



# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459-1449  
Telephone: (617) 796-1060 Fax: (617) 796-1086  
[www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov)

Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

**ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**  
Brenda Belsanti, Zoning Board Clerk

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, December 21, 2022**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**Hybrid – in person and via ZOOM**

**Board Members Present:** Brooke Lipsitt (Chair), Michael Rossi, Elizabeth Sweet (remote), Stuart Snyder, William McLaughlin, and Denise Chicoine (alternate)

**Staff Present:** Brenda Belsanti, ZBA Clerk; Jennifer Wilson, Assistant City Solicitor; Heather Zaring, Executive Assistant (remote); Barney Heath, Director of Planning; Katie Whewell, Chief Planner, and Michael Gleba, Senior Planner

**A public hearing of the Newton Zoning Board of Appeals was held as a hybrid meeting in person and virtually via Zoom on Wednesday, December 21, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. on the following petitions:**

1. **#09-22** Northland 160 Charlemont, LLC, requesting a Comprehensive Permit, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40B, to construct a nine-story mixed-use development with 410 residential units and approximately 10,689 square feet of ground floor commercial space on 6.98 acres of land located at 160 Charlemont Street and 56 Christina Street in the Mixed Use 1 Zoning District. The proposal includes 103 affordable units and 486 parking stalls.

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**Agenda Item 1:** #09-22 – Northland 160 Charlemont, LLC, Newton. This item was opened on October 26, 2022. Sitting Members: Brooke Lipsitt (Chair), Michael Rossi, Elizabeth Sweet, William McLaughlin, Stuart Snyder and Denise Chicoine

### **Documents Submitted:**

1. Memorandum from Lou Taverna, City Engineer dated November 15, 2022.
2. Revised Zoning Review Memorandum from Jane Santosuosso, Chief Zoning Code Official dated November 17, 2022.
3. Memorandum with attachments from the Planning Department dated December 16, 2022.
4. Letter with attachments from Katherine Adams of Schlessinger & Buchbinder dated November 21, 2022.
5. Email from Marcia Johnson, President of the Newton League of Women Voters, dated November 2, 2022.



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### Testimony:

Mr. Gleba presented the project reviews received that were mentioned in the Planning memo dated December 16, 2022. Received the transportation peer review from Beta Group on December 18, 2022. Site design and open space peer review from Horsely Witten Group on December 18, 2022. The City Engineering Division issued their initial memorandum on November 16, 2022. Engineering and Horsely Witten will coordinate a review of the utilities and storm water plans and other aspects of the project going forward. MBBJ peer reviewer will be looking at the design, building placement and relationship to the street. Peer reviewers are here this evening to present.

Jeff Maxtutis, Transportation Planner and Project Manager, The Beta Group, 315 Norwood Park South, Norwood, MA presented a transportation site review focusing on major transportation issues and reviewed the internal circulation of the site and its consistency with the Needham Street Vision Plan. Thirteen intersections were studied and an additional five will be studied. Existing traffic volumes, traffic growth rate, trip generation, trip distribution, future signage, speed monitoring was studied as well as requests for future EV charging stations for car and bike, covered bike parking, MBTA passes for residents, and shuttle service. Follow up questions for retail traffic, bike and pedestrian traffic, revised plan of the parking garage, garage access, space dimensions, number of spaces for retail, turning radius diagrams for loading docks, crosswalk placement, and snow storage area placement will be addressed later.

Janet Bernardo, Professional Engineer, Horsely Witten Group, 112 Water Street, Boston, MA presented a site plan and open space review focusing on impact to the abutting residents and open spaces. Shadow study was conducted. Proposed landscaping is consistent with Newton. Riverfront area will need input from Newton Conservation Commission. MassHousing noted wetlands but we are unsure where they are located. Follow up questions to clarify dimensions, a physical model of the plan, internal traffic pedestrian and bicycle conflicts, what is public/private in the area, tree waiver, sustainability and Passive House certification approach, sources of energy and use details, hazardous materials investigation, and lighting waiver details will be addressed later.

Katherine Adams, Attorney, Schlesinger & Buchbinder, 1200 Walnut Street, Newton, MA gave an update that there was a meeting on December 1, 2022 with the Newton Conservation Commission



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and the feedback was positive. We will be meeting with the Urban Design Commission in 2023 with all of the peer review input. We will present detailed responses to the follow-up question submitted.

Peter Standish, Senior Vice President, Northland Investment Corporation, 2150 Washington Street, Newton, presented the site design and building plan focusing on the building placement on the site allowing for a shared open space and a natural buffer to the abutting neighborhood.

Christopher Bridle, Landscape Architect with Stantec, 40 Water Street, Boston, presented the site design focusing on the public open space, pedestrian pathways, and the traffic flow to Needham Street. Parking spaces were increased by nine and added delivery parking spaces. Added exterior bike parking. Landscaping will be roughly 20% lawn for recreation.

Mr. Gray, Landscape Architect with Stantec, 40 Water Street, Boston noted that there is an added area for bike parking with an easier access in the garage and an external area with direct access onto Christina Street. Clarified positioning of residential courtyard in relation to the loading dock area.

Mr. Gray asked for clarification on the design of the model the Board would like presented at the next meeting.

Chair Lipsitt asked for questions from the Board

Michael Rossi asked for clarification on traffic patterns on Christina Street. Would traffic back up into the site?

Mr. Maxtutis responded that he could provide a simulation of traffic to show the queueing lengths at the intersections. Also, there will be signal improvements which are hard to simulate. Signals controls will adapt to volume.

Chair Lipsitt responded that studies showed the intersection was over capacity and asked for the solution



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Mr. Maxtutis responded that if the capacity of the lanes were at capacity then signal timing adjustments could be made.

Mr. Rossi responded that this issue is a concern and needs to be flagged for later study.

Chair Lipsitt agreed with Mr. Rossi.

Mr. Rossi stated that pedestrians having to cross Christina Street twice to access Needham Street needs to be addressed.

Mr. McLaughlin stated his concern on the parking space size and the parking ratio.

Mr. Snyder asked for recommendations for the area of Christina Street of developing access to the bridge and public use of the space as a pathway to Christina Street and traffic calming measures that may be utilized.

Mr. Maxtutis responded that they are coordinating with the city with what the measures would be taken whether it be signals, signage, raised crosswalks, but specifics have not been decided.

Mr. Snyder stated that it is an important public safety matter and looks forward to more specifics.

Mr. Snyder stated that he was pleased to see the adjustment of added external parking spaces. What is the expectation of visitors to the site and parking?

Ms. Sweet stated she was also pleased with the additional spaces, but wants more ideas to increase usage MBTA, pedestrian, and bicycle and less auto usage.

Ms. Chicoine stated that the redesigned of the bicycle access to parking is a good improvement and agree to encourage public transportation. Would like to hear more about EV charging capacity.

Chair Lipsitt asked for the shuttle service to be increased to more than every 30 minutes. She



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would also like more clarification on all traffic patterns.

Mr. Snyder stated that anything that can be done to make more use of Charlemont Street instead of Christina Street it would be a better choice in terms of public safety.

Ms. Chicoine stated that the playscape with natural elements seems like a nice idea.

Chair Lipsitt stated that the property lines for the abutters seem ill-defined and would like to see something done so people are not wandering onto the private property of the homeowners. Also, in the report the proposed stairs could possibly be a ramp to accommodate people of different abilities.

## **Public Comments:**

Madeline Aviles, CEO of the Price Center, 27 Christina Street, Newton, stated the business is for people with intellectual and physical disabilities that has existed for 45 years and stated her concern for traffic because the entrance is directly across from theirs. They serve 200 lives and  $\frac{3}{4}$  arrive on-site in passenger buses at peak hours in the morning and leaving in the afternoon. Safety is a big issue for them. The bike pathways are a concern because they go into their property because the parking lot extends all the way to access to the bridge. Happy if the bridge could be rehabbed and put into use. There is concern that when parking spaces become short people will migrate into their parking lot and they would like that discussed and addressed. They are supportive of a project like this but are very concerned of the impact it will have on them.

Steve Ayres, 94B Christina Street, stated he believes his concern about trees is being addressed. He is concerned about the absence of a plan to put a continuous sidewalk on the north side of Christina Street from where the sidewalk now ends to where it restarts opposite the Price Center and adjacent to the storage facility. If there is no sidewalk continuously people could be killed trying to cross that street. The members of the ZBA that crossed that street with him on November 10, 2022 got a feeling for the limited sight lines to the east and west. A sidewalk is possible with the use of retaining walls. The two condos have retaining walls. It's expensive but can be done.



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Mr. Bridle clarified what trees will be removed due to construction or disease. There will be trees removed, but the new plantings will exceed the trees removed and there will be more biodiversity.

Chair Lipsitt stated there will be a review of the landscape plan in the subsequent meetings.

### **Deliberation:**

Chair Lipsitt requested a building plan and alternative plans for the future meetings. Would like to see unit mix, commentary on the plans, and more substantial plan of design.

The next hearing for this project will be January 25, 2023.

The hearing was continued to January 25, 2023.

Adjourned 8:42 p.m.

**ZBA DECISIONS can be found at [www.newtonma.gov/ZBA](http://www.newtonma.gov/ZBA)**