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Acting Director

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## PUBLIC HEARING/WORKING SESSION MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** June 12, 2015  
**MEETING DATE:** June 16, 2015  
**TO:** Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen  
**FROM:** James Freas, Acting Director of Planning and Development  
Alexandra Ananth, Chief Planner for Current Planning  
Daniel Sexton, Senior Planner  
**CC:** Petitioner

In response to questions raised at the Land Use Committee public hearings, and/or staff technical reviews, the Planning Department is providing the following information for the upcoming public hearing/working session. This information is supplemental to staff analysis previously provided at the public hearing.

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### PETITION #89-15

**271-283 Auburn Street**

Request for Special Permit/Site Plan Approval to allow a restaurant with more than 50 seats, a 1/3 reduction in the parking requirement, a waiver of 20 parking stalls, to waive the requirement for parking in the side and rear setbacks, waive the maneuvering aisle width requirement, and to waive screening, interior landscaping, lighting, surfacing and striping, and bicycle parking requirements.

The Land Use Committee (Committee) held a public hearing on May 8, 2015, which was held open so that the petitioner could respond to questions/concerns that were raised in the Planning Department's memorandums and at the public hearing by the Committee and public. The petitioner submitted information on June 8, 2015 in response to the questions/concerns that were raised. Overall, the Planning Department finds that the petitioner's responses are complete, and provides the following supplemental comments:

**Community Meeting Results.** The petitioner facilitated two community meetings with businesses/property owners (Tuesday, May 26, 2015) and residents (Wednesday, May 27, 2015) in the surrounding area to discuss the proposed project. According to information provided by the petitioner, the attendees to the business/property owner meeting were generally supportive of the project. There were, however, concerns raised regarding restaurant patrons using the parking lot on the adjacent parcel at 450 Lexington Street, trash removal, odors, and rodents attracted by the presence of food. At the meeting with residents, the feedback appears to be positive. A number of

attendees noted that traffic in the area was a problem during peak commute times; however, most traffic clears out after 6 p.m.

Per these comments, the petitioner agreed to relocate the trash receptacles to a location amenable to the adjacent business owners, increase the frequency of trash pick-ups, and screen the trash receptacles. To address the parking concerns, the petitioner is proposing to post area parking information within the restaurant and is open to paying for signage on the 450 Lexington Street property and, if necessary, the towing of vehicles. The petitioner also agreed to install bicycle racks.

The Planning Department is supportive of the proposed use. The Planning Department does, however, encourage the petitioner to work with the trustees of 450 Lexington Street to install additional plantings or a sight-obscuring fence on their property, if they are amenable, to discourage use of this property's parking lot and to visually screen the project site.

**Parking Utilization Study.** The petitioner contracted with Planning Horizons to complete a parking utilization study for the site and the surrounding area during the anticipated lunch and dinner peak hours. According to the study, there are 98 parking spaces available for public parking within a two-minute walk from the project site. Of those spaces, 44 and 78 spaces were documented as vacant respectively during the lunch and dinner peak hours. On-site an average of 11 and 23 spaces were documented as vacant respectively during the lunch and dinner peak hours. As such, the study concludes that there is on average a sufficient surplus of available parking in the area to allow the requested 20-stall parking waiver. Furthermore, the consultant noted that businesses in the area, including those on the site, are eligible to use obtain Auburndale Business Permit Parking Passes to park on the other side of the Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90) along Central Street. The utilization of these passes would provide the opportunity for the restaurant employees to park off-site, and frees up parking spaces closer for patrons and surrounding businesses.

The Planning Department finds the methodology and data presented in the study to be accurate. The Planning Department, as such, concurs with the consultant's conclusion that there is a surplus of parking in the area to accommodate the parking demand generated by the proposed restaurant. The Department recommends that the petitioner, as part of their parking demand management plan, encourage employees to utilize the Auburndale Business Permit Parking Passes.

**Landscaping and Screening.** To minimize the visual impact of the proposed restaurant use and enhance the aesthetic appearance of the site, the petitioner is proposing to upgrade the landscape beds along Auburn Street and Lexington Street and has agreed to screen the trash receptacles with a sight-obscuring fence. According to conversations staff had with the petitioner, they are working with the trustees of the 450 Lexington Street parcel to identify amenable screening measures that can be installed on the 450 Lexington Street parcel to discourage use of this property's parking lot and to visually screen the project site.

The Planning Department believes the measures proposed above by the petitioner will enhance the site and streetscape as well as minimize any nuisances that may be created by the proposed use.

**Recommendation.**

Based on the supplemental information submitted, the Planning Department finds the petition to be complete. The Planning Department is supportive of the project and recommends approval with conditions.