

Minutes
Board of Selectmen Meeting with School Committee and Planning Board
Rosemary Recreation Complex
December 19, 2018

8:00 a.m. A special meeting of the Board of Selectmen was convened by Daniel Matthews. Also present were John Bulian, Moe Handel, Matthew Borrelli, Marianne Cooley, and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick. School Committee members present included: Andrea Longo Carter, Connie Barr, Sue Neckes, Matt Spangler, Michael Greis, Aaron Pressman, and Superintendent of Schools Dan Gutekanst. Planning Board members present included Paul Alpert, Ted Owens, Marty Jacobs, Jeanne McKnight, Liz Grimes, and Planning & Community Development Director Lee Newman,

Industrial Zoning – Mr. Alpert outlined the basis for the zoning proposal, the impact on setback limits on Highland Avenue and Gould Street, maximum heights, and landscaping requirements. He noted that the proposed zoning is a blend of Industrial and Mixed Use 128 with no residential component, and that it applies only to the “Muzi/Channel 5” portion of the district. Mr. Borrelli asked what had changed from the prior proposal. Mr. Alpert said that the major change involved screening along Highland Avenue and Gould Street, and that the proposed height and setback limits remain the same. Mr. Alpert said that the Board is not interested in “big box” stores locating in the district. Mr. Handel said that he thought it was a good use for the area. Mr. Borrelli asked if the Planning Board would consider traffic mitigation requirements. Ms. Newman noted that the traffic mitigation provisions currently only apply in the NEBC zoning district but that could be changed. Mr. Alpert said that he is not sure that the mitigation aspect could be added at this point but that he would ask the Board to evaluate the idea. Ms. McKnight noted that very often if a development impacts an intersection then Special Permit provisions could require upgrade measures. Mr. Matthews asked about height and economies of scale based on elevator sizes and similar features. Ms. Grimes said that this proposal has only one neighborhood and that is across Highland Avenue from Muzi.

Chestnut Street – Mr. Alpert said that the zoning that will be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen involves just the Hartney Greymont/MBTA property. The rest of Chestnut Street is something that the Board continues to evaluate. The proposal would allow for the construction of a residential facility, with or without the MBTA parcel. He said if the MBTA does not lease the property to the developer the project would be smaller. He said the

Board is mindful of the concerns of abutting residential areas, especially Maple Street. Ms. McKnight said that the Developer has said that condominiums are not a good option at that location, but apartment units would be. Mr. Matthews asked about the height and affordability restrictions. Mr. Alpert said that the affordability is 12.5% and the height is six stories, although the Board would prefer five stories. He said the Board was told that five stories is not economically feasible. Ms. McKnight said that it is her understanding that with the MBTA parcel it could be five stories, and without it six stories. Mr. Borrelli asked about the 145 units planned and how many would be three bedrooms. Mr. Owens said no three bedroom units are planned. Mr. Borrelli said he does not understand why five stories is not feasible, and that home ownership units are more beneficial to the Town. He asked how the project is adding value to the Town. Mr. Alpert said that the Planning Board has received communication from residents in favor of the project. He hears that the location is appealing as residents can walk to the business area, train, and hospital. Mr. Borrelli reiterated that 145 units seems high for the location. Mr. Bulian noted that the support letters are not organic, that he would be more interested in a smaller project. He said that the growth in housing puts pressure on the schools. Mr. Alpert said that he is not in a position to advocate for the developer. He says what he hears is that there is a growing number of seniors who want to lower their residential responsibilities and that there is no housing stock in Needham. He noted that young professionals are the future of the Town and keep it vibrant. He said he is in favor of this type of development. Ms. Longo Carter said that she is opposed to a project of this size since we cannot control who will move in. She said the schools are out of space. Dr. Gutekanst noted that even small units marketed with dens can increase the school-age population. He also noted that if seniors are downsizing to these units, families move into their homes. Mr. Pressman remarked that this type of situation occurred this year at Eliot.

Mr. Matthews said that the implication of the proposed development must be sorted out, and the tipping point identified. Dr. Gutekanst said that the Town prides itself on welcoming students, but that we need to think about infrastructure, especially at the middle school. He said that building a new middle school is very expensive. Ms. Grimes said that the six stories sounds high, but the Planning Board considered the topography and that from the street it appears to be three stories. She said that the Planning Board cannot ignore the desire for increased housing production, but that we also need to plan for the schools. She said that she thinks this is a good use for the site. Mr. Owens noted that this

meeting is not the time for a debate but for a heads-up. He said that the Planning Board hears the objections, and is aware of the issues that have been raised. He asked for constructive engagement by the community on the zoning proposal, allowing the Planning Board time to review all of the options. He said the School Committee already indicated that it is at a tipping point, and this project and its potential school age children is not determinant of the need for a new school. Mr. Handel said he feels there is a misconception about empty-nesting. People are going to leave their home regardless; it is just a question of whether they stay in Needham. Ms. McKnight said that the developer had provided a fiscal impact analysis indicating that the estimated school age population would be 15. Ms. Neckes said that it is hard to have this discussion around individual parcels; the Town needs to understand how housing production impacts us across the board. She noted the Town is pushing the limit at every level.

Dr. Barr said that the Town must be mindful of the needs of seniors and the tax implications of constructing a new school. Ms. Cooley asked about dens, noting that since the project is not a LIP, there is no local control once the project is allowed. She asked if mitigation is an option at this site. Mr. Alpert noted that the Special Permit process allows the Planning Board to set conditions. Mr. Matthews noted that there is a laundry list of concerns on this particular zoning, but there is agreement on the need to upgrade Chestnut Street. He said that the Hartney Greymont parcel has special factors to be considered including the railroad bridges. He said the project needs a lot of thought and should not be fast-tracked because there is a developer interested in the project. He said that it may be helpful to have a vision for the entire street first. He suggested the proposal could be addressed through the LIP process. He said that the Town has permitted 1,000 apartments in the last decade, 700 of which are not fully occupied. The Town is on its way to a population of 35,000, and a LIP would provide 25% affordability. Mr. Greis said that the conversation is helpful and should continue. He said that the School Committee appreciates the support of the Town and recognizes that there are other priorities. He said he would like all concerned to think about how to address the growth in school age population, noting that there will be close to 500 students at the High Rock School next year. He said that we must be honest with the Town about the consequences of decisions. Mr. Alpert noted that he agreed with Ms. Grimes that this proposal is the best use of this particularly parcel. It is segregated, and cut off by the tracks. He said that no development has occurred since the last Chestnut Street zoning change, and that we need the owners to work together to make it

happen. Ms. McKnight noted that the developer is amenable to securing public access to the Rail Trail. Dr. Barr said that in her experience working with seniors, they do not move into this type of apartment unit. Mr. Jacobs said that he does not think the school age population issue is impacted by this proposal, and that population growth is inevitable.

Accessory Dwelling Units – Mr. Alpert noted that the proposal limits ADUs to 850 s.f. and only by Special Permit. He said that it is a proposal for small one bedroom units, limited to family members and caregivers, with no rental allowed. Mr. Handel said that the ADU proposal meets a real need to help keep people in their homes. Mr. Greis said that there is no formula readily available to evaluate the impact of ADU zoning on school enrollment – the School Committee asked the demographer to check. Dr. Gutekanst noted that McKibben will be at the School Committee meeting on January 8, 2019 and would meet with the Future School Needs Committee before that meeting. Mr. Bulian said that this is a good proposal. He asked if the number of units should be limited in the first few years in order to give the N2025 study time to evaluate any impacts. Mr. Alpert said he felt the required five year renewal permit would serve as a way to continue to evaluate the situation. Ms. Cooley asked about long-term house rental issue, she felt that it was open-ended. Mr. Alpert said that issue will be explored and addressed. Mr. Borrelli asked if there would be a mechanism for the Planning Board to slow down the number of permits if too many of them are granted. Mr. Alpert responded that the Special Permit process provides great flexibility, although any decision can be challenged. He said that there is a fairly high bar for challenging decisions of this type. Mr. Handel said that there are already many ADUs in existence. He feels that the demand is minimal but for those in need, it will be very helpful. Ms. Grimes said that the zoning was written with safety in mind and that the Board was provided guidance by the Building Commissioner. She said she would be surprised if there were many applications. Mr. Alpert summarized that he hopes the initial impact of the zoning, if passed, is that it will correct illegal units. Mr. Matthews agreed saying that the proposal is a careful and well-written draft.

Needham 2025 – Ms. Cooley stated that the Town will issue an RFP for consulting assistance in the New Year. The Committee will pull together prior studies and seek input on filling the gaps. She said the highest priority is understanding the Town's population and its striations. She asked the Planning Board and School Committee to identify one member to serve on the small

working group. Mr. Jacobs and Ms. Neckes were identified as the members. Mr. Greis noted that the Town must be mindful of the impact of economic downturns on school enrollment. Dr. Gutekanst said that 18 – 20% of Needham students are not enrolled in the District, and that number is fairly constant. Ms. Cooley noted that after the downturn in 2002 the number was as low as 10%. Mr. Matthews said that there will likely be significant zoning measures enacted by the State in 2019 and that all of the boards will need to work together to transmit Needham's concerns to the Legislature.

Review of Housing Proposals – Mr. Matthews noted that in 2012 a working group of several boards drafted a set of guidelines for reviewing 40B projects, identifying preferred neighborhoods and designs. The Board of Selectmen believes that it would be a good idea to revisit that document in the post-40B world. Mr. Handel suggested that topic could be its own workshop. Mr. Borrelli said this project would dovetail with the N2025 work. He said that given the projects that have recently been proposed: Hunnewell, Great Plain Avenue, Chestnut Street and Crescent Road, the Town should have a formal strategy for review. He said he does not believe that significant housing growth is inevitable because the Town is in the driver's seat.

Zoning Review Protocols – Mr. Matthews said that people who have an interest in zoning now go to the Planning Board, or Board of Selectmen, or the CEA. He said the current practice is to muddle through. Ms. Fitzpatrick said that the Board's goal in this matter is to determine whether there should be a framework around prioritizing zoning proposals. Mr. Alpert said that it would be helpful if all zoning proposals are referred to the Planning Board. Ms. McKnight noted, for instance that the Planning Board was not involved in LIP meetings on the GPA project. She said that getting involved at the ZBA level would be very late in the process. Mr. Matthews agreed that good communication is important. Mr. Handel noted that the Board of Selectmen has not had any meetings on the proposed LIP – a developer on his own is meeting with neighbors, which is the recommended course of action. Mr. Borrelli said that he believes neighbors of that project would like to see a smaller scale project. He said that there are many people proposing uses at that location that he is not sure are appropriate. He asked the Planning Board if the use tables in each district should be evaluated. Mr. Alpert agreed. He said that the Planning Board should evaluate the use table for MU-128, and also the Industrial zone on Hillside Avenue. He said that he is disappointed in the slow redevelopment in MU-128. Mr. Pressman

noted that he is aware of a parcel that was not redeveloped because none of the proposed, marketable uses were allowed.

Council of Economic Advisors – Mr. Matthews noted that it is important that slots be filled by active participants. Mr. Jacobs noted that he feels there should be more private sector members.

Mr. Bulian, Ms. Longo Carter, Mr. Owens, Ms. Grimes, and Dr. Barr left the meeting prior to adjournment. Mr. Matthews thanked everyone for attending and suggested that the parties meet again in the near future.

10:05 a.m. **Motion: Ms. Cooley moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Handel seconded the motion. Unanimous: 4-0.**