



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath
Director
Planning & Development

Rachel Powers
CD Programs Manager
Planning & Development

Members

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

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CITY OF NEWTON

Planning and Development Board

AGENDA

DATE: **Monday, April 2, 2018**
TIME: **7:45 p.m.**
PLACE: **Newton City Hall, Room 204**

- 1. Minutes:** Approve minutes from the March 5, 2018
- 2. Discussion Item:** Zoning Redesign Update
- 3. Next Meetings:**

- May 7, 2018 at 7:30 p.m., Planning & Development Board and Board of Survey Public Hearings

The location of this meeting is wheelchair accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: jfairley@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

March 5, 2018



Full Members Present:

Scott Wolf, Chair
Megan Meirav
Sonia Parisca
Chris Steele

Staff Present:

Rachel Powers, Community Development Programs Manager

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

Chair Wolf opened the meeting at 7:34 p.m. The motion was made by Chair Wolf and Seconded by Ms. Meirav, and approved 3-0-1, with Ms. Parisca abstaining, to approve the minutes of February 5, 2018.

2. Action Item/Vote: Approval of Modifications to the Downpayment/Closing Cost Assistance Program

Housing and Community Development Division staff Ms. Powers presented a proposal to modify the existing Downpayment and Closing Cost Assistance Program. While the program offered an improved and more efficient strategy to assisting low-to-moderate income householders from previous Downpayment and Buydown Programs, the current structure has proven difficult in implementing. Ms. Powers described some of the challenges the Division encountered in holding separate application phases, staff capacity limitations and the substantial amount of review and underwriting required for each application. The Division is recommending several changes that streamline and simplify the program, while still promoting sustainable homeownership, including offering straightforward \$10,000 downpayment/closing cost assistance awards in the form of grants to eligible households and limiting applications to one phase.

Mr. Steele asked for clarification on the definition of liquid assets. Ms. Meirav asked how many projects the Division anticipated assisting each year. Chair Wolf also inquired about the ability to increase awards.

Public Hearing (7:45pm)

Bob Kavanagh, 69 Court St: Mr. Kavanagh claimed it was disingenuous to say money didn't go to the developer. He referenced a letter from SEB indicating they weren't supposed to receive public subsidy and argued that the downpayment/closing cost assistance program provided a subsidy to that developer. He is concerned that information wasn't vetted out carefully enough. He further noted that the purchase prices went up a great deal, while the condo fees went down, prior to marketing. He believes that the developers got more money from the difference in lower HOA fees and the final purchase prices and assistance ultimately benefitted a for-profit company. Mr. Kavanagh suggested that no one asked the developer why a subsidy was needed and would rather have assisted other non-profit affordable housing opportunities.

Ms. Powers attempted to clarify that downpayment/closing cost assistance directly benefitted low-to-moderate income homebuyers purchasing the affordable units and that increases in the purchase price of units were the result of increases in the Area Median Income. Ms. Powers further noted that all purchase prices were reviewed and approved by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Chair Wolf briefly summarized the general 40B approval process, but inquired as to how the affordable purchase prices were determined. He conceded that the developer should have lowered the purchase prices, so that subsidies were not needed. Chair Wolf noted that in the future if a developer claims to not want public subsidy, units should be priced so that none is needed.

Julia Malakie, 50 Murray Rd: Ms. Malakie is concerned about the Court Street development not having enough HOA fees to maintain property in the long term.

Ms. Powers explained that this program also provided downpayment/closing cost assistance in the resale of affordable units that were once purchased at market-rate with public subsidies. She also noted that not all homebuyers received downpayment assistance; some only received closing costs, which pays for lender fees resulting from the acquisition.

Mr. Steele reiterated the statement, notes Mr. Kavanagh's concern, but knows families will always need assistance in obtaining closing costs, regardless of the offering price, and urges everyone to be mindful of that.

Ms. Powers indicated that the program would seek to assist other deed restricted units in the future.

The motion was moved by Ms. Meirav, seconded by Mr. Steele and approved 4-0-0 to accept the Division's recommendations for the proposed modifications to the Downpayment/Closing Cost Assistance Program.

3. Next Meetings

Staff member Ms. Powers discussed the timeline for upcoming meetings and confirmed the availability of Board members. ZAP Meetings are currently scheduled for 7:00PM March 12th and April 9th. There was a potential conflict in achieving a quorum at the March 12th meeting, but Ms. Meirav offered to attend for the planned votes.

4. Action Item: Adjournment

Upon a motion by Chair Wolf, seconded by Ms. Meirav and unanimously passed 4-0-0, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

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Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 23, 2018

TO: Councilor Susan Albright, Chair
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee

FROM: Barney Heath, Director of Planning & Development
James Freas, Deputy Director

SUBJECT: Zoning Redesign

MEETING DATE: March 25, 2018

CC: City Council
Planning and Development Board
Ouida Young, City Solicitor

On March 15th, 2018 the Planning Department hosted the seventh of a series of topic-based Zoning Redesign events. This event was titled *Building Shape, Size, and Form in Neighborhoods and Village Centers* and focused on how Newton's zoning ordinance could incorporate the basic design principles that define Newton's great villages and neighborhoods. For the upcoming Zoning and Planning Committee meeting staff will share the presentation from this event, review the comments and discussion from the public, and facilitate a discussion of the same topics with the Committee. Attached is an info sheet from the event, which describes the topics that were presented. Staff will provide the event Summary Report for the Committee at the meeting.

Building Shape, Size, and Form in Neighborhoods and Village Centers

March 15, 2018 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street

www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning

Zoning is one of the most important tools the City has to ensure that the basic design principles that define Newton's great villages and neighborhoods are maintained even as buildings change over time. In Newton's villages the streets are lined with open shopfronts and frequent building entrances that make for a lively and interesting pedestrian environment. For many of Newton's neighborhoods, there is a consistent context of building scale and setback that makes for a pleasing sense of community. In either of these environments, the architectural style and the building materials can vary, as long as these design principles are reinforced and maintained.

What are the design principles that make for a great village center or neighborhood?

On March 15th, we will explore how Newton's Zoning Ordinance could:

- Maintain and enhance the great design found in many of the city's villages and neighborhoods.
- Introduce these same design principles into other parts of the city so that we improve our commercial areas and provide greater contextual consistency in neighborhoods as they change.
- Provide options for addressing the issue of tear-downs / mansionization in residential neighborhoods.
- Guide appropriate building forms in areas that transition between village centers, commercial areas, and neighborhoods.

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