



# PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

March 11, 2019

## Full Members Present:

Peter Doeringer, Chair  
Kelley Brown, Member  
Sudha Maheshwari, Member  
Sonia Parisca, Vice Chair  
Barney Heath, ex officio  
James Robertson, Alternate

## Staff Present:

Rachel Powers, Community Development & HOME Program Manager

Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

Barney Heath  
Director  
Planning & Development

Rachel Powers  
CD & HOME  
Program Manager  
Planning & Development

Members

Peter Doeringer, Chair  
Kelley Brown, Member  
Sudha Maheshwari, Member  
Jennifer Molinsky, Member  
Sonia Parisca, Vice Chair  
Chris Steele, Member  
Barney Heath, *ex officio*  
Kevin McCormick, Alternate  
James Robertson, Alternate

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## 1. Minutes from the Planning and Development Board Meeting held on January 7, 2019

### 2. Updates/Discussion:

- a. Economic Development Strategy Plan
- b. Zoning Redesign
- c. Washington Street Vision Plan
- d. Riverside Vision Process
- e. Inclusionary Zoning
- f. Climate Action Plan
- g. FY20 Annual Action Plan
  - i. ESG RFP Review (*Peter Doeringer*)
  - ii. Human Service RFP Review (*Sonia Parisca*)
- h. Recreational Marijuana

### 1. Action Item: Approval of Minutes of January 7, 2019 meeting

Chair Doeringer opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m. The motion was made by Mr. Brown and Seconded by Ms. Maheshwari and passed unanimously 5-0-0, to approve the minutes of January 7, 2019, as amended by Chair Doeringer and Mr. Robertson.

### 2. Updates/Discussion:

#### a. Economic Development Strategy Plan

Dir. Heath announced that after several amendments, including the re-prioritization of transportation elements, the Economic Development Strategy Plan has been adopted and is moving ahead towards implementation. The Newton Economic Development Commission (EDC) and Economic Development Director, Kathryn Ellis, will be the advancer of the outlined initiatives. There have not been any changes to the Plan since they Board's review of the document.

#### b. Zoning Redesign

The Planning and Development Department concluded a series of Zoning Redesign meetings in all 8 wards. Meetings got increasingly better throughout the process and attracted sizeable crowds. The Planning team is currently tweaking the first draft of the proposed ordinance. One particular issue relates to the creation of the R-3 zoning district where all multifamily had been condensed into

a single zone. Many did not feel comfortable with this prospect. The Department is looking to do a new split, subsequently renaming the new zones. ZAP will discuss the decision-making process later this evening. This conversation will be of interest to the City Council and Planning and Development Board, as it impacts decision-making around special permits. The second draft is anticipated, but the timetable is uncertain at this time. The build-out-analysis at a previous ZAP meeting proved to be helpful. Members of the Planning and Development Board complemented the presentation and work performed by the Planning staff.

**c. Washington Street Vision Plan**

Conversation segued into the Washington Street Visioning process. Mr. Brown had attended the recent Ward 3 meeting, which attempted to tackle both Zoning Redesign and Washington Street concurrently. He spoke to the confusion expressed by Ward residents with these overlapping, but separate processes. Dir. Heath indicated that Planning needed to provide more of a distinction between both efforts.

Dir. Heath also announced that draft 2 comments are due tomorrow, with a third iteration expected to go before ZAP in April. There is still more work to do before City adoption. He recognized that there's been slightly less focus on Washington Street visioning efforts, but the plan itself is pretty far along. The Vision Plan may advance prior to Zoning Redesign. Additional comments will be taken into consideration during the third round. The consultant is on board until the end of April. Dir. Heath spoke to some big changes that had been taken into consideration, such as decreasing density. Density and scale proved to be a concern, and subsequently addressed. However, Mr. Brown was worried that too much density had been lost in the process. There's less of an incentive for developers to build. Without increased density, there's not much ability to address the need for multi-family housing. More consideration needs to be paid to allowing more by-right development, particularly near transit.

**d. Riverside Vision Process**

Dir. Heath indicated that Planning was actively involved in the Riverside visioning process. The consultant has been keyed-in to stakeholders, neighborhood groups, the MBTA and developer. The team is trying to get a broad perspective of views. A development consultant is also reviewing Mark Development's numbers as part of the Vision Plan. The next meeting is scheduled for March 28<sup>th</sup> at Lasell College. Mr. Robertson asked for Dir. Heath to share upcoming meetings with the Board to support efforts. March 28<sup>th</sup> will be an interim meeting that will convey comments and the development principles and analysis. A final meeting, anticipated for April 30<sup>th</sup>, will present the draft plan.

Recent focus has been placed on trail connections to the Charles River and establishing a network that connects Riverside to the Lower Falls neighborhood. This development could potentially contribute to those efforts. Mr. Brown noted tension between the previous developers presenting non-fully formed concepts and the transition to a single owner. He asked if staff and the consultant would be able to reconcile these components to produce a fruitful project. Dir. Heath indicated that the Planning team is really seeking to create principles that help to guide development and believes that the Vision Plan will serve as a good tool. Civic Moxy has proven to be a good firm. Part of the process will involve dispelling myths with respect to instituting prior plans. This has been a challenge; the Needham Visioning process posed similar challenges.

A Riverside public meeting scheduled for March 14<sup>th</sup> will present conceptual plans to the City Council. This is required prior to submittal of the special permit request. Chair

Doeringer asked if the conceptual design would be made available on the City website. Staff indicated the design should be available under high interest projects. Mr. Brown inquired if a connection had been made with MassDOT planning relative to their ride or shuttle efforts. Chair Doeringer agrees this should be introduced into the conversation early. Dir. Heath indicated that this is on Newton's radar and that Civic Moxy attended the recent open house to review that particular issue. Riverside has been a part of their planning. Chair Doeringer also asked if the City lobbied with adjacent communities on transportation issues. The City is involved with Metro Mayors Commuter Rail (Initiative) and participate in ongoing transportation-related planning efforts. Staff are also engaged in dialogue with Watertown and Needham. Chair Doeringer further stressed the importance of these partnerships and the potential to attract private funding. Ms. Maheshwari noted that reduced density could limit the ability to offer shuttle options.

**e. Inclusionary Zoning**

IZ is before ZAP again this evening. The ordinance is currently being retooled following a recent meeting held with local affordable housing advocates. The desire was expressed to hold onto basic tenets of the existing ordinance, such as the split between 50% and 80% AMI. Housing consultants RKG are reviewing this and will discuss potential changes and how they might impact a developer's proforma. A new proposal will be reintroduced in about a month and a half. Chair Doeringer felt troubled around the issue regarding land values and thought these values could be manipulated.

**f. Climate Action Plan**

The next big meeting on the Climate Action Plan is planned for March 21<sup>st</sup>. A draft will be released next week. The City is working with MAPC and an internal working group. One of the issues is that this specific plan is the City's action plan, but the Newton Energy Commission will also release their own action plan. The City is somewhat constrained in terms of policies and actions it can implement, but the collaboration has been a healthy tension. The Commission has been actively involved, bringing a ton of talent to the process. The City is also pleased with MAPC as the convener of this effort.

**g. FY20 Annual Action Plan**

Ms. Powers provided a brief progress report on efforts related to the FY20 Annual Action Plan. While HUD has still not distributed FY20 funding levels, the National Community Development Association provided updates on the Congressional allocation process. The City is currently expecting to receive \$1.9M in CDBG, \$1.4 in HOME and \$161,000 in ESG. Ms. Powers reminded the Board about the ESG and Human Service RFP process. A total of 14 human service applications and 5 ESG applications were received. Review committees, which included Board members, were convened for both programs.

- *ESG RFP Review*- Chair Doeringer presented an overview of the ESG Review process, explaining the eligible program components and how programs work in conjunction with one another. The City had the same applicants as in the previous year, with no new entrants into the competition. Programs included a day shelter, domestic abuse programs, eviction prevention, security deposit assistance, food and counseling. Requests exceeded available funds. Awards were considered on an agency basis. Chair Doeringer noted that the review process was positive, outlining fellow participants and scoring methodology. He is very comfortable with the recommendations and spoke to the importance and quality of programming, as well as considering creative options moving forward.

- *Human Service RFP Review*- Vice Chair Parisca presented an overview of the HS Review process; this has been her third year participating. She explained that purpose of the Newton Human Service Program was to help low-to-moderate income residents achieve economic mobility and self-sufficiency. Vice Chair Parisca spoke to the differential between agencies' requests and the available funding. Program priorities ranged across assisting youth, promoting economic mobility for adults, and serving vulnerable older adults. There were no new applicants. The committee tried to levelly fun organizations, while rewarding stronger applications. It was noted that sometimes applications aren't comparable to the strength of the individual programs. The idea of arranging Planning and Development Board site visits came up.

**h. Recreational Marijuana**

A change is being reviewed to expand the areas where recreational marijuana would be allowed; the shift would include industrial zones. A half dozen more locations have been identified, clustered along the north side, Upper Falls and West Newton. The City initially was not a strong advocate for this change; these areas are generally not used for retail. Mr. Brown inquired into the motivation for these changes. Dir. Heath thought the proponents wanted to see more zones and options. The City met the state's requirements from the city's perspective, but the state did not agree and sought a broader map. Planning is looking to partner with the City Council on these efforts. Conversation shifted to the overall change in public perception and reduction in the anti-retail approach.

**i. Northland Continuation**

Dir. Heath indicated a revised meeting schedule had been distributed. Chair Doeringer requested a map that highlighted building heights. The book has been difficult to sort through. Dir. Heath will try to get this.

**3. Action Item: Adjournment**

Upon a motion by Vice Chair Parisca and seconded by Mr. Brown, and unanimously passed 6-0-0, the meeting was adjourned at 7:01p.m.