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PUBLIC HEARING/WORKING SESSION MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 27, 2018
MEETING DATE: May 1, 2018
TO: Land Use Committee of the City Council
FROM: Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Chief Planner for Current Planning
Neil Cronin, Senior Planner
CC: Petitioner

In response to issues raised at the City Council public hearing, the Planning Department is providing the following information for the upcoming continued public hearing/working session. This information is supplemental to staff analysis previously provided at the public hearing and working session.

PETITION #68-18

227 Washington Street

Special Permit/Site Plan Approval to establish a for-profit educational use.

The Land Use Committee (The "Committee") held public hearings on this petition February 13, 2018, and March 27, 2018. The public hearings were held open for the petitioner to respond to questions and concerns raised in the Planning Department's memoranda and at the public hearings by the Committee. This memo reflects those issues and concerns, as well as revised materials submitted by the petitioner as of April 24, 2018.

The petitioner is seeking a special permit to establish a for-profit educational use at 227 Washington Street. The property is improved with a two-story, mixed use structure located in the Business Use 1 zone in Newton Corner. The structure was used as office space for many years before a day care center on the first floor and two residential units on the second floor were permitted in 2015. The footprint of the structure consumes much of the lot, but there are seven nonconforming parking stalls on site. Due to the prior uses of the structure, the property carries a parking credit of eight stalls in addition to the seven stalls on site.

The petitioner proposes to hold small group tutoring sessions after school and on the weekends. Each session consists of three classes, each class containing as many as six children, for a total of 18 children on site. In addition to the 18 children, there will be 11 employees on site. The Planning Department

has concerns regarding the site's ability to safely accommodate the number of vehicle trips generated by the for-profit educational use. Staff believes the potential for high turnover (18 children arriving to and exiting from the site simultaneously over the course of several hours) presents safety concerns given the limited parking stalls on site, limited maneuverability of vehicles within the site, and the restricted access to the site.

In response to these concerns, the petitioner is proposing to prohibit pick up and drop off on site. Instead, parents will be asked to use the Pearl Street Municipal Lot. The Planning Department believes requiring pick up and drop off to occur off site, will only shift the safety concerns and may impact the neighborhood. If parents park at the Pearl Street Municipal Lot, students will be required to cross Centre Street which is a heavily trafficked street, especially during the hours when the school is operating. Additionally, this requirement will be difficult to enforce by both the petitioner and the City. Furthermore, it is impractical to expect parents to use the Pearl Street Municipal Lot. Staff believes the more likely outcome will involve parents "live-parking" on either Jefferson Street or Nonantum Place to mitigate the need for students to cross Centre Street on foot. Jefferson Street is a one-way street traveling west to east from Centre Street with "No Parking" on the left side of the street and "One Hour Parking" on the right side. Nonantum Place is a two-way street with "No Parking" on the right side of the street, and permit parking only on the left side of the street. When reviewing the revised proposal with the Transportation Division, staff learned the current parking restrictions on Jefferson Street were implemented by the Traffic Council because street parking was occupied by nearby businesses.

Figure I: Site Map



There are six metered parking stalls on Charlesbank Road near the project site. The petitioner states staff will be directed to use these meters. The Planning Department and the Transportation Division believe it is more practical to ask staff to park at the Pearl Street Municipal Lot and direct parents to use these six stalls. However, these stalls can only be accessed from Charlesbank Road because cars cannot

legally make the left turn from Nonantum Place onto Charlesbank Road. This requires all parents to access the site via Charlesbank Road which is a densely settled street. Once parked at the meters, children will have to cross Washington Street to enter the building. There is a crosswalk farther down Washington Street towards Centre Street, but it is unlikely to be used. Lastly, the petitioner is proposing 18 students per session, staff does not believe the six stalls will be able to accommodate the traffic. Staff believes this option is more practical, but still presents safety concerns.

The Planning Department believes the site is not an appropriate location for the proposed for-profit educational use. The amount of turnover combined with the physical limitations of the site's parking facility present safety concerns. Additionally, requiring pick up and drop off to occur off site, whether at the Pearl Street Municipal Lot or at the meters on Charlesbank Road, only shifts these safety concerns and is difficult to enforce. Lastly, staff believes requiring pick up and drop off to occur off site may impact the neighborhood due to limited access and limited on-street parking. For these reasons, the Planning Department does not support the request to establish a for-profit educational use at this site.