



Large House Review (LHR) Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 18, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present:

Artie Crocker Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee (Co-Chair)
Bill Paulson Real Estate Broker appointed by the Planning Board
Oscar Mertz Architect appointed by the Planning Board
Joe Matthews At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Moe Handel Design Review Board Member / Design Review Board Designee (Co-Chair)
Ed Quinlan At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Marianne Cooley Select Board Member / Select Board Designee
Paul McGovern Developer appointed by the Planning Board
Chris Cotter At Large appointed by the Planning Board
Jeanne McKnight Planning Board Member / Planning Board Designee
Tina Burgos Finance Committee Member / Finance Committee Designee
Rob Dangel At Large appointed by the Planning Board

Staff Present:

Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development
Alex Clee, Assistant Planner

Committee Members Absent:

Nik Ligris Zoning Board of Appeals Member / Zoning Board of Appeals Designee
Heidi Frail Select Board Member / Select Board Designee

1. Welcome and Introductions

Introductions of Committee members present were made.

2. Approval of meeting minutes

Upon motion duly made by Moe Handel and seconded by Bill Paulson, it was voted to approve the meeting minutes of August 4, 2025, as amended. By roll call, the motion passed unanimously.

3. Update on RFP & Consultant.

Ms. Newman stated that two proposals were received, and the lowest qualified bidder was RKG. A contract is in the process of being signed. The three house sizes for modeling and a work plan will then be determined.

4. Modeling presentation.

Oscar Mertz reviewed the updated modeling presentation. He explained that the consultants were asked to review three sample houses from Needham houses that have been anonymized and range from 7,500-10,000 s.f. lot sizes. The consultants were then asked to consider three levels of reducing the volume or “bulk” of the house. Each sample house then went through a series of changes, including changes to FAR, lot coverage, and height. Regarding FAR, the current definition is the first and second floors of a house. The proposal from the Committee is to change this to the first, second, and third floors, along with the attic and the garage. This is more in line with what other towns are doing. Regarding height, the Committee discussed reducing this dimensionally from what is currently allowed in Town, 35’, to between 30’-33. Three dimensional models were created to view the changes in the reduction target areas. All three houses have been modeled, and all three steps of reduction have been completed.

The Board reviewed the 3D modeling. The models also include the original building for comparison with the reductions. There was discussion regarding what other towns would do to control the size of the three model houses.

5. Review of spreadsheet prepared by Ed Quinlan comparing Needham to Lexington, Concord & Wellesley allowable built area.

The Committee reviewed the spreadsheet that compares Needham to Lexington, Concord, and Wellesley in terms of allowable built area.

6. Discussion of potential recommendations for dimensional controls.

The Committee reviewed the potential recommendations for the dimensional controls.

There was discussion regarding third floors. It was explained that the proposed dimensional requirements may make third floor space unusable, though this is not the overall intent of the proposal. There are controls in place for living space in a basement and no changes are proposed to this.

Rob Dangel asked about exclusions for lots with environmental restrictions. This could then trigger a secondary process.

There was discussion regarding the Town sending a postcard to residents regarding all of the upcoming meetings on the proposed Articles.

7. Review of Updated Schedule.

The Committee agreed to meet on Monday, August 25, 2025.

Upon motion duly made by Ed Quinlan and seconded by Moe Handel, it was voted to adjourn at 8:51 p.m. By roll call, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude