

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

November 5, 2018



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath
Director
Planning & Development

Rachel Powers
CD and HOME
Program Manager
Planning & Development

Members

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

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Full Members Present:

Peter Doeringer, Chair
Kelley Brown, Member
Jennifer Molinsky, Member
Chris Steele, Member
Sudha Maheshwari, Member
Kevin McCormick, Acting Member for November Meeting
Jim Robertson, Acting Member for November Meeting
Barney Heath, *Ex Officio*

Staff Present:

Rachel Powers, Community Development and HOME Program Manager

- 1. Minutes from the Planning and Development Board Meeting held on October 1, 2018**
- 2. Washington Street Vision and Zoning Presentation**
- 3. Subcommittee/Planning Schedule and Strategy**
- 4. Northland Public Hearing** – Continued from September 25th Land Use Hearing

1. Action Item: Approval of Minutes of October 1, 2018 meeting

Chair Doeringer opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. The motion was made by Mr. Brown and Ms. Molinsky, and approved 6-0-1, with Mr. Steele abstaining and Mr. Robertson and Mr. McCormick voting as alternate members, as amended by Dir. Heath, to approve the minutes of October 1, 2018.

2. Washington Street Vision and Zoning Presentation

Dir. Heath familiarized the Board with the Hello Washington Street presentation given by Principal Group at the previous week's Newton North Vision Plan event. Approximately 250 attended. The big challenge centered on how to keep village centers authentic, while being adaptable toward the future. Dir. Heath shared project focus areas, community feedback, as well as conversational highlights on balancing trade-offs, shared goals and potential development.

Dir. Heath provided an overview of the market conditions impacting ongoing development, the need for fiscally-positive growth and market driven precedents. Principal Group introduced three different approaches: the Market Driven Option, the Incremental Approach and Courtyard option. With the Market Driven option, design and scale is influenced more by the market and economic viability, rather than through regulation. The incremental approach would be regulated through zoning and offer breaks in buildings, more varied designs and would result in less parking requirements. A courtyard option would allow the creation of courtyards, shared outdoor spaces and subterranean parking. The pros and cons of each approached were summarized and deliberated. These approaches resulted in a draft "sector"

map that addressed preservation of scale, enhancement of the quality of the village centers and enabling of new value at the edges. There is no one-size-fits all approach. Discussion ensued about the applicability of Principal Group's approaches to Newton and the Washington Street map perimeter. When considering enhancement of village centers, the issue of parking is prevalent.

Dir. Heath also broke down individual blocks, presenting as they currently existed, and the various market driven, courtyard, and incremental approaches and possibilities. Such examples included the Cinema Block and the Crafts Street Block surrounding Whole Foods. Alternative strategies also addressed potential for historic façade preservation, neighborhood step-downs, upper story setbacks, parks and squares required as part of development, flexible parking standards and allowing by-right incremental development.

The presentation finale emphasized transportation concerns in Newton, including pedestrian safety, MBTA station accessibility and ideas for short-term intervention and long-term redesign of Washington Street. Members noted in the illustration that parking would be lost. Mr. Robertson would like additional conversation on the impacts of medians/islands. Ms. Molinsky noted major concerns with the flow of traffic on Watertown Street and the potential for increased danger.

The presentations and draft plans are online. Public comments will be accepted over the next month. Open office hours are also being held and will be open to the public. Chair Doeringer inquired if any new ideas were shared at this most recent Washington Street presentation; however, no new feedback or ideas had resulted. The draft plan is being presented November 14th at ZAP.

Mr. Robertson commented that the City should coordinate with State partners on leveraging toll dollars and sharing tax revenues. Dir. Heath noted that these conversations are happening. Discussion shifted to urban rails/ MBTA, parking management and shuttle options. Ms. Molinsky also wondered about potential changes to exit 18. Chair Doeringer asked if Mass DOT would attend public hearings on transportation and Washington Street? Dir. Heath noted that the Vision Plan will culminate in a public hearing; the plan is largely highlighting concepts and will not result in definitive transportation plans. The Vision Plan is primarily concentrated on land use controls.

3. Subcommittee/Planning Schedule and Strategy

Conversation stemmed around the proposed Northland Land-Use and upcoming ZAP schedules; copies were distributed to all members. The subcommittee option has been a flexible approach up until the series of joint Planning/LUC meetings on the Northland project. According to Chair Doeringer, this can continue to be an option, unless a joint meeting is held officially. The Board consensus was to maintain at least a quorum at all joint Planning/LUC meetings.

Dir. Heath indicated that Northland would like to present zoning principals of project at the December Planning and Development Board meeting; Attorney Schlesinger would like this matter taken up prior to approval on the full special permit. The Planning and Development Board is solely voting on the zoning piece of the project; once a vote occurs, there is no obligation for the Board to continue with the joint LUC meetings. Concerns were noted relative to the content and logistics of the special permit and potential community impacts. Chair Doeringer and Ms. Molinsky would like to look at the project in more expansive terms. The Board could recommend rezoning under a particular scheme, but

circumstances could change under the City Council. However, the Board could consider attaching conditions to their recommendation.

Northland's request is primarily a map change, similar to an overlay district. The Board needs to be prepared to say this is the right zone in the right place. Recommendations should also be offered on the special permit. The Board could be prepared to act earlier on the zoning piece, as long as said conditions related to the special permit are included. Mr. Robertson questioned the benefit of making a decision in November/December versus waiting out the series of meetings with LUC. While the Council is heavily involved with Zoning Redesign, Mr. Brown is considering tone and helpfulness. Chair Doeringer noted it made sense to defer until the Board hears more of the story. Public Hearings and comments influence Board recommendations.

As far as scheduling is concerned, the special permit request was submitted in parallel with the rezoning request. There is no statutory timeline as long as the public hearing remains open. Deadlines kick in once a hearing is closed.

In closing this topic, Dir. Heath indicated that Zoning Redesign is going to move forward as well. Individual topics will be taken up through Spring of 2019.

4. Northland Public Hearing-

Chair Doeringer would prefer the hearings to go in tandem with LUC moving forward. Unless the Board closes, they can simply announce at the meetings that they plan to continue. Additional description highlighting Northland's December 3rd presentation on zoning can be incorporated for public clarity and transparency.

Upon a motion by Mr. Steele, seconded by Mr. Brown, and approved 6-0-1, with Mr. Robertson voting as an alternate member and Dir. Heath abstaining, the matter was continued through November 13, 2018.

5. Next Meetings-

The next Northland joint LUC meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2018; the covered topic will be Site Design and Open Space.

6. Action Item: Adjournment

Upon a motion by Mr. Steele, seconded by Mr. Robertson, and unanimously passed 7-0-0, the meeting was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.