

August 4, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this finds you all enjoying a bit of time off from too many zoom meetings - getting outside and seeing family and friends a bit - safely.

First - **Thank you** for terrific attendance! 23 Councilors have joined at least one ZAP committee meeting this term; the majority of you and the Planning Board have been regulars. This has been important in guiding planning staff efforts to present various zoning strategies for us to consider. In fact, 22 Councilors attended the 6/29 meeting, where PD staff were seeking explicit policy guidance. In addition, since COVID isolation began, we have enjoyed super public attendance, attention and feedback - in record numbers.

But I write primarily to clarify where we are in the process ZAP has undertaken, and how we plan to move forward so we can most thoughtfully and thoroughly consider the complexities of zoning. Although it has been clear to most that we are in the middle of exploring zoning mechanisms that are intended to facilitate our stated goals for the five residential districts, and that we have yet to evaluate the whole, some misrepresentations have led to worry and confusion.

20-21: Whole Term Process

The committee began discussing how to tackle ZO Redesign at the beginning of this term. The first detailed Planning memo (2/7/20) proposed an organized review process for getting through all of Chapter 30 by the end of this term. Ultimately the committee agreed it will work to complete revising the whole ordinance before presenting to full Council. We also discussed that for each section/ subject, **but only when the committee reaches reasonable agreement that we are ready with a coherent proposal**, public hearings will be held. We may as well schedule a COW for Council discussion, TBD. This will be in addition to holding the required public hearing prior to putting the whole ordinance before Council, targeting the fall of 2021.

Straw Votes

As we move from one section or rule to the next, **taking as much time as the committee needs** to understand each Article/s, we will take straw votes to record

the committee's opinion on how well we see the mechanisms proposed meeting our goals. Straw votes are tentative, and subject to conditions.

The review process , calendar and the beginnings of an FAQ is also published on the newly released **Zoning Redesign website**:

http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/lrplan/zoning_redesign/current/article_3.asp

The **ZAP summer schedule** was decided June 1st in committee and remains unchanged on the Council Calendar. We held a third June meeting (6/29 report attached), two meetings in July featuring local volunteer building professionals sharing case studies and reviews testing the proposed ordinance (Reports will be in this week's Friday packet). The committee chose to meet on **Thursday August 13 and Monday August 31**. It was as well decided that the **revised draft of Article 3 Residence Districts** will be released prior to the first August meeting; the consistent practice has been a week prior. It will be in this Friday's packet, possibly sooner. At this writing I am aware that Planning awaits reviews or additional information from Law, ISD and Current Planning.

The **third draft of Article 3** will reflect committee reviews, comments, concerns and key principles discussed this year, but it is still a draft. It will track revisions from the 2.28.2020 draft (attached below), which was provided to us with the Planning memo for the March 9 ZAP meeting. (*NOTE: The 2.28.20 draft incorporates revisions to the October 2018 draft which were catalogued in 2019 by former staff Rachel Nadkarni and James Freas resulting from six months of Council and community meetings.*)

Goals of zoning redesign.

A few have challenged why we are undertaking zoning redesign as a comprehensive rethinking of the whole, versus editing the existing code. At the beginning of the term, Mr. LeMel provided an annotated bibliography of documents, planning department memos and presentations cataloguing the work of the ZAP committee over many terms, about ten years, to chronicle Council adoption of various plans, commitments to various needs assessments, studies, etc., and the related discussions in committee. These can all be easily found as well, linked to the ZO Redesign Website.

Therefore the committee discussed and by unanimous straw vote reasserted **three primary goals**: to facilitate increasing and diversifying housing opportunity,

promote economic and environmental sustainability and respect and control the physical character and scale of existing neighborhoods and new development according to adopted visions.

Onward:

Our work now is to evaluate how well the means proposed can support the goals, and to what degree. There will be many choices to make and certainly we will agree on some, disagree on others. Please continue to join us as your schedules allow.

The **6/29 report** of item #88-20 was filed mid July, and includes several maps:
[Preview attachment 06-29-20 Planning Presentation #88-20.pdf](#)



[06-29-20 Planning Presentation #88-20.pdf](#)
[994 KB](#)

[Preview attachment 06-29-20 Transit Analysis Citywide GreenLine-Commuter #88-20.pdf](#)



[06-29-20 Transit Analysis Citywide GreenLine-Commuter #88-20.pdf](#)
[3.6 MB](#)

[Preview attachment 06-29-20 Transit Analysis Citywide MBTA-Bus #88-20.pdf](#)