

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 13, 2021



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

Barney Heath
Director
Planning & Development

Cat Kemmett, Planning
Associate

Members

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

Also Present: Councilor Wright

Staff Present:

Valerie Birmingham, Chief Preservation Planner
Cat Kemmett, Planning Associate

Meeting held virtually by Zoom Meeting

1. Recommendation on Landmark Proposal before the Newton Historical Commission for 72 Columbus Street

Chair Doeringer opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Valerie Birmingham, Chief Preservation Planner, made a presentation about 72 Columbus Street, the Women's Club in Newton Highlands. The Women's Club nominated the structure as a local landmark, and the Newton Historical Commission will vote next week on this designation. Based on the architectural and historic merits of the structure, the report and presentation determine that the property meets the criteria for historic preservation, as set forth in Section 22-64 (b) of the Landmark Ordinance. Following the presentation, Board members discussed this nomination.

It was remarked that in the future, it would be helpful to include more detail about the surrounding area for proposed landmark buildings and city policies, in addition to the historic and architectural context of the building. The notion of using a transfer of development rights as a way to preserve historic structures like this one while still allowing for new construction elsewhere in the city was raised to consider a possible tool in the future.

Board members then discussed the relationship of the proposed designation to the relevant policies of the City and its effect on the surrounding area. While the Board noted that the property at 72 Columbus Street was close to an area in the Newton Highlands village that had the potential for future development, it concluded that historical preservation of the property at 72 Columbus Street is

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consistent with principle of using history to build a sense of place and community contained in the City of Newton's Comprehensive Plan. It represents the kind of iconic building worthy of preservation that is envisioned in other recent documents related to village development, such as *Washington Street Vision Plan*. Board members were impressed by the historic continuity in the ownership of the property by the Newton Highlands Women's Club. This ownership has regularly contributed to the vibrancy of the Newton Highlands village by providing a meeting place and rental space for community activities and family celebrations.

The Planning and Development Board concludes that the building at 72 Columbus Street represents a structure that deserves landmark preservation. A motion to endorse the recommendation for landmark designation was approved by a vote of 6-0-1, with Director Heath abstaining.

2. Zoning Updates

Zoning Redesign

Ms. Kemmett said that staff are continuing to work with Utile on the next step of Zoning Redesign, which will include a deeper dive into potential tools for the city to consider to achieve the changes prioritized through the quantitative analysis and community engagement thus far.

Veterinary Uses in BU-4

Director Heath said that at ZAP on December 16 there will be a public hearing and likely a vote on a petition to allow veterinary uses in the BU-4 district.

3. City Updates

Director Heath reported that City Council voted to approve the creation of a municipal housing trust. The creation of their rules, regulations, and membership will take several months at least, but that work will be underway shortly. Additionally, the evaluation of RFPs for the West Newton Armory is almost complete, with the winner expected to be announced shortly.

4. Minutes

The following minutes were approved: September 13, October 4, October 5, October 25, November 1, and November 8.

5. Adjournment

Upon a motion by Mr. Steele and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.