

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: January 14, 2015 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:05 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

PRESENT: John Hawes, Chairman; Jeff Brown; Fergal Brennock; Linda Tuttle-Barletta; Neal Corbett
Steve Magoon, Director; Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Planning Board;
Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

ADMINISTRATION BUSINESS

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to approve Minutes of 11/10/14.

Jeff Brown seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0 In favor

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to approve Minutes of 12/10/14.

Jeff Brown seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0 In favor

CASE PENDING:

- **65 Grove Street;** Edward Nardi, Cresset Grove LLC - **Special Permit with Site Plan Review**

John Hawes, 65 Grove Street will not be heard tonight.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to continue the above petition until the next meeting of Planning Board on February 11, 2015.

Neal Corbett seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0 In favor

PROPOSED ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT

- **SIGNS AND ILLUMINATION FOR HOTEL/MOTEL SIGNS**

John Hawes, the pending Text Amendment for signage and illumination for hotels and motels will be discussed tonight.

Gideon Schreiber, the amendment had been proposed by a Petitioner. DCDP staff suggested creating a new section of the Sign Ordinance to deal with signage for hotels and motels in all districts. The current Ordinance allows up to 200 square feet of signage at each site. No sign can be greater than 5% of a façade and no sign would be allowed above 20 feet in height on the facades. The proposed language would allow more flexibility, because the use is unique. The DCDP staff identified that the Petitioner's draft language would only allow Wall and Banner signs. To remedy this, DCDP staff recommended changes to the draft language, creating an allowance for Monument Ground Signs. The staff suggested an introduction, to clarify the intent: This section of Watertown's Zoning Ordinance (WZO) is only for hotels and motels. There are clarifications to other references to the WZO that would not be needed. Further change under "*Banner*" would be projecting Banner signs. Banner signs are defined as being at least 7 feet above the ground level. A short visual presentation would provide a context of what is currently allowed versus what would be allowed with the proposed Text Amendment.

William McQuillen, Boylston Properties, showed images of their existing properties with signage. They were hotels in Brookline, on Storrow Drive, Cambridge, the Charles Hotel in Harvard Square, Tudor Warf in Charlestown, Embassy Suites, Waltham, a Holiday Inn Express in Waltham, Weston in Waltham, the Hyatt Hotel on Memorial Drive, Cambridge, and the Newton Marriott. There are other hotels that don't have signs on the top of their building, but our company is looking for signage at the top of the proposed Marriott building. The proposed building is 69 feet tall, and the current WZO only allows signage at 20 feet up on the façade. Renderings illustrating the proposed banners, and signs, are shown. The proposed banners are about 2 feet wide and about three stories tall. They would be

about 30 feet in height. The signs and banners would be below the sizes allowed by the proposed Text Amendment.

Neal Corbett, would the banners be illuminated at night?

William McQuillen, the proposal is to have the banners up-lighted. This is what has been done for a Residence Inn in the Fenway about 18 months ago. The up-lighting is not really critical.

Steve Magoon, the up-lighting is generally prohibited. The staff has not discussed the type of lighting with the Petitioner.

John Hawes, should this issue be addressed in the proposed Text Amendment?

Steve Magoon, this Amendment does not affect that either way. The staff generally requires on projects Dark Sky compliant fixtures, which are down-directed and fully shielded. Up-lighting is inconsistent with these requirements and would be an issue. There are other ways to illuminate the banners, such as down-lighting, which is still consistent with Dark Sky initiatives.

Gideon Schreiber, Section 7.08 speaks to permitted illumination. This section requires lights to be installed in a manner that prevents light spill over onto adjacent streets or property.

Barbara Ruskin, what do the 200 square feet in the proposed Text Amendment refer to?

Steve Magoon, this is a limitation in terms of the overall size of Wall Signs for Hotels or Motels. Building signs would be limited to no more than 200 square feet.

Jeff Brown, I have discussed my concerns with staff, the bottom of the banner can be 7 feet to the ground. This is a quite low, and may be within reach of pedestrians, who might attempt to grab the banner.

Gideon Schreiber, the staff was trying to achieve a height that was in keeping with other sections of the Sign Ordinance. I suggest a 9 foot height as an alternate. The banners may not in all cases be at or over a sidewalk. An alternative would be to deal with banners over sidewalks.

Steve Magoon, the proposed 7 foot distance might be too low. This distance could be increased, to make it more than 7 feet, thereby raising the bottom of the banner above the sidewalk. 9 feet would be adequate, although it would not be consistent with the sign height in other sections of the WZO.

Barbara Ruskin, is 200 square feet, as the maximum size of Wall Signs, too large?

Steve Magoon, the proposed language is 200 square feet, total, with a maximum of 100 square feet for any one sign. If you look at the renderings shown by Mr. McQuillin, the large sign on the approved hotel would be about 85 square feet. The WZO already includes a maximum signage allowance of 200 square feet for large structures.

Gideon Schreiber, the size of Wall Signs area is also regulated by the size of the façade. Based on this, the 200 square foot size is an upper maximum of the size of all the wall signs. Each individual sign could only be 100 square feet in size.

Ellen Bean, the banner would be up-lighted, how bright will the up-lighting be? I am concerned that it would be a bright light, causing light pollution.

Steve Magoon, the DCDP staff had the same concern, the light for the banners, if used, should not be glaring, and spilling out into the street, or onto other properties.

Councilor Falkoff, the proposed building renderings showed another small white sign at the main entrance and a corner sign. Is there one on the other end? The entrance should be labeled, and the look was better than using banners.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to recommend to the Town Council approval of an amendment to Section 7.11 of the Watertown Zoning Ordinance including a requirement that the sign will be at least 9.0 feet above ground level, in Section 7.11(1)(b)(1).

Jeff Brown seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0 In Favor

PROPOSED ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT

- ***PLEASANT STREET CORRIDOR DISTRICT – See Attached***

Steve Magoon, at the last meeting when this proposed text amendment had been discussed, the Planning Board had asked for some changes to the text and to the draft Zoning Map. One of the directives from the Board was to put the PSCD changes into the context of the draft Design Standards and Guidelines, to make sure that both were not in conflict. Staff enlisted our consultant David Gamble to review the PSCD language and make some suggestions.

Gideon Schreiber, some of the numbering had changed. Language clarifications to put back references to the Charles River façade side of buildings that had been inadvertently deleted in a prior text re-write. Height limits have been corrected and recommendations for sectional drawings were added, allowance for 79 feet/7 stories, 15 foot step back kept. Percentage of publicly accessible open space was created. Incentives for additional open space are allowed. Build-to line is to be used and references added to the adopted Design Standards and Guidelines. We need to visually shield parking lots and find ways to enhance open space. There are new additional changes for FAR and height. Two sections need to be modified in the *Table of Dimensional Regulations*. The zoning map has been updated since the October 2014 meeting, a single family house parcel on Pleasant Street has been changed to “T-zone.” Area circled on the draft zoning map changed railroad corridor frontage to mixed use.

Joan Gumbleton, 47 Waltham Street, what is the zoning status of lot at 46 Waltham Street, at the intersection of Waltham & Bridge Street? I am concerned that the lots might be negatively impacted if a new owner wanted to tear down the existing structure and build new two-family homes.

John Hawes, when the area became PSCD, residential was allowed on all these sites. The non-conformities should not be a problem. Putting only commercial on Waltham Street creates a use that empties into a residential neighborhood. Which parcels should be PSDC-2 or PSCD-3? What’s the logic of the last piece?

Gideon Schreiber, when the PSCD zone was created, single-family and two-family housing was not allowed as of right in the zone. These cases are now non-conforming. That lot has been historically non-conforming and has been in the Industrial-3 zone. There are all two families and will remain two family homes.

Steve Magoon, there are several issues. One is dealing with long-standing uses and another is looking at the frontage issues. Businesses in the area are more likely to be redeveloped as residential. This poses a potential threat for these parcels to be redeveloped, it is important to keep the tax base.

Barbara Ruskin, I am grateful that the conversation is being started. I never understood to make only commercial in the lavender colored areas, the market will decide. Cities are having commercial and residential, or commercial and retail. We have concerns over more traffic if more residential is allowed. Office buildings tend to generate more cars. Office buildings on the river have lots of glass. Once the office buildings are empty, the area is dead and dangerous, because office lights are turned off. We need more residential in the mix for the area to be alive past 6:00 PM.

Steve Magoon, restricting to commercial will not solve the traffic problem. The idea to make it commercial is to help with the mix of uses. We need to allow residential with other uses, and spread the types along and throughout the corridor.

Councilor Ken Woodland, we need to maintain the Town's tax base. I understand the PSCD zone and endorse keeping this as it is.

Councilor Vincent Piccirilli, I have been working on the PSCD corridor zoning since 2007. It is hard to achieve a mixed use district through zoning. The proposed changes are needed to force more commercial/retail. I support the plan with the three zones as presented. We thank the DCDP staff for changes in the map to the four lots on one end of the corridor.

Jeff Brown, is it in the Board's purview to extend the green coding on the map through a gap? What is the length of the walls? Is it normal to stipulate not more than x-length in feet? What's the right length?

Gideon Schreiber, the segment in the river can be changed. The other area is private property and that cannot be coded as open space. We can make that change to the map.

David Gamble, Gamble Associates, the number is in some ways arbitrary. Design Standards and Guidelines will provide more clarification. Other Towns would have a requirement like this. We want to create a mixed use corridor. Façade lengths can be easily overdone or be over-regulated. Farther setback, less engagement in the public realm.

Councilor Dushku, this is one of my concerns. Façade length and building size are the key issues for people in the corridor. Could you fit a 250 foot building on some of the PSCD lots? I am impressed by Mr. Gamble's presentation of the Design Standards and Guidelines. Smaller buildings allow for cut through roads to be built, too.

John Hawes, it appears that a building can be built to a zero lot line. Language seem to eliminate the protection. Item F on page 4. Allowance for flat roof. I don't know if that is enough.

Gideon Schreiber, 18 foot setback still trumps. In certain instances it will be a rear yard or a side yard. Within first 40 feet from that residential district, there must be a setback.

Jeff Brown, do the proposed changes to PSCD fit into the Guidelines?

Steve Magoon, it is not practicable to have façade to that line at exactly 10 feet back, this will give some limited flexibility. We are asking David Gamble to take a look at the proposed PSCD zoning, and help ensure that there are no significant inconsistencies with the Design Standards and Guidelines.

David Gamble, this passed our review. Proposed PSCD zoning passed muster through the proposed Design Standards and Guidelines.

Joan Gumbleton, 47 Waltham Street, I am not clear about the reference to the S-6 zone and the 18 foot setbacks. Two single family homes are that area and lots are narrower than 100 feet. In these cases, can go to the 8 foot mark and have 10 feet of vegetation. That's really close to their property line. There is a potential to deprive people of their back yard privacy. This requirement appears to target this area. Loss of the berm alone will be an impact.

Gideon Schreiber, there is a 10 foot setback, which is the same setback such as house would have for a side yard. There could be an underground story, or a garage, and then there would still have to be that step-back. This is what is allowed in the T and S-6 zones. 26 feet in height for a wall. For the first 40 feet, the development has to emulate what the T or S-6 zone has. One concession is the 10 feet of buffer. Better than the prior case, which was a straight 18 feet. Not many lots about the S-6 zone.

Councilor Dushku, I like the idea of unbundled parking. We need to require the developer to separate the cost of parking from the unit. Resident can decide if they want to pay for a parking space or not. It would impact the amount of hardscape in Watertown.

Steve Magoon, the idea of residents/renters recognizing the true cost of parking is positive. I hesitate because the details are not worked out. Developer may decide the solution is to make the parking extremely costly and it would force residents to park elsewhere. I am not opposed to the idea, but I am not certain it should be in the Zoning Ordinance.

Gideon Schreiber, rental units don't necessarily include parking now. Reductions of 25% could impact more of the Town.

John Hawes, Chair, Watertown is not as dense as certain areas of San Francisco that provide large public parking garages where residents without paid spaces can park overnight.

Ian Clarke, 18 Falmouth Road, I am in support of proposed zoning changes to PSCD and mixed use concept. I am a car and motorcycle enthusiast who believes that cars should not be used for commuting. We need mixed areas where people can live and walk to places to eat and shop, or even walk home. We cannot unbundle cars and parking unless one can prove that the person does not have a car. I also have trouble with random people parking on the street where I live with multiple cars in a single driveway.

Barbara Ruskin, Watertown needs to take a chance on parking and to experiment. Watertown is urban, we should build some residences without parking. We need to see drawings to explain the zoning changes. Most of the area is a Town onto itself which we need to enliven. We don't want a canyon effect on Pleasant Street or on the Charles River, the river needs to be accessible. I don't understand 25% GFA and retail and I worry about the Ziggurat style buildings. What about building coverages? 40,000 square feet retail: What is Watertown thinking about? Is it a new mall area? I am confused about zero lot line and common walls. Every property should have a path to the Charles River. We need more access to the River and views of the River as well. Allowing a 250 foot long wall is much too long. 80% impervious surface is too high by the River. Open Space: Addition of public/private is great. But, still need to keep the views to the Charles River. Density is okay, but a 250 foot wall is too large. We need to allow people to walk to the River. The Planning staff or the Planning Board should decide something has been done "*to the maximum extent possible*" in the Environmental section (pg. 6 of 10), not a developer.

Neil Corbett, the Planning Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority/approval authority for projects in the PSCD corridor. There is very little "by right" development. The objectives in the Purpose section

will be taken by the Board into account, but we also need to balance allowances for novel solutions and new technologies.

Joan Gumbleton, 47 Waltham Street, how can a lot have a minimum size but no minimum frontage? Control this so everything is not completely covered, particularly along the River front. We need to replace with mature trees if removed. Biggest issue is Public open space, there appear to be loopholes for developers. We don't want developers to have all of these loopholes. The Boards and staff need input from abutters, 250 foot wall length is too large.

Gideon Schreiber, many of these issues are things that the PSCD zoning has, and have been in the I-3 zone. There are many existing parcels in the Corridor that do not have road frontage.

John Hawes, Chair, Needham has a maximum of 300 feet wall. Cressett built a project in Needham. Riverbend is a favorite example of a problem project. Problem is not the length, per se, it is that the project is so close to the street edge. We need to require step-backs after the third story. This has been a work in progress before the Design Standards and Guidelines came forward. This draft should be moved ahead.

Gideon Schreiber, typically, an urban block is 300 to 600 feet. 250 feet is in this context not very long. Do want to potentially allow development up to the property line. If single lots are being built, they typically don't do this, and have windows on the side walls. Zoning provides a box within which development can decide to build. If it sets strict requirements with no flexibility, such as the referenced 40,000 square feet, Russo's Market could not be built, because it is larger than 40,000 square feet.

Steve Magoon, as a practical matter, the concerned citizens will continue to make sure that the Planning staff and Planning Board look at these issues closely, such as providing access to the Charles River.

Councilor Dushku, the zoning should tell developer's what the requirements are. In Watertown, from the CVS to the path is almost 280 feet, 250 feet is a long distance. There is much less opportunity at the Council for discussion with the Planning Board. Hearing that this is a concern.

John Hawes, the Planning Board also needs to send forward a document that reflects its judgments. I am bothered by incentives and not convinced the tradeoff is worth what the developer is allowed to do. I don't want to hold up this re-write until the Design Standards and Guidelines are done. We should move the amendment ahead. I see this as an interim step to a more comprehensive Town-wide rezoning effort. I could see some of these requirements also applying along Arsenal Street. What do other Planning Board members think of the 250 foot requirement?

Councilor Woodland, Mr. Schreiber said it best, this is a framework. This is a framework that is more in keeping with the desires of the Town. I have confidence in the Planning staff and the Planning Board to deal with these fine-grained issues like easements for pathways. The experience with Greystar, and how that project changed due to community input.

John Hawes, building to a lot line or maximum allowed without a variance but with a Special Permit. The Special Permit is discretionary. Maximum allows a developer to go that far, but may not actually see development build that way.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta, that 250 foot wall is too long. I am concerned that if the draft Text Amendment goes to the Town Council for review with this language in it that it may seem as if the Planning Board is endorsing 250 feet. What if someone comes in at 225 feet? It should be scaled back.

David Gamble, the 250 feet is not an arbitrary distance. In instances where the wall is over 100 feet, techniques must provide variation. After 100 feet, must have a setback of 35 feet. When the building is broken with a setback of 35 feet, it looks quite different. We need to read the length with the note together. I have looked at various projects around Watertown. It's not excessive. It can be done well or poorly. We have language in the Guidelines about porosity and connectivity. Don't get hung up on the 250 feet.

Fergal Brennock, the Board and the audience should take account of David Gamble's comments. The Board has been working steadily on the PSCD Text Amendment for some time, and should take note of potential projects waiting in the wings. Let's move forward, with the 250 feet length in place.

John Hawes, the Repton Place was added onto and creates a shape and connection between the two buildings. It created 400-500 feet of façade. You are not aware of that along the Pleasant Street side. Conundrum is that the Board may want to keep its options open and be specific.

Gideon Schreiber, this district has always had a façade length of 300 feet. It was, however, unclear, because the language said "on a block." What is a block? Proposed length came from a study of all the buildings in the Corridor, such as the mill building on Bridge Street. It has a façade of over 1,000 feet. Target warehouse is a remnant of a large building, but it's over 300 feet in length. That was the genesis of the original 300 foot length. The proposed language is clearer.

Barbara Ruskin, we shouldn't just look to the Corridor's past. Don't just average the façade lengths. End up with mistakes, such as 202-204 Arsenal Street and "notches" that don't work.

Jeff Brown, how does one determine the depth of the façade articulation?

David Gamble, the articulation comes from the Design Standards. Requires a 35 foot articulation for façade of 100 feet in length. Depth from the street.

John Hawes, why not include that specific articulation in the Text? Is this a deterrent to a developer? Have not said what the variation can or will be?

David Gamble, mentioned Greystar project as an example. Some of these requirements or guidelines are drawn from the redesign of that project. They are coming from a real-world example. 250 feet is a good dimension to include, and the second point clarifies that.

Councilor Dushku, most people noted that along the Greystar project length, was to punch through the building with a pass through and walking path and have a bridge between the two buildings. I understand connectivity needs to be balanced with porosity.

John Hawes, some other parts of the overall site will have a relatively long façade, such as in the case of the proposed development on the Chico property. He sought a motion on the proposed wall length.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to recommend to the Town Council that the provision that walls shall be no more than 250 feet should remain in the draft Ordinance.

Jeff Brown seconded. Vote: 4-1 In favor, *Tuttle-Barletta opposed*

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to recommend to send the draft PSCD Text Amendment to the Town Council for action.

Fergal Brennock seconded. Vote: 4-1 In favor, *Tuttle-Barletta opposed*

Steve Magoon, this is a reminder that the last Design Guidelines meeting has been scheduled on January 22, 2015 at the Middle School at 6:00 PM. David Gamble would be presenting the draft Design Guidelines and Standards (actual ordinance language) and a poster as an outreach tool. The final edits on the draft Comprehensive Plan had been sent to the consultants, who were working on assembling the document's final form. The timeline is to get the document back and then schedule public hearings with the Planning Board and Town Council.

John Hawes adjourned the meeting at 9:15 pm

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:15 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____
For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 1/14/15 which is available in the DCDP office.