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Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 29, 2020

TO: Peter Doeringer, Chair of the Planning and Development Board
Members of the Planning and Development Board

FROM: Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Development
Nevena Pilipović-Wengler, Community Engagement Manager
Zachery LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning

RE: **#88-20 Discussion and review relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance**
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING requesting review, discussion, and direction relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance.

MEETING: November 2, 2020

Community Engagement for Zoning Redesign

The City of Newton's Department of Planning and Development will work in partnership with the Zoning and Planning (ZAP) Committee to undertake robust community engagement concerning Zoning Redesign. From 2017-2019, the department facilitated a series of public events to both educate the public as well as solicit their ideas and concerns on Zoning Redesign's main themes which resulted in an initial draft Zoning Ordinance. Since January of this year the department has been working with the City Council Zoning and Planning Committee to refine the portion of the ordinance concerning the rules for residential districts.

The Planning Department recognizes that another round of focused community engagement is needed. Newton residents are at different stages in how they relate to Zoning Redesign, with many unaware that it is even happening. We believe we need to conduct community engagement that establishes a baseline understanding of Zoning Redesign for the public-at-large, to refresh memories and to invite new voices into the conversation. We propose a set of efforts called the 'Listening Tour' to kick off this phase of community engagement.

The Listening Tour will allow Planning staff to reconnect with those who were previously involved while also providing an opportunity to engage members of the public that may be new to Zoning Redesign. The Listening Tour is not intended to cover the substantive details of Zoning Redesign, but to provide an update on the process and next steps while gaining a better understanding of the public's baseline knowledge and interests related to Zoning Redesign.

At the same time, the Planning Department recognizes that community engagement is needed on an article-by-article basis, for public opinion to directly influence the discussions at ZAP. We hope for the 'Listening Tour' to solicit the public's ideas on how we can carry out a robust community engagement strategy in 2021. This is the heart of the Zoning Redesign community engagement that has yet to be determined – but that we intend to design based on what we hear and learn during the 'Listening Tour.' A public forum on Article 3 – Residence Districts will kick off these phases of community engagement.

The proposed timeline is:

- November 2020: Community Outreach for the Listening Tour
- December 2020: Listening Tour
- January 2021:
 - Synthesis of Learnings from the Listening Tour
 - Public Forum on Article 3 – Residence Districts
- February – September 2021: Comprehensive Engagement Strategies for Each Article

Potential Roles for the Planning & Development Board

The Listening Tour will include two large public events that will involve break-out rooms for discussion among the participants. The prompts used for these discussions will focus on the following:

- Prompt 1: What about Zoning Redesign is clear? What do you need more clarification on?
 - *Purpose: To help staff understand what we are doing well and what we need to improve in our public education of Zoning Redesign.*
- Prompt 2: What did you know about the Zoning Redesign goals prior to this meeting? Now that we have gone over them, which ones are most important to you? Which articles feel most relevant to these goals?
 - *Purpose: To offer Newton community members an opportunity to remark on the Zoning Redesign goals and to help staff understand which articles will need more intensive community engagement.*
- Prompt 3: How would you like to be engaged for Zoning Redesign in 2021?
 - *Purpose: To solicit ideas on what robust yet pragmatic and realistic community engagement on Zoning Redesign could look like for 2021.*

We believe the Planning & Development Board could play a helpful role in assisting with the two public events, especially through facilitation of the breakout groups. In addition, if there is interest, the Planning & Development Board could help review the materials staff create for the public on Zoning Redesign and/or conduct outreach to help turn out Newton stakeholders to the Listening Tour.

Soliciting Feedback

Feedback from the Planning & Development Board on the community engagement proposal as well as the Board's potential roles would be much appreciated.