

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

April 2, 2018



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath
Director
Planning & Development

Rachel Powers
CD Programs Manager
Planning & Development

Members

Scott Wolf, Chair
Peter Doeringer, Vice Chair
Barney Heath, *ex officio*
Megan Meirav
Sonia Parisca
Chris Steele

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Full Members Present:

Scott Wolf, Chair
Peter Doeringer, Vice Chair
Megan Meirav
Sonia Parisca

Staff Present:

James Freas, Deputy Director
Rachel Powers, Community Development Programs Manager
Rachel Nadkarni, Long Range Planner
Lily Canaan Reynolds, Community Engagement Manager
Shubee Sikka, Urban Design Planner

1. **Minutes from the Planning and Development Board Meeting held on March 5, 2018**
2. **Zoning Redesign Update**

1. **Action Item: Approval of Minutes of March 5, 2018 meeting**

Chair Wolf opened the meeting at 7:47 p.m. The motion was made by Ms. Meirav and Seconded by Chair Wolf and approved 3-0-1, with Vice Chair Doeringer abstaining, to approve the minutes of March 5, 2018.

2. **Presentation: Zoning Redesign**

Deputy Dir. Freas presented updates on the Zoning Redesign Process, introduced Planning staff and invited Planning & Development Board members to reach out with questions and comments. The presentation touched upon on the zoning reform project's timeline and the three-phase zoning reform process.

Deputy Dir. Freas explained that the Planning and Development Department's objectives have been to meet the goals of the original zoning reform working group, create a better ordinance overall, address issues identified by the community and achieve policies reflected in the Comprehensive Plan, Housing Strategy, Transportation Study and Economic Development Study. The City is seeking to refine base zoning through area vision and master planning, while incorporating best practices.

Phase One efforts, focused on reorganization, date back to 2007. A working group led by Councilor Deborah Crossley issued a report in 2012, outlining the City's goals and objectives, and recommendations on how best to approach zoning redesign.

Phase two, beginning in 2016, involved most of the redesign, data analysis, the development of the pattern book, the community engagement process and will culminate in the draft zoning ordinance. Deputy Dir. Freas illustrated the threads of data influencing zoning redesign and information incorporated into the pattern book.

Phase three will involve a review of the adopted ordinance.

Ms. Nadkarni described the zoning redesign event series held in parallel to the zoning reform process. Events ranged from informal presentations, to ZAP public meetings and drop-in sessions. Meeting topics have covered such items as transportation and parking. Each meeting begins with a conversation on Zoning 101 and nuanced discussion of Newton's existing zoning map. Ms. Nadkarni provided a brief history of zoning in Newton and clarification on what elements the new ordinance would consider, including residential building types, scale, dimensional controls in neighborhoods and village centers. She also noted that Hartford, CT recently completed a similar zoning redesign.

Staff described next steps in the process and upcoming meetings to be held as part of the event series and in conjunction with ZAP/LUC. The next several topics to be discussed include the special permitting process. In addition, individual ward meetings are planned over the summer that will cover the draft map and obtain feedback. The draft ordinance is expected to be presented to ZAP in October 2018.

Deputy Dir. Freas described in length all the contributing parties in the zoning redesign process and how the ordinance is intended to be a foundation for the future.

Chair Wolf inquired into the housing types and styles being integrated in the final ordinance. Deputy Dir. Freas explained how building types would be incorporated and impact the massing standard. This would replace the existing FAR requirements.

Ms. Parisca inquired about the identification of specific areas in need of a major adjustment. Deputy Dir. Freas explained the need to identify "transformational areas". Currently, Newton is about 95% non-conforming. Chair Wolf also asked if the draft map would be accompanied by requisite set-backs and standards. Vice Chair Doeringer expressed the helpfulness of the zoning update, and in a city with such a tremendous amount of non-conformity, sees a reassuring benefit to establishing a baseline.

Chair Wolf asked if anyone was taking the lead on several legal cases involving zoning. Deputy Dir. Freas is expecting that the new ordinance would alleviate some of these issues, particularly when it comes to lot sizes. Chair Wolf further queried if the City anticipated any controversial issues. The City believes a draft will help to identify where those hot button items may be; village centers, transformational areas and smaller lot sizes could be controversial.

3. Next Meetings

Staff member Ms. Powers discussed the timeline for upcoming meetings and confirmed the availability of Board members.

Vice Chair Doeringer inquired about the status of Farwell Ave Subdivision and requested that the project be fully vetted before coming back to the Planning and Development Board. There are many non-resolved technical issues until the Conservation Commission and Engineering Division sign off.

4. Action Item: Adjournment

Upon a motion by Vice Chair Doeringer, seconded by Ms. Meirav, and unanimously passed 4-0-0, the meeting was adjourned at 8:38.