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To: Land Use Committee of the City of Newton Board of Aldermen

David A. Olson, CMC
Newton, MA 02459

From: Lou Mercuri, Planning Horizons

Re: 255-257 Newtonville Avenue Storage Facility

Date: September 21, 2015

On behalf of the petitioner for this land use petition, Planning Horizons is submitting this report regarding the supporting customer count surveys for the proposed self storage facility location at 255-257 Newtonville Avenue in Newtonville.

Project Overview

Storage Development Partners LLC is proposing to locate a 113,187 square foot self storage facility with 1025 storage units at 255-257 Newtonville Avenue in Newtonville. This location on 75,634 square feet of land is currently occupied by an office building that would be razed to allow the storage facility to be constructed. The facility would be available to its clients 24 hours a day and it is expected that no more than four employees would be employed on the largest shift. Situated in a manufacturing district, storage facilities are allowed by right in this district. However, per Section 30-19 (1)(15) of the zoning ordinance permission is being sought to grant a 36-stall parking waiver for the facility. One stall for each of the four employees and one stall for every 2500 square feet of proposed floor area are required under the ordinance. Therefore, 47 stalls are required for the project. However, 11 stalls are being provided on the site which reduces the parking requirement to a total of 36 stalls (47-11) for this development. Other forms of zoning relief are being sought under this petition; however this report focuses on the likely customer usage of the site based on the activity of similar nearby facilities.

Planning Horizons was asked to establish the likely customer/client demand for this storage facility based on peak usage at other similar storage facilities. Two nearby storage facilities were identified for this purpose. Public Storage at 945 Moody Street in Waltham and EZ Storage at 300 Needham Street in Newton were surveyed at different times and the results of these customer surveys are the main topic of this report.

Existing Conditions

The entire 75,634 square foot parcel with the existing office building will be razed and replaced with the 113,187 square foot, 3-story storage facility. The area is along the westbound side of Newtonville Avenue just west of Lewis Terrace. The Massachusetts Turnpike to the north borders the property. There is a mix of residential, industrial, and office uses in the area and the site is bordered by primarily residential properties along Newtonville Avenue. Vehicular access to the site is entirely from Newtonville Avenue.

Public Storage and EZ Storage Customer Counts Methodology and Results Methodology

Since a storage facility of this size would be entirely new to the area, the best way to assess and evaluate the potential impact of the number of customers and clients using the site is to carefully review the activity at comparable storage facilities. For this purpose, two storage facilities in the Newton area were identified and extensive usage surveys were conducted at the end of August and the beginning of September 2015. The two surveyed facilities are:

1. Public Storage, 945 Moody Street in Waltham (just past Rumford Avenue – half the site is in Newton and the other half is in Waltham), a 117,500 square foot building with 1015 storage units that was permitted in 2010.
2. EZ Storage, 300 Needham Street in Newton, a 170,000 square foot building with approximately 1400 storage units that was constructed in 2006.

Planning Horizons surveyed each of these facilities on three different occasions for a total of six one-hour constant observations for customer traffic. The goal was to identify the days and times of the week that would most closely represent the peak usage at these facilities which would closely translate to possible peak usage at the Newtonville Avenue facility.

Three surveys were conducted at each location and the overall mix was two morning weekday counts, two late afternoon weekday counts, and two counts on a Saturday, one in the morning and one at midday. The Public Storage counts on Moody Street were conducted on Friday August 29, Tuesday September 1 and Saturday September 5. The EZ Storage counts on Needham Street were conducted on Tuesday September 1, Friday September 4, and Saturday September 5. Observations were conducted from nearby parking areas so as not to conflict with the operation of the facilities. Customers were counted individually upon entering the location by vehicle and the data was recorded in 15-minute intervals.

It is important to note that storage facilities have peak periods during certain times for the year as well. These peak periods typically correspond with when college students begin or end classes and when people change residences and need to accommodate their moves. Therefore, the most widely used periods are either in May-June or between mid-August and mid-September. Our surveys captured this late summer peak period on peak “moving” days so the customer counts described below likely represent potential peak traffic at the proposed Newtonville Avenue facility at any time of the year.

Results of Customer Counts

The following charts provide the specific detail of the customer counts at both locations between August 28 and September 5:

2. EZ Storage, 300 Needham Street, Newton

Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2015 Time: 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM 75° , Sunny	
	# Customers entering site
9:00-9:15	2
9:15-9:30	3
9:30-9:45	0
9:45-10:00	2
TOTAL	7

Date: Friday, September 4, 2015 Time: 4:15 PM – 5:15 PM 75° , Sunny	
	# Customers entering site
4:15-4:30	3
4:30-4:45	4
4:45-5:00	1
5:00-5:15	2
TOTAL	10

Date: Saturday, September 5, 2015 Time: 11:45 AM – 12:45 AM 75° , Sunny	
	# Customers entering site
11:45-12:00	0
12:00-12:15	2
12:15-12:30	3
12:30-12:45	3
TOTAL	8

3-hour site average: 8.3 trips per hour

The actual customer data reveals several points. First, the total number of customer trips to both sites during the six hours of observations was 50. This equates to 8.3 trips per hour or roughly one vehicle entering the site every seven minutes. If both entering and exiting trips are factored in, the projected number of two trips is 16.6 per hour or one trip every 3.6 minutes. Second, the 15-minute intervals reveal a range of between 0 and 4 entering trips during the 24 surveyed intervals. This reveals that

1. Public Storage, 945 Moody Street, Waltham

Date: Friday, August 28, 2015 Time: 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM 70° , Sunny	
	# Customers entering site
9:00-9:15	2
9:15-9:30	0
9:30-9:45	2
9:45-10:00	3
TOTAL	7

Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2015 Time: 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM 85° , Sunny	
	# Customers entering site
4:00-4:15	4
4:15-4:30	3
4:30-4:45	3
4:45-5:00	1
TOTAL	11

Date: Saturday, September 5, 2015 Time: 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM 65° , Sunny	
	# Customers entering site
9:00-9:15	1
9:15-9:30	2
9:30-9:45	2
9:45-10:00	2
TOTAL	7

3-hour site average: 8.3 trips per hour

traffic to the storage facilities (even at peak times) is relatively small and steady regardless of the day and time.

The size of both storage facilities can be factored in to the proposed Newtonville Avenue site. Public Storage on Moody Street in Waltham is very comparable in both the total building square footage and in terms of the number of units. Public Storage is 117,500 gross square feet with 1015 storage units. The proposed facility on Newtonville Avenue would have 113,187 gross square feet with approximately 1025 storage units. Public Storage generated an average of 8.3 one-way trips to the site per hour and considering its overall size, is nearly identical to the current proposal. An upper limit estimate of 8.3 trips per hour is therefore valid.

The EZ Storage site on Needham Street in Newton is considerably larger with 170,000 gross square feet of space (vs. 113,187 square feet for the proposed site) and 1400 storage units (vs. 1025 for the proposed site). In spite of this differential, the EZ Storage site generated the same number of vehicle trips (8.3 trips per hour) as its smaller competitor on Moody Street in Waltham. This data suggests that larger storage facilities generate approximately the same levels of traffic and further studies would be needed to determine if there are reasons for this expected outcome.

Finally, the timing of the late August to Early September customer counts coincides with the perceived peak times of year for storage facilities. Therefore, the observed data points in this study *likely truly* reflect what might be expected at peak times at the Newtonville Avenue site.

Summary and Conclusion

The proposed storage facility at 255-257 Newtonville Avenue is a relatively low traffic generator when compared with office or residential uses of a similar scale. Our study of two comparably sized storage facilities reveals an average trip rate of 8.3 trips per hour to each site. This figure works out to one trip to the site approximately every seven minutes, even during peak periods. During off-peak hours, the number of trips to the site will be far less, or almost non-existent. By providing 11 onsite parking spaces, the needs of customers/clients can be easily met. Therefore, the parking waiver request of 36 spaces relates to a theoretical number assigned to storage facilities rather than a number related to actual need for this specific use.