

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

May 3, 2022

The Needham Planning Board Virtual Meeting using Zoom was remotely called to order by Paul Alpert, Chairman, on Tuesday, May 3, 2022, at 7:15 p.m. with Messrs. Block and Crocker and Mmes. McKnight and Espada, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Mr. Alpert took a roll call attendance of the Board members and staff. He noted this is an open meeting that is being held remotely because of Governor Baker's executive order on March 12, 2020 due to the COVID Virus. All attendees are present by video conference. He reviewed the rules of conduct for zoom meetings. He noted this meeting does include one public hearing and there will be public comment allowed. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call. All supporting materials, including the agenda, are posted on the town's website.

Public Hearing:

7:20 p.m. – Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Special Permit No. 91-7: Henry Hospitality, Inc. d/b/a The James, 18 Cliftdale Street, Roslindale, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 1027 Great Plain Avenue, Needham, MA). Regarding request to permit up to 69 outdoor seats by the James Pub on 5 on-site parking spaces.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Crocker, and seconded by Mr. Block, it was by a roll call vote of the five members present unanimously:

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

Stuart Henry, owner of the James Pub, thanked the Board for access to the patio during the pandemic. Mary Kiley, General Manager of the James, was at the meeting with him. He will keep the same footprint and build another platform from the building to access more handicap accessible tables. Mr. Block noted the application says this outdoor dining area will occupy 3 parking spaces. Mr. Henry noted they are currently using 3 parking spaces. There are 2 more parking spaces by the entrance that will be used. Mr. Alpert asked Mr. Henry to work with the Planning Staff to correct the application. He noted the applicant is asking for year-round outdoor dining. He looked at the second license and memorandum of understanding dated 3/11/22. Reading this gives the ability to have year-round outdoor dining and is subject to the agreement. The Board cannot grant the right to year-round outdoor dining, but he has no objection. The Board can allow this as long as it conforms under the second license and memorandum of understanding. It looks like that requires Select Board approval.

Mr. Alpert noted the following correspondence for the record: multiple communications from the Building Commissioner; an email from Fire Chief Dennis Condon noting the Fire Department is ok with this; an email from Assistant Health Director Tara Gurge with the usual requirements to continue to maintain the exterior in a clean and safe condition and a letter from Town Engineer Thomas Ryder with no objections. The emails from Building Commissioner David Roche questioned the number of seats and bathroom accommodations. Mr. Henry made arrangements to use a third bathroom at the Architrave store. The Building Commissioner then responded that the ability to use the third bathroom is fine and he is satisfied. Mr. Block had a question about the arrangement. The store hours are different, and he asked how the arrangement would work. Mr. Henry stated he rents space in the basement of that building and has 24-hour access to the back door and bathroom right there. Mr. Block is pleased with the bathroom arrangement and congratulated Mr. Henry on the success of his business.

Ms. McKnight noted the entry/exit on the left side and asked if that is from the railway walkway. Mr. Henry noted that is on the other side. Mr. Block noted the entry to the restaurant is on the railway right of way. This plan is only outdoor seating. Ms. McKnight stated she agreed with Mr. Alpert's comments. The applicant needs the Select Board's approval for use of the 5 parking spaces. Currently the handicap parking space is being used. It is problematic to eliminate a handicap space. She asked where a handicapped person would park. Mr. Henry stated they could park right outside the entry to the restaurant. There are 2 spaces right there. There is no handicapped-parking placard yet, but he will get one. Mr. Alpert asked if the applicant is ok with a condition the applicant replace the handicap space. Mr. Henry is ok with that. Ms. McKnight asked if a handicap person would be able to enter the restaurant via the outside eating area. Mr. Henry stated yes, the door is 42 inches wide.

Ms. Espada stated she appreciates the site plan. It is helpful to see all accessibility provisions. She asked why there is a 6-inch platform for most of the seating. Mr. Henry noted they were waterlogged most of the first year and people were sitting in puddles. Ms. Espada noted some seats are on the ramp. The ramp needs handrails. Mr. Crocker stated he has done a fantastic job. Mr. Block noted there are 2 parking plans. One has the proposed dumpster location. He noted there is a yellow section around 4 spaces and it shows bollards. The plan does not show the structure of where the restaurant is. He assumes it is behind that. Ms. Newman noted those parking spaces are the ones the Town has approved for use for the dumpster and now they want them to be approved for outdoor seating. The spaces in yellow are privately owned. Mr. Alpert stated the spaces are privately owned but need Town approval due to the agreement with the Town. It sounds like the Town can grant the request but pull it back anytime if they need the spaces.

Ms. McKnight noted the license agreement is dated in 2022. This is extending the 2015 license. She asked if there was any discussion with the Select Board when the license was approved regarding outdoor seating. Mr. Alpert stated it was covered in the agreement allowing outdoor dining. It contemplates outdoor dining. Ms. Newman noted the original agreement did not contemplate outdoor dining. It ran for 5 years and when it was renewed it added language for seasonal outdoor dining. Year-round seating would not be in violation of the agreement, subject to Select Board approval.

Mr. Crocker asked about snow removal and what is happening with that. Mr. Henry noted all the restaurants, Needham Center Fine Wine and Citizens Bank all take care of the snow removal. They are responsible for that part of the lot as it is private. Citizens has people that do snow removal and take it away. The rest of the snow is pushed against the patio wall.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Crocker, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by a roll call vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to close the hearing.

Ms. Newman will prepare an affirmative decision with prior comments and the discussion from tonight for the next meeting.

Appointment:

7:50 p.m. – Minor Project Review: Town of Needham, 500 Dedham Avenue, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 1330 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA).

Ms. Newman noted this is a minor project review. It does not hit the trigger for a major project review. The Planning Board provides comments to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA); the Board does not issue a decision but makes recommendations. Hank Haff, Director of Building Design and Construction for the Town, noted this is a complete gut renovation for continued use of the building for the school administration. The building was built in 1898 as a high school and is 124 years old. Construction was 24 years old before the first draft of the 1925 Zoning By-Laws. In 1947 the building was converted to school administration use and in 1986 it was placed on the Registry of Historic Places. The Historical Commission is supportive of the renovation. There will be Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding and the hope is Town Meeting will approve the CPA funding. The renovation is almost entirely enclosed within the building. Several waivers are being requested. This was discussed with the DRB on 4/25/22 and the architect is reviewing those. He noted the DRB is generally supportive of the project.

Town Counsel Christopher Heep reviewed the waivers. In Section 5.1.1.2, amount of parking, the requirement is 89 parking spaces, and they are proposing 62 spaces. The current building would require 85 spaces under the By-Law but there are only 65 spaces on site. This is a net reduction of 3 spaces. The site has performed well over the years. In Section 5.1.1.3 (j), setback to parking, there is 10 feet required and there is only 4 feet in some places at the rear of the site along Oakland Avenue. In Section 5.1.1.3 (k), landscaping, the By-Law requires 10% and 25% interior. There is 13.4% landscaping but only 8.4% interior. In Section 5.1.1.3 (m), parking location within 300 feet of the site, he noted there may be instances where parking may need to be off-site. He acknowledges this. He noted there are 3 existing non-conformities. The side yard setback for the portico is 11.3 feet from the side yard lot line. That portico is not changing but 15 feet is the setback requirement. The maximum height is 3 stories and 40 feet but the existing height is 4 levels and 60 feet.

Mr. Alpert asked what the building to the west is. Mr. Haff noted, technically, it is south and adjacent to St. Joseph's. Ms. McKnight noted immediately south there is the former convent that is used as a pre-school. Then next to that is the church itself. Mr. Heep stated none of the existing non-conformities are being extended in any substantial way. Ms. McKnight stated, as to the waiver with regard to parking, she is supportive of granting a waiver to reduce to 62 spaces. She does not understand the need for any special conditions if the waiver is granted. She is opposed to parking at Stephen Palmer and does not see the need for a waiver to allow parking more than 300 feet from the site. Mr. Haff stated the applicant applied for more relief than needed. The list was worked up with the Building Commissioner so he would not like to drop the request.

Mr. Alpert noted the waiver to allow for additional parking more than 300 feet from the building. He asked, if granted, would the applicant need to come back if that changes. Mr. Heep does not think there is any question of their contracting with any business owners. This is for municipal lots within 300 feet of the building. Mr. Haff analyzed the number of on-street spaces within 300 feet of the building. This use of on-street parking has been the experience for decades with the existing user. Town Meeting requested the applicant not constrain the Stephen Palmer site, which is more than 300 feet from the site. Ms. Newman agrees with Ms. McKnight it does not need a waiver. The relief under Section (m) is not required. Mr. Heep stated if the Planning Board wants to include a recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) that the relief is not needed he is ok with that.

Mr. Crocker stated he does not understand why they are looking for a waiver when it is not needed. There is parking on site and other parking nearby. Mr. Block stated, when it was a larger project, there was a discussion regarding using Stephen Palmer as a parking site, but the project has since been reduced in size. He asked if the ZBA should add a requirement no employees or visitors shall park on Oakland or Pickering north of May Street as that is resident parking only. For big meetings, were they thinking of parking on Pickering and north of May Street? Mr. Haff stated all spaces were counted as available parking. He noted people park in the school lot for church and funerals. It has functioned like this for years. The teachers can park in 2- or 3-hour spots. It is all public parking around there. Mr. Block was not aware it was public parking.

Mr. Alpert clarified people can park on public streets. Mr. Block commented he was concerned with 100 cars pulling out. Mr. Crocker noted the Town has a responsibility when they have a large gathering to encourage car-pooling. Ms. McKnight agrees with Ms. Newman. A condition that allows for parking further than 300 feet is appropriate only when the site is owned or leased by the applicant, and it is determined the applicant needs the parking. Any condition about 300 feet is not necessary. Ms. Espada agrees. She does not see the need.

Joel Bargmann, of Bargmann Hendrie & Archetype, Inc., reviewed the project. The old entry is being changed by infilling it to prevent confusion with the new entrance. The DRB suggested a planter and recess the window a bit. It is not practical to put the old clock in, but it has been preserved off site. There is a roof top enclosure to hold the mechanics. The major change is they are down 3 parking spaces. The entire asphalt in front of the school is being removed and only 3 handicap spaces will remain at the left portico. It was suggested they use some bushes to hide the spaces from Highland Avenue. There is a small addition for trash and a loading dock. All the floors are at a split level, so you need a loading dock.

Mr. Bargmann stated the existing vehicular entry is being maintained due to an easement access for the residential abutters. The DRB suggested panelizing the roof top enclosure or putting a cornice to provide more detail and make the enclosure smaller. They will put a planter to infill the old entry. It is difficult to see the elevator overrun and mechanical systems from Highland Avenue. He noted the elevator has to be where it is at the entry. The back of the building has 6 windows that are filled with brick. The project will open them up and create some office space that can be used. He stated they plan to show the comments from the Planning Board to the ZBA.

Mr. Block stated this was an excellent presentation. He asked if someone were to go by wheelchair, are there stairs to go from the driveway into the front door. Mr. Bargmann stated there is one step there. Ms. Espada had no comments or questions. Mr. Crocker asked, with the heating system being different, would the chimneys even be used. Mr. Bargmann stated the chimneys could not be used. The 2 chimneys in the middle will be kept as they are structurally required for air exchange. The chimneys in the back are being removed and they are gaining 8 offices in the building.

Ms. McKnight sought clarification as to whether the property is burdened by an easement to the condominium property and was informed that is correct. There is also a utility easement. Ms. McKnight noted she always thought of the rooftop

structure referred to as a clock as a water tank. Mr. Haff noted Anne Gulati, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance, requested the high school students have input into what goes into the circle at the front of this structure if the clock is not put back. The students designed the town logo. Ms. McKnight noted the comments from the DRB regarding trees and plantings. She asked if the applicant is responding to comments from the DRB. Mr. Bargmann noted, as to the comment regarding tree removal, it is necessary. The addition cannot be put on without removing the tree and there is no other place to put the loading dock. He noted some historic photos show bushes. There is one remaining bush that will bring back some of the historical character.

Ms. McKnight noted rubbish removal and the arborvitae tree screen. Mr. Bargmann noted there is a tree screen and hedge that screens the dumpster for St. Josephs. Mr. Crocker noted the Planning Board would require some type of additional trees between the back and St. Josephs to the south of the building. He asked why nothing is being planted there. Mr. Bargmann will take a look at that. Mr. Haff stated St. Joseph's side has a row of pine trees that goes all the way across the face of the building and one large oak tree by the play yard. He will speak with St. Joseph's. If they want the applicant to add a second row of trees, they will do that although it may be redundant.

Oscar Mertz, architect, asked if the community would have access to the building at times with shared room and common spaces. Mr. Haff stated the community comes in throughout the day for a variety of services. The top floor will be a larger conference room that could be utilized by the public especially in the evening. It is not really as big as Powers Hall. They are still in discussions as to whether the School Committee will have its meetings there or continue to have them at Broadmeadow School. Ms. McKnight commented she is happy to hear that there could be community use. She asked if that room will be added to the list of available Town spaces. Mr. Haff noted it most likely would be added for off hours and weekends. It would need monitoring of the room and a nominal fee. Mr. Alpert reviewed the comments for the ZBA. The parking waiver is not necessary for more than 300 feet and landscaping should be considered on the south side of the building. McKnight would like to comment she would support the grant of a parking waiver to allow construction with 62 spaces. All agreed. Mr. Alpert asked if there would be a bicycle rack. Mr. Haff stated it conforms to the zoning by-law. They have not observed a lot of people coming by bicycle, but he noted the bike rack could accommodate 8 bicycles.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a roll call vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to recommend approval of a parking waiver of 62 spaces and recommend they not grant a waiver for off-site parking more than 300 feet from the site as it is unnecessary.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a roll call vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to accept the rear setback on the east side of the building from 10 feet to 4 feet and the amount of landscaping within the interior of the area.

Decision: Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Review No. 1018-05: Town of Needham, 1471 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 28 Glen Gary Road, Needham, MA.) Regarding request to remove Condition 3.2 of the existing decision, which would then allow the temporary move of the Needham Public Schools ("NPS") administrative staff.

Mr. Alpert noted the decision has Ms. Espada as being present and she was not. The vote would be 4 members. Condition 3.2 regarding preventing using the parking lot for municipal use has been removed.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a roll call vote of four of the five members present (Ms. Espada abstained):

VOTED: to grant the requested amendment to a Major Site Plan Review Special Permit issued by the Needham Planning Board on July 17, 2018, amended June 29, 2021, under Section 7.4 of the Needham Zoning By-Law and Special Permit 2019-05, Section 421, subject to the following plan modifications, conditions and limitations in the decision that is before the Board.

A motion was made to approve the amendment to the decision dated 5/1/22. Mr. Alpert noted the finding in Section 1.5 says “Needham Public Schools (NPS) would of course need to use existing parking spaces.” He does not feel “of course” is appropriate and should be struck. Ms. Newman agreed.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a roll call vote of four of the five members present (Ms. Espada abstained):

VOTED: to approve the amendment to the decision dated 5/1/22 with the one change discussed.

Decision: Amendment to Major Project Site Plan Review No. 2008-08: The Learning Tree Preschool, Inc., 225 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA, Petitioner (Property located at 225 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA). Regarding request to expand its current operation at this location to include the abutting former UBreakiFix tenant space.

Mr. Alpert noted on the 1st page, 4th paragraph, it does not list those present. That information needs to be added. On the top of page 3, last sentence in Section 1.3, says “in essence.” That is not appropriate and should be removed. All agreed. Mr. Alpert noted in Section 3.1, there is a space that should be removed between 2020 and the comma. Ms. Newman stated she would remove Ms. Espada from the signature line.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a roll call vote of four of the five members present (Ms. Espada abstained):

VOTED: to grant (1) the requested Major Project Site Plan Special Permit Amendment under Section 7.4 of the Needham Zoning By-Law and Section 4.2 of the Major Project Special Permit No. 2008-08; dated November 12, 2008, amended August 11, 2009, January 4, 2011, August 9, 2011, June 12, 2012 and July 21, 2020; and (2) the requested Special Permit under Section 5.1.1.5 of the By-Law to further waive strict adherence with the requirements of Section 5.1.2 (Required Parking), subject to and with the benefit of the following Plan modifications, conditions, limitations and finding of facts as set forth in the decision.

Mr. Alpert noted there is another space in the “Therefore” section. There is an extra space after July 21, 2020. It will be removed.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a roll call vote of four of the five members present (Ms. Espada abstained):

VOTED: to approve the decision with the changes discussed.

Revise temporary outdoor seating/outdoor display policy to extend applicability date to April 1, 2023 or another later date deemed appropriate by the Board.

Mr. Alpert noted the date should be changed to 4/1/2023 as the outside date. Ms. Newman stated the Governor has approved outside seating through 4/1/2023. The town needs to modify the policy for an additional year to be consistent with the Governor. This is a very recent change.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a roll call vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adopt a change of date as presented to the Board.

Vote new Select Board appointment to the Housing Plan Working Group.

Ms. McKnight has spoken with Heidi Frail who has agreed to be the Select Board appointee.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Ms. Espada, it was by a roll call vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to appoint Heidi Frail as a member of the Housing Plan Working Group Committee as the Select Board member.

Minutes

Ms. McKnight noted in the minutes of 12/21/21, 1688 Central Avenue, the paragraph at the bottom, it says “Mr. Jacobs stated it may not be in the proviso.” Mr. Alpert stated it should be “may not be in the M.G.L. Ch. 40, Section 3.” All agreed. Ms. McKnight noted on the next page, it says “the barn is exclusively for day care use and not necessarily for storage.” She thinks “only” should be added after “storage.” In the paragraph at the bottom of the page, Mr. Alpert stated the Board needs to come up with “regulations.” It should be “conditions.” Mr. Alpert thought it may be “reasonable regulations.” It was decided to leave it alone. On the next page regarding setbacks, it says “the setbacks are there because that is where the builders decided years ago to build the houses.” Ms. McKnight feels it should say “the setbacks in Section 4.” Mr. Block agreed.

Ms. McKnight noted there were 2 sentences regarding statements by Mr. Jacobs that are unclear. One was “Mr. Jacobs stated the Board could find the setback needs to be more than 64 feet, but he does not know how to make that clear.” Mr. Block stated that would be making a condition based on a subsequent condition. Mr. Alpert thinks the discussion was about traffic and a condition of whether to have a police detail and if it continues was about traffic study. Mr. Block stated the second sentence regarding a statement by Mr. Block should be struck and Mr. Jacobs sentence should remain. Ms. McKnight noted in the 1st paragraph of the breweries discussion, Mr. Alpert stated Mr. Jacobs said at the Select Board meeting “He was not sure we need to have zoning. Under the current By-Laws there can be breweries.” She is not sure that is needed. She brought the 2 sentences together and suggests adding “if deemed similar to already allowed uses.” Mr. Alpert stated that is not what Mr. Jacobs said. Mr. Block felt it was a reasonable addition. Mr. Alpert noted he was ok with adding it.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Block, it was by a roll call vote of four of the five members present (Mr. Crocker abstained):

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 12/21/21 with the changes shown in red line and further changes discussed tonight.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Ms. Espada, it was by a roll call vote of four of the five members present (Mr. Crocker abstained):

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 1/4/22 with the changes shown in red line.

Ms. McKnight noted in the minutes of 2/15/22, page 2, “Mr. Jacobs asked if the construction dumpsters will be in a couple of months.” Mr. Alpert stated it should be “will be installed in a couple of months.” Ms. McKnight noted Mr. Moskowitz conceded the dumpsters were there about 5 years. She is not clear on how many years. It should be 15 years. Ms. McKnight noted the last paragraph of the Emery Grover discussion regarding setbacks. A non-apartment building side yard setback is 15 feet under Section 4.3, but it should be Section 4.73.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Ms. Espada, it was by a roll call vote of four of the five members present (Mr. Crocker abstained):

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 2/15/22 with the changes shown in red line and with the additional changes discussed tonight.

Ms. McKnight noted on the minutes of 2/25/22, 2nd paragraph, Mr. Alpert noted there was a minor modification on the agenda and there would be public comment. The Board did not get to that item. Mr. Alpert stated it was on the agenda and should be left as is. Ms. McKnight noted the 1st paragraph of 1688 Central Avenue, “at the last meeting the Board discussed the restriction of further subdividing the lot. They have since learned an easement would enable a subdivision of the lot.” She suggested adding “roadway” before easement. Mr. Block stated it should be “roadway easement.” He remembers the substantive conversation. Mr. Crocker asked if there could be a driveway easement. Mr. Alpert asked when does a driveway become a roadway. A driveway cannot have frontage; it would need to be a roadway. Ms. McKnight suggested adding “a roadway laid out and approved” or separating the paragraphs and leave out the sentence.

Ms. McKnight noted on page 4, 3rd paragraph, Mr. Jacobs stated “members have already said no to enough and cannot say yes to the letter.” Ms. McKnight asked if this is the letter from the attorney. Mr. Block stated it makes sense in the context. Ms. McKnight suggested removing the sentence. Mr. Alpert noted Mr. Huber’s letter said the applicant would agree to an 80-foot setback if the Planning Board agreed to other things. This was already discussed, and the Board said no. He suggested putting “Evans Huber’s settlement letter.” This was agreed.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Block it was by a roll call vote of three of the five members present (Mr. Crocker and Ms. Espada abstained):

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 2/25/22 with the red line changes shown in the draft and with the changes discussed tonight.

Ms. McKnight noted the minutes of 3/1/22, 5th page, 1st full paragraph, it should be “segment” not “department.” Mr. Block agreed.

Upon a motion made by Ms. McKnight, and seconded by Mr. Block, it was by a roll call vote of four of the five members present (Mr. Crocker abstained):

VOTED: to accept the minutes of 3/1/22 with the red line changes shown in the draft and the one change discussed tonight.

Report from Planning Director and Board members.

Ms. Newman noted a copy of the Town’s response to the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for 557 Highland Avenue, comments from the DPW and Rebecca Brown of GPI. Mr. Alpert noted Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick stated the parcel is being used as a dealership, but that is long gone and the buildings have been razed. Ms. Newman stated she wrote the letter for the Town Manager so she takes ownership of that. GPI is doing a review now on the site plan and she will get a revised letter. The intended roadway widening at Highland and Gould is extending onto the Muzi property and is showing as an easement. It should be shown in the layout. It could impact FAR. She noted the hearing is set for 6/7/22 and will be the 1st hybrid meeting at Powers Hall. She stated the Planning Board has Power’s Hall for July and August as it is a larger space. Mr. Block asked when the leadership changes for the Planning Board and was informed after Town Meeting.

Ms. McKnight stated a housing survey was sent out last week with the responses due 5/19/22. The responses will be evaluated at a subsequent meeting of the Housing Plan Working Group. She requested that, if Board members are active in any group, they send out the link to the survey. Mr. Block asked what the plan is, where is the subcommittee at, what are they studying and what kind of recommendation will there be. Ms. McKnight noted they would likely have a draft housing plan and public meeting in October. The 2020 census data is finally set. Housing and Planning Consultant Karen Sunnarborg made a good start on the housing plan. Now the housing group has come up with ideas and put a lot in the survey. They will take into account all the responses.

Ms. McKnight noted the MBTA Communities Initiative Act. There are 11,500 housing units in town. If it is a commuter rail community the Town’s obligation to zone for new multi-family housing it would be at 15% of current housing units and not the 20%, which is unreasonable. Ms. Newman stated the Town wants to come up with a plan in response to the new law. Mr. Alpert stated he is in full accord with the objective of the intentions of this bill. He would love to see Needham do what it can to have transit housing in somewhat the form the statute is requiring. The penalty is not so onerous for not adopting. He agrees with all the sentiments, but it should be done by special permit. The Town should adopt the sentiment of it and go forward and have the kind of housing envisioned but by special permit.

Ms. Espada stated they had a community housing workshop with community members. There were 69% who wanted to participate in the MBTA Communities Initiative and 50% supported the Needham Housing Authority to renovate and expand the housing units. The Board should support revised zoning to allow for different types of housing in different areas of town. This needs to be revised. Mr. Crocker agrees they need to look at it but not by right. Mr. Alpert agrees with Ms. Espada they do need to change Zoning By-Laws to move on housing. Ms. McKnight encouraged all to read the report done by the Town staff. There is a blueprint for compliance.

Mr. Alpert stated they could look at structure in terms of site plan review. Site plan review is like 40A and cannot be denied. Ms. Espada noted the subgroups’ work will be done the end of May. They can start getting together before the summer so they can start again in October and move forward. Mr. Alpert stated, to comply with the MBTA Communities Guidelines, the zoning has to be family friendly, but they seem to be encouraging studio apartments.

Mr. Alpert noted the following correspondence for the record: an email to support and vote positively on a Town Meeting Warrant Article but at last night’s Town Meeting. Ms. McKnight noted The Town of Needham Sewer System Impact

Program Regulations are included in the packet. She intends to make a comment at Town Meeting on an article regarding Public Works capital projects on storm water improvements. She wants to comment the reason stated in the article explanation is that they need to spend money on it because subdivisions and multi-family housing are being built without proper storm water management. It almost seems to imply the Planning Board has not been watching this issue when approving projects. The Town adopted new storm water regulations in 2018. Maybe in decades past the town was not addressing the need but they are certainly doing so now. She does not want to let it hang out there that it is the Planning Board's fault.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Block, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a roll call vote of the five members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Adam Block, Vice-Chairman and Clerk