

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ZONING AND PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 2001

Present: Ald. Yates (Chairman), Ald. Mansfield, Sangiolo, Johnson, and Baker

Absent: Ald. Gentile, M. Lipof, and Merrill

Also present: Ald. Parker, Tattenbaum, and Lipsitt

City officials: Michael Kruse (Director of Planning & Development), Juris Alksnitis  
Lou Mercuri (Planning), Linda Finucane (Clerk)

Also: Philip Herr (Chairman) and Deborah Crossley ( Framework Committee), Doug  
Dickson, Michael Clarke, Peter Kastner (Newton Conservators)

#423-00(4) ALD. YATES offering a RESOLUTION urging the Framework Plan  
Committee and Planning and Development Department to complete a  
revised *Open Space Plan* with maximum feasible participation.

ACTION: APPROVED AS AMENDED 5-0

NOTE: The Planning Director explained that the Department wanted to complete an update of the current Open Space Plan that was too old to qualify the City to apply for state Open Space funding. The Parks and Recreation Department wants to apply for funding for the second phase of the renovation of Forte Park in Nonantum. Alderman Yates explained that he supported this initiative but urged that representatives from all villages be included in even the fast track planning. He knew that the Administration had reached out to many interested parties but urged them to broaden their outreach even more. Alderman Sangiolo asked why the Framework Plan Committee was cited in the item when it was clear that the Planning Department was going to do the work with input from a different group. Alderman Yates agreed with Alderman Sangiolo and accepted her comment as a friendly amendment. Doug Dickson, President of the Newton Conservators, was recognized. He presented a letter (attached) in favor of the item but urged that a real revision of the Open Space Plan be done with broad input. Even the now expired plan was merely a paper amendment of a previous version that was itself an update of a plan done with active participation back in the 1970's. In essence, Newton has not had a real open space planning process done for twenty-five years. We should not let any opportunities for funding be missed; but we should also make sure that the new plan reflects the current needs of the city. He also cited other plans such as a sustainability plan and tree replacement plan that the city would also need. On a motion

from Alderman Sangiolo, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve item 423-00 (4) as amended by the deletion of the Framework Plan committee.

#423-00(5) ALD. YATES offering a RESOLUTION urging His Honor the Mayor to have undertaken as soon as possible an *Historic Preservation Plan* with positive incentives as outlined in the *Framework Plan*.

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0

NOTE: Alderman Yates had filed this resolution because he found that the Historic Preservation section of the Plan contained positive incentives to encourage residents to maintain existing historic properties without further regulations that some property owners might find onerous. The Committee agreed that this section had a level of specificity and feasibility that made it suitable for approval. Alderman Sangiolo's motion of approval passed 5-0.

#423-00 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR submitting for aldermanic review the draft *Framework Plan prepared by The Newton Framework Planning Committee*

ACTION: HELD 5-0

#423-00(2) ALD. YATES offering a RESOLUTION commending the members of the Framework Plan Committee on the overall *Framework Plan* and urging the Committee to begin work as soon as possible on a detailed Land Use/Transportation Plan.

ACTION: HELD 5-0

#423-00(3) ALD. YATES offering a RESOLUTION that the *Framework Plan* and documents based on it include a recognition of the adverse impact of the closing of village schools and branch libraries and a commitment to preserve the remaining ones and the community centers that replaced the closed ones.

ACTION: HELD 5-0

NOTE: (Much of the following discussion took place before the approval of the two items above.) Mr. Herr and Mr. Kruse explained that the Framework Plan had been developed over a two year process involved a very disparate group that had been able to reach consensus of every issue but one. Alderman Mansfield confirmed as a member of the group that the document was small but the file describing its creation was very large. Doug Dickson of the Conservators pointed out that the Plan had been the subject of two public hearings with hundreds of people participating.

Alderman Parker appreciated the amount of useful information contained in the Plan but found the lack of specificity and of tough choices on policies and plethora of bland

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truisms made it of little value. He was also confused by the voice of the Plan. Who was the "We" of the Plan? Mr. Herr explained that the "we" was intended to be the city. Alderman Baker agreed that the lack of specificity was troubling. He felt that a resolution supporting the work of the Committee in general and urging the Committee to develop a Land Use/ Transportation Plan that reflected the Framework Plan would be a waste of their time if the Committee and the Board did not truly agreed with the overall thrust of the Plan. Alderman Yates explained that his resolution was indeed intended to get the Committee to produce more specifics, but that we risked institutional paralysis if we reviewed the minutiae of the Plan and never gave the Committee the go-ahead to make the next step. After some discussion, it was agreed to hold the items relating to the basic part of the Framework Plan for further discussion and possible amendment. Alderman Yates did point out that he had pointed out small errors and structural problems to Mr. Kruse and Mr. Herr at the December meeting which was in fact months after the Framework Plan's submission to the Board in September. 423-00(3) was his response to a major policy area that was omitted from the Plan. The final two items were his attempt to have rapid progress made on areas that were ready. He urged members with concerns about the substance of the Framework Plan to come prepared to future meetings or offer resolutions of their own.

In order to clarify the status of the Plan, Mr. Kruse and Mr. Herr agreed to make general information available on the contents of comprehensive plans. Alderman Johnson did not want the Committee to repeat the work already done by the members of the Framework Plan Committee so asked that all Committee members be asked to attend the next meeting of the Zoning and Planning Committee at which the Plan would be discussed. The Chairman agreed to invite them to the Committee meeting in late February. Mr. Herr and Mr. Kruse clarified that the Framework Committee would take the input from the Board into account and revise the Framework Plan into a format that would be labeled as a Comprehensive Plan. This Comprehensive Plan would follow the process outlined in the Charter. It would be referred to the Planning Board for a Public Hearing and then returned to the Board for a public hearing before the Zoning and Planning Committee before final action by the committee and the Board. With that understanding, the committee voted 5-0 to hold these three items.

Respectfully submitted,

Ald. Brian Yates, Chairman

Attachments:

- Mayor's letter
- Conservators Letter
- Charter extract
- Historic Preservation section of Plan

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