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Mayor

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Director
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John Sisson
Director
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Commissioners
Phil Plottel, Chair
Sarah Rahman, Vice Chair
Chuck Tanowitz, Secretary

Lisa Adams
Jeremy Freid
Jim Griglun
Debora Jackson
Zach Knowlton
Jack Leader
Florent Mali
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CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Economic Development Commission

Meeting Minutes

DATE: June 14, 2022

TIME: 6:30 pm via Zoom

1. Attendance

Commissioners Attending: Phil Plottel (Chair); Sarah Rahman (Vice Chair); Lisa Adams; Jeremy Freid; Jim Griglun; Debora Jackson; Zach Knowlton; Jack Leader; Matt Segneri; and Joyce Plotkin.

Commissioners Not Attending: Marcella Merino and Chuck Tanowitz

Staff Attending: Barney Heath, Director of Planning & Development; Bill Ferguson, Co-Director of Sustainability; Zachary LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning

Also Attending: Ken Hoffman, and Florent Mali

2. Approval of Minutes of May 10, 2022

After the motion to approve was made by Mr. Leader and seconded by Ms. Adams, the May 10th minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Presentation on Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance

- a. The City's Co-Director for Sustainability Bill Ferguson introduced the topic and some of the City's team joining him this evening including Ann Berwick, Co-Director of Sustainability, Halina Brown, Michael Gevelber, and Phil Hauser (all from the Newton Citizens Commission on Energy). Mr. Ferguson presented a PowerPoint (see attached) of the City's planned approach to implementing a BERDO ordinance. The initial audience and target for having to comply with BERDO would be buildings over 20,000 sq. ft. Newton would be modeling their BERDO requirements similar to the City of Boston. There would be two phases – a reporting phase and an emission standard requirement to get to net zero carbon emission by 2050. Mr. Ferguson will be holding monthly information sessions with interested parties and property owners. Mr. Gevelber then gave a presentation on how property owners can transition their energy planning as part of BERDO.

4. Village Center Zoning Framework Update

- a. Zach LeMel updated the EDC on the progress of the Village Center Zoning. Mr. LeMel categorized the proposal changes into categories:
 - Reducing the overall village center parking requirements including a one space for one unit reduction (currently two

required) and eliminating parking for ground-floor commercial use.

- Allowing up to 4.5 stories in height in the case of one larger Village Centers, 3.5 stories in the next closest band of properties and 2.5 stories in the height in those village center districts that transition to the neighborhood

4. Discussion

Phil Plottel asked what the next step is for ZAP in terms of overall direction. Mr. Heath indicated that the ZAP Committee will be providing a straw vote on the whole package. Mr. Freid offered that the reduction in parking could be quite helpful for properties in terms of financial feasibility. Mr. Leader asked whether the zoning requires a simple majority or a two-thirds majority. Mr. Heath indicated that it is most likely both depending on whether there is a housing by-right component (which would be a simple majority vote). Ms. Jackson asked if what the outcome would be if these changes were to pass. Mr. LeMel responded that the zoning changes might result in a wider variety of re-development of varying scales. Ms. Plotkin asked whether the review process would be bifurcated for commercial and residential processes. Mr. Heath responded that eliminating the requirement that all projects of greater than 20,000 sq. ft. need a Special Permit will help expedite the process for review of projects. Ms. Rahman asked about if folks are going to be comfortable allowing projects by-right. Mr. LeMel indicated that we will be creating design standards and guidelines to help produce desirable building outcomes. Mr. Griglun asked whether more properties might turn-over. Mr. Heath responded that these changes could stimulate some smaller village centers re-development. Mr. Segneri expressed a desire that our new zoning be structured in a manner that was clear and competitive in terms of being able to attract investment to Newton.

A motion to endorse the direction of the zoning was moved by Ms. Plotkin and seconded by Mr. Leader and unanimously approved

Mr. Heath indicated that an offer has been made to a candidate for the position of Economic Development Director

5. Adjournment: Upon a motion by Mr. Leader, seconded by Mr. Freid and unanimously approved the meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Barney Heath, Director of Planning