burden off their hands and puts in the hands of a professional in that area. Mr. Finch said that professionals in the field should be making at least the preliminary judgment.

Ald. Baker noted that in the historic review process, the changes have been modest. But with Special Permit criteria, he feels it is important to be clear about those and he is not persuaded that taking the responsibility from the Board is automatically a good idea. Ald. Hess-Mahan said there is an item before the Land Use Committee to look at criteria.

#### Follow Up

Ald. Johnson asked Ald. Hess-Mahan to have the Committee Clerk notify this Committee and the Working Group when the criteria item comes up for discussion in the Land Use Committee.

Ald. Sangiolo was not in favor of removing this item from the agenda. She would like to keep track of this issue. Ald. Johnson said that there will be opportunity to keep this discussion going through docketing another item, or through discussion of item #328-12. The FAR Working Group will be invited to those discussions as well.

Ald. Yates moved to vote No Action Necessary on this item. The motion passed with 5 in favor and Ald. Sangiolo and Johnson opposed.

#162-11(2) DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting a letter of support from the Board of Aldermen for the Draft *2013-2020 Recreation and Open Space Plan*. [08-06-12 @11:53AM]

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 6-0 (Ald. Sangiolo not voting)**

**NOTE:** Mr. Freas explained that this document enables the City to be eligible for State funds. The State wants to allocate its dollars appropriately across the entirety of the state in terms of providing open space funding. This plan demonstrates that the City has thought comprehensively about its Open Space needs which include both conservation land and recreation land. This document is a vision for the City. Ald. Yates explained that the purpose of the letter is to persuade the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs that the Plan does have broad support in the City and was developed with broad input. The letter is attached to this report.

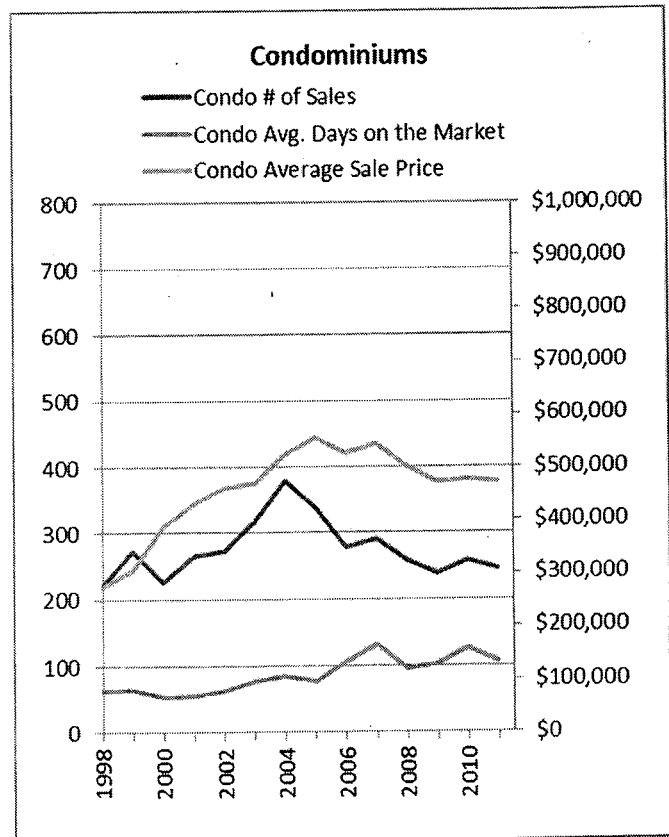
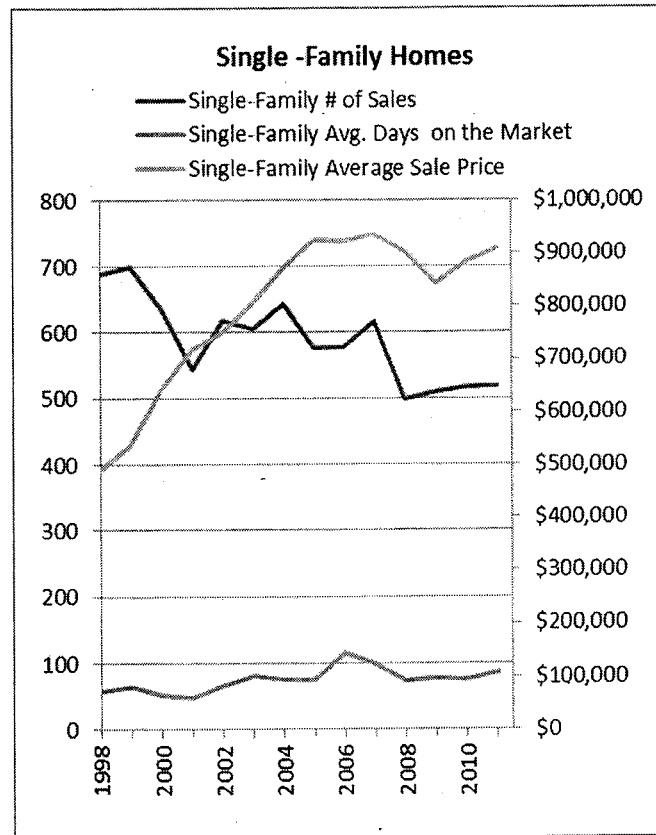
The Committee voted to approve.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Marcia Johnson, Chairman

# 1. Impact on development of two-family condos

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- Market
- Supply of lots
- Impact of FAR on unit size

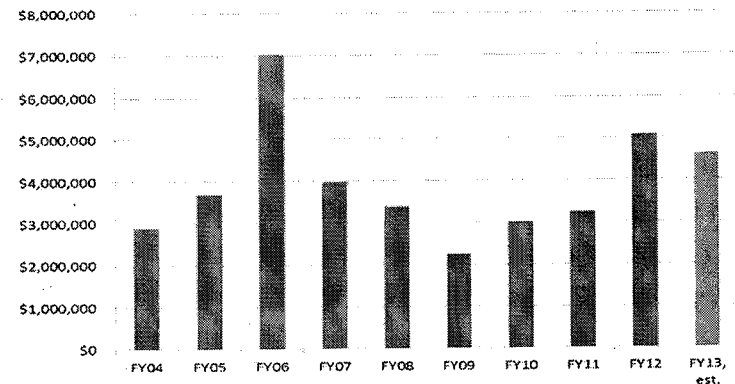


## 2. Additional data on permitting and fees

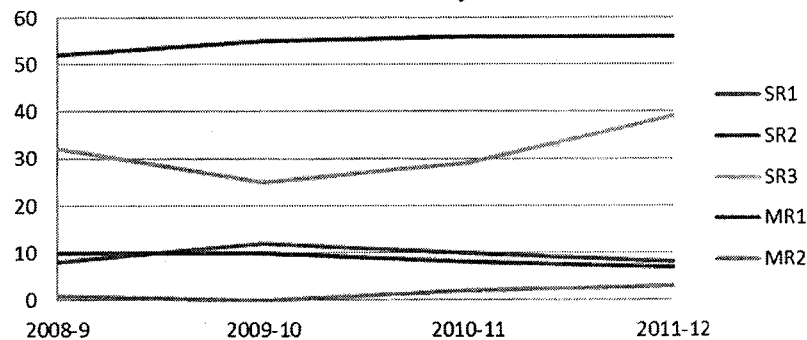
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- No clear impact on new construction, additions, assessed values or building permit revenue
- Data trails impact of new regulations

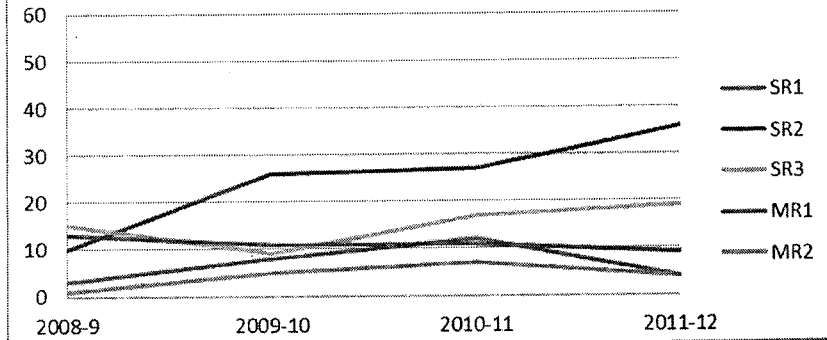
Building Permit Revenue (FY04 - FY13)



Additions by Zone



New Construction by Zone



Draft letter of support for Recreation/Open Space Plan

Candace Havens  
Director of Planning and Development  
City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Ave.  
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Candace:

The Board of Aldermen is pleased to support the Recreation and Open Space for 2013-2019 Plan Update for submission to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. We understand that acceptance of the Plan will enable the City to apply for several Recreation and Open Space grants from the Commonwealth.

We appreciate that your Department conducted an extensive outreach plan to seek input from as many interested citizens and groups as possible and that such input included a public workshop, a public survey, input from neighborhoods and others throughout the advisory committee work, a public hearing with an extended comment period. The planning process was guided by a broad-based advisory committee with representatives from a range of natural resource conservation, environmental, and recreation organizations, along with regional and City agencies.

The results of the broad citizen participation include an increased emphasis on maintaining the City's recreation and open spaces including the City's street trees. The Plan Update also supports new initiatives like the Upper Falls Greenway, access to it from the Charles River Pathway, the restoration of the Quinobequin Road trails, the use of the Cochituate Aqueduct Land and the Sudbury Aqueduct Land to establish new loop trails, and the establishment of new pathways across the Charles River in the Lower Falls/Auburndale area. We are pleased to see that the Plan Update encourages the establishment of new Friends groups to help carry out the purposes of the Plan Update in partnership with the City.

Congratulations on the completion of this Plan Update. We look forward to working with you and your Department on its implementation.

Sincerely,

Scott F. Lennon  
President of the Board of Aldermen