

Waban Area Council
Meeting Minutes 12/8/22 7:30pm
Held via Zoom

WAC: Rena Getz, Christopher Pitts, Isabelle Albeck, Sallee Lipshutz, Dinah Bodkin, Drake McCabe, Sumukh Tendulkar, Bill Bracken

City Councillors: Deb Crossley, Bill Humphrey

Community: Alice Ingerson, Carol McCarthy, Erik Brown, Erin Wand, Geline and Bruce Edmans, Jeffrey Freedman, Margie Arons-Barron, Shawn Hurley, Annie Aunins, Bernice Bradin, John Mordes, Liz Larson, Faith Friedman

Historic Plaques Installed in Waban

Two plaques were installed on 12/7/22, one at Waban Common, one directly across from WLC. Plaques give description of Waban history, important persons and local landmarks. Plaques are well situated because buildings referred to are within sight lines of the plaques. Well described in Historic Newton <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/historic-newton/research/newton-history/history-signs/waban-history-signs>. Some financing for the project was provided by Waban Improvement Society. Remainder funded by anonymous donor. QR code on the plaques gives additional historic details.

20 Kinmonth Rd.

Reconfiguration of sidewalks and streets created much consternation among local residents and businesses. RG contacted Isaac Prizant engineer for City of Newton about concerns. Was informed that Kinmonth is a private road and the work is being done by the developer of 20 Kinmonth. Main concerns are around parking, which is now much reduced, and vehicle circulation which is now much encumbered. Very concerning for Waban Market and Barry's Deli. Preferred Properties is the property management company for the Strong Building and its parking lot. Presumably they are free to lease out parking spaces. Street reconfigured so that it is no longer possible to make U-Turn in front of Waban Mkt and Suzuki School. Meeting planned tomorrow with Bill Humphrey and business owners. Concerns will be brought to DPW.

Zoning Update

RG presented material from Planning Department Slide Decks or ZAP reports. Aerial view of Waban Village Center, chart showing what is allowed by right and by special permit in VC1 and VC2. Charts and tables also show allowable massing and building heights. Planning Department's current focus is Village Centers. All information, charts, etc. available at <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>. Property owners of parcels identified in the proposed Waban Village Overlay District (VCOD), can choose to abide by the current base zoning (SR2) or submit a building application selecting the VCOD designation. Once a building permit is issued utilizing the VCOD zoning, the parcel "must remain in compliance with the overlay district going forward." RG explained that setbacks still determine the size of the allowable building footprint. Deb Crossley stated that there has been preliminary discussion at the Zoning & Planning Committee (ZAP) meetings that a special permit option will not be allowed in VC1, except in limited circumstances. As of now maximum footprint in VC1 is 4000 square feet. Although parameters differ from current zoning, in the proposed zoning, lot size, required building setbacks and separations, as well as onsite parking requirements will determine maximum allowable building footprints. Very large lots (>30,000 sq ft) are in their own category and will require a special permit from the city.

Councillor Humphrey :Lots where Union Church located have a deed restriction. Can not be used for any other purpose. Councillor Humphrey anticipates that there's going to be a revision in the next round of maps. Erin Wand questioned whether special permit will be

allowed for commercial properties in VC. Councillor Crossley: the general desire is to not see special permit option for commercial eliminated completely. Concern re getting the proportion of commercial to residential ratio correct. No commercial expansion is planned for Waban. Wish to minimize vacant retail space. Shawn Hurley, a local resident who is also a real estate developer stated that floor heights in proposed zoning are excessive. RG showed how building designs would actually look in 3D. Computer work in Google Earth Pro was done by Drake McCabe utilizing the proposed zoning to depict allowable zoning envelopes and then layering them into the existing 3D terrain. Examples showed that the allowed massing would be excessive and way over scale.

Discussion turned to general problem of affordability, with Deb Crossley stating that in order to have truly affordable housing, the number of units allowable on a single lot has to be adjusted. If four units are allowable on a single lot (example given was lot next to her own house) then the housing crisis can be addressed at scale. Units would be smaller and more affordable. Units on Wyman St, owned by Newton Housing Authority, are deed restricted at the affordable level. The problem of parking kept coming up. Example given where people who have bought units at Kinmonth almost certainly will have more than one car per family. Yet, the building has one underground parking spot per unit. Similar problems will arise as housing density is increased.

Discussion turned to aesthetic problems caused by large massing. Shawn Hurley proposed that there should be a minimum lot size that really focuses on larger areas that do make sense for development. Sallee Lipshutz proposed for large homes to be developed into two units. That possibility also comes up in discussions of historic preservation. Councillor Humphrey again reiterated that the property between Manitoba and Waban Common is almost certainly not going to be included as part of the Village Center in the next round of maps.

MBTA Communities Development Act requires more housing in vicinity of light rail, ie Waban T stop. Possibility of some smaller unit construction on Wyman St discussed.

Councillor Humphrey, along with Councillors Downs, Crossley and former W5 Councilor John Rice submitted paperwork to landmark the Strong Building.

Shawn Hurley, given his expertise as a developer, was asked to inform Councillor Crossley on key issues of building height, mass, etc. Agreed to meet Councillor Crossley for this purpose. Discussion ended with general agreement that lack of affordable housing is creating all sorts of labor and economic problems throughout Newton, if not throughout the entire region and country. Next version of the zoning map will be out in February of 2023.

Respectfully submitted by Dinah Bodkin
January 3 2022