

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

October 4, 2021



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath
Director
Planning & Development

Cat Kemmett, Planning
Associate

Members

Peter Doeringer, Chair
Sonia Parisca, Vice Chair
Kelley Brown, Member
Sudha Maheshwari, Member
Jennifer Molinsky, Member
Chris Steele, Member
Barney Heath, Planning
Director *ex officio*
Lee Breckenridge, Alternate
Kevin McCormick, Alternate

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Members Present:

Peter Doeringer, Chair
Sonia Parisca, Vice-Chair
Jennifer Molinsky, Member
Chris Steele, Member
Kelley Brown, Member
Lee Breckenridge, Alternate
Kevin McCormick, Alternate

Staff Present:

Amanda Berman, Director of Housing and Community Development
Shaylyn Davis, Senior Community Development Planner
Cat Kemmett, Planning Associate

Meeting held virtually by Zoom Meeting

1. Presentation on the FY21 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER)/ Vote

Chair Doeringer opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Amanda Berman, Director of Housing and Community Development and Shaylyn Davis, Senior Community Development Planner, made a presentation on the use of Newton's federal Community Development Block Grant, HOME Housing investment Partnership, and Emergency Solution Grant funding for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. This presentation was a follow-up to the presentation and public hearing on this matter on September 13, 2021 and focused on addressing questions raised at the public hearing regarding the demographics of the programs, data related to the small business recovery grant program, and other questions about allocation of funds.

Following the presentation, Board members had several follow-up questions and comments:

Did anything in the data surprise you? Does staff have any insight into how the data should be interpreted?

Ms. Berman said the data was not very surprising. Newton has a majority white population, and it isn't very shocking that they are the largest population served. Staff is in frequent contact with recipients about how to do better outreach and how to connect people with programs that can help. Ms. Davis added that they are looking into ways to reach more people of color and asking questions of their partner organizations as well to see what they are doing to reduce racial barriers.

It was suggested that staff look into information about who applied for grants but did not receive them- are there race or gender disparities there, or lack of access to grant application experience that might help address some of these gaps? The power of informal networks to spread the word can also be a factor here. Do staff have an idea of how applicants learned about these grant opportunities?

Ms. Davis said that many of them reported hearing about it from the mayor's newsletter.

In the future, some Board members expressed interest in a report of the racial breakdown and income of clients served by sub-recipients of each program.

Ms. Berman said that staff can review data and see if that is feasible, but there are some client confidentiality concerns involved that may make that level of reporting difficult.

2. Zoning Updates

Zoning Redesign

Ms. Kemmett said that staff has wrapped up the push to solicit feedback about village center zoning redesign for the phase they have been working on for several months and they have begun synthesizing the data. All of the images shared via vision kits are already available on the Flickr page on the city website, and the rest of the data collected will be available online shortly. On October 25th, staff will be presenting some high-level takeaways from this process at ZAP, followed by a public information session in November.

On October 25th there will also be a public hearing at ZAP to discuss housing trusts. Mr. Brown said that this would be a good proposal for the Board to articulate an opinion on and provide feedback for.

Armory

The deadline for the City's Request for Proposals for development proposals to develop the West Newton Armory into 100% permanent affordable housing passed on September 30, 2021. That list of proposals is available online.

3. Minutes

Mr. Doeringer noted an error in the minutes from August 16, which needs a correction to reflect that while the Board voted to approve the first component of #240-21, the zoning cleanup items, they voted to hold the amendment regarding the definition of "two-family, detached" structures. Upon a motion by Mr. Steele, the Board voted in favor of approving the minutes as amended, with Ms. Molinsky abstaining.

4. Adjournment

Upon a motion by Mr. Steele and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:09 pm.