

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

January 21, 2020

The regular meeting of the Planning Board held in the Charles River Room, Public Services Administration Building, was called to order by Martin Jacobs, Chairman, on Tuesday, January 21, 2020, at 7:05 p.m. with Messrs. Owens and Eisenhut and Ms. McKnight, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman, Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee and Recording Secretary, Ms. Kalinowski. Mr. Alpert arrived at 7:10 p.m.

Boston Development Group: 629-661 Highland Avenue, proposed development.

Ms. Newman noted this is being postponed due to illness.

Discussion: Boston Children's Hospital.

Mr. Jacobs noted a letter from Attorney Robert Smart requesting the discussion be postponed to the 2/4/20 meeting.

Minutes

Ms. McKnight noted on the 11/6/19 minutes, page 4, 3rd paragraph, 3rd line, change to "her understanding is the Select Board would like the Planning Board to do so."

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 11/6/19 with the one change discussed.

Ms. McKnight noted on the 11/19/19 minutes, page 2, 1st paragraph, 5th line, after "request for sidewalks" remove the comma and it should say "both sides only for the smaller..."

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Owens, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 11/19/19 with the changes discussed.

Correspondence

Mr. Jacobs noted a legal notice from Dedham regarding a Planned Residential Development and a copy of an article in Wicked Local regarding Bruce Eisenhut's appointment.

Preparation for Needham Heights Neighborhood Association community meeting.

Ms. Newman noted she received information from Natasha Espada looking at showing a warehouse on the Muzi property. This came in late today. This would need to be a 130,000 square foot warehouse use from an aerial perspective. Mr. Owens stated this is an allowed use by right under the current zoning. Ms. McKnight noted it is not clear where the access would be. This information should show the paved area. Ms. Newman noted pavement will be shown. This is just an aerial view. Ms. McKnight stated there was criticism of a look like boxes. She asked if there would there be windows and doors and what would it look like? Ms. Newman did not have Ms. Espada do that rendition.

Ms. Newman stated people thought the deficiency in our Town Meeting presentation was relating what could be put there right now and we did not do that. Mr. Eisenhut does not feel the Board should present this as the only as of right thing that could be built there. Adam Block suggested what could be done by Special Permit should be shown as well. Ms. Newman stated the Board talked about doing an as of right proposal. Mr. Eisenhut noted the Board could present one example and say this is only one example of what could be done. Ms. Newman noted retail above 5,750 square feet needs a special permit.

Mr. Owens commented he would not spend time on a special permit. He feels they need to illustrate the area where the Board has no control and what could go in as of right right now. They could simply say this is what type of thing is allowed by special permit. Ms. Newman gave an update. She and Mr. Owens had a working meeting with Select Board member Marianne Cooley, Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick and Town Engineer Anthony DelGaizo regarding a traffic study. There needs to be updated counts done. Counters have been put up at Central Avenue and Gould Street. They may be able to pull key intersections but not all. The report Beta did called for a light at Central and Gould. This cannot be done without taking 2 houses at the intersection. There could be no right on Gould Street coming out of the Muzi site but they would need to look to add a lane on Highland Avenue to see if that could be accommodated. The Board needs to set an FAR. The traffic study informs the decision on the FAR number. Mr. Jacobs noted the old counts are almost 5 years old.

Ms. McKnight asked whether there will be the same visuals at the neighborhood meeting that were presented at Town Meeting. Mr. Owens stated the visuals will not be updated after the meeting on Monday. Mr. Jacobs suggested saying the originally proposed FAR was 1.7 but the Board is now thinking in the range of 1.35. This is not definite. Mr. Owens suggested the Board could say there is an expected meaningful decrease in FAR based on feedback. Mr. Eisenhut stated he heard the concern is too broad a range for as of right and not a large enough range for a special permit. Ms. Newman agreed with that. Mr. Eisenhut also heard concerns with the side setback at the intersection and concern expressed on heights. The presentation visuals did not really depict that.

Report from Planning Director and Board members.

Ms. McKnight stated she has been approached by a Maple Street woman. Along the first block of Maple Street there is a General Resident District. What is being built are huge single family homes with one in front and one behind and connected with a portico. Mr. Eisenhut noted that is 2 buildings on a single lot. Ms. McKnight noted there is one under construction at present with a portico and hallway connecting the two. She would like to ask the Building Inspector what is going on. Mr. Jacobs requested the Planning Director ask the Building Inspector about this.

Ms. McKnight stated she was contacted by 2 women about the feasibility of having a By-Law in Needham regarding gas lines in Needham. They suggest no new homes can have gas lines. Mr. Eisenhut talked with the woman also and he thought she wanted to set a committee to look into this. Mr. Owens stated that would drive up the cost of housing. He thinks a study committee is a fine idea.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Owens, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Jeanne S. McKnight, Vice-Chairman and Clerk