

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

March 27, 2025

The Needham Planning Board meeting, held in the Charles River Room of the Public Services Administration Building, and virtually using Zoom, was called to order by Natasha Espada, Chairman, on Thursday, March 27, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. with Messrs. Crocker, Alpert and McCullen, Planner, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Ms. Espada noted this is an open meeting that is being held in a hybrid manner per state guidelines. She reviewed the rules of conduct for all meetings. This meeting does include one public hearing and public comment will be allowed. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call.

Public Hearing:

7:00 p.m.

Article 1: Amend Zoning By-Law – Flood Plain District

Article 2: Amend Zoning By-Law – Map Change to Flood Plain District

Upon a motion made by Mr. Crocker, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to waive the reading of the public hearing notice.

Ms. Newman gave an overview. She furnished a flood plain map so the members could see where the old flood plain line was and where the new flood plain line is. The federal government updated the FEMA lines, which were last updated in 2012. The map represents the changes made. Needham is required, to ensure people still have flood insurance, to accept the new maps and update the zoning framework to reflect the changes. This is changing the flood plain line in Needham as a result of new data coming in and the National Flood Insurance Program has a series of requirements that communities have to adopt. This has been in place for a long time but the Massachusetts communities were not required to adopt it. They are now required to adopt it and need to make sure the regulations are in place.

Ms. Newman noted the changes include a revised Statement of Program and Purpose designating a community flood plain administrator. Needham has chosen to designate the Town Engineer for that purpose. There are a series of definitions embedded in the federal law that need to be incorporated in Needham's definition section. Also, the special permit section needs to be revised so that all new construction in the flood plain is governed by a special permit. There are some established flood way encroachment standards along water courses that do not have regulatory flood way designations. There are some elevation and anchorage standards for recreational vehicles that need to be replaced in the By-Law. An insurance statement is to be required to ensure the individual has received the state and federal permits being required. The town will be responsible for making sure the permits have been obtained.

Ms. Newman stated the Town has to supply FEMA with additional data within 6 months if anything changes in the flood way and there are some notification requirements under the building code and some insurance notifications the town has to follow. Reflected in the first Article, it recognized the new maps and the By-Law language has been modified to reflect the changes FEMA is now requiring in order to ensure Needham residents eligible for flood insurance can actually secure it. She sent a draft By-Law to DCR and it was returned with some suggested technical changes. There was a map reference to add. References to new maps were not updated in some places and they were asked to include references to the AE and A11 zones. The State will accept this By-Law with these changes.

Town Engineer Thomas Ryder prepared a couple of maps. One is an overlay of the existing map and the second map is the FEMA ortho photo with everything overlaid with changes in the size of the flood plains in the whole town. There is not much change. There are some base flood plain elevations along the Charles River noted on the south side of town and changes of a couple of inches elevation difference on the north and east side. An area closer to the west side of town increases by a few inches and a few areas added over by 128/Kendrick Street. Rosemary is also added and was not on the original. There are just a few inches here and there and a few sections added here and there. Mr. Crocker asked if this was

based on a 100-year storm. Mr. Ryder noted it was based on a 100-year storm for a 1% chance of flooding. Ms. Espada asked if there are any new private properties being affected. Mr. Ryder does not see any private properties being affected based upon the study area designed for a one-mile catchment area.

Mr. Crocker stated, on the map, it says SRB on the other side of 128. He asked if it should be SRA and was informed there is some SRA there. Mr. Ryder noted there is a draft plan. He will prepare the final version for Town Meeting. Ms. Espada asked if there were any concerns. Ms. Newman noted she has worked through the process and worked with the state. The draft By-Law has been revised and approved with the changes. There were no public comments.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to close the hearing.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to send Article 1 as drafted with changes shown in the packet, and further changes requested by DCR and as shown in the packet, to the Warrant Committee for insertion in the Town Warrant.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to send Article 2 as previously shown with amendments in the packet and further amendments by DCR as shown in the packet for insertion in the Town Warrant.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to recommend to Town Meeting both Articles be adopted.

Appointment Recommendation to Stephen Palmer Reuse Development Committee.

Ms. Espada noted the Select Board wants a member, or designee, from the Planning Board and other town Board's. An RFP has been done for a consultant to engage the future of the site and options for reuse. Mr. Alpert asked if the Planning Board would have a say in the 2 members at large. Ms. Espada noted it says the Select Board would be the appointing authority so she assumes it would be the Select Board. She noted this is an appointment for 3 years, but the charge is for one year. She would like to be on this committee.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Crocker, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to appoint Ms. Espada to the Stephen Palmer Reuse Development Committee.

Minutes

There were no minutes.

Summer Schedule

Mr. Crocker noted the Board usually does not have meetings in July. Ms. Clee stated she usually waits until after the election, then she asks when people are around. There is usually one meeting in July and one in August. Mr. McCullen feels there should be input from the new member. They could pencil in some dates but should wait to set it. Ms. Clee will work around the members. She will put it back on the agenda for 4/15/25.

Report from Planning Director and Board members

Mr. Crocker noted a Planning Board member from Wellesley will be at the Large House Committee meeting on Monday to discuss their process and their review of large houses. Mr. McCullen noted the Mobility and Envision Needham has not

met since the last time, so he has no updates. Ms. Newman noted she and Mr. Crocker are going to the Finance Committee on 4/9 to answer some questions about the flood plain and in front of the Select Board the week after. The 4/15/25 meeting has been moved to Town Hall to be there if the Select Board has any questions.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Upon a motion made by Mr. McCullen, and seconded by Mr. Alpert, it was by a vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Artie Crocker, Vice-Chairman and Clerk