

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: April 30, 2015 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:10 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Special Meeting/Public Hearing

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

John Hawes, Chair, opened the hearing and asked the staff to go over the changes to the draft *Design Guidelines and Standards* that had been made since the last Planning Board meeting/hearing on April 8, 2015. There would be more time for audience input.

Gideon Schreiber, using the Staff Summary, went over the proposed changes to the draft *Design Guidelines and Standards*. There are 18 proposed changes to the *Design Standards*.

Steve Magoon, the DCDP staff had taken account of the oral and written comments received on the draft Guidelines and Standards to date. Some of the comments cut both ways in terms of the draft language. The comments were also shared with David Gamble of Gamble Associates. The Summary and proposed working draft was a reasonable response to the comments received. Another way to respond to the commentary was having the "demonstration project," Elan/Greystar/Union Market to use as a test case. It was very beneficial for DCDP staff and Gamble Associates to have a project to review, while drafting language.

Susan Falkoff, Town Councilor, I am concerned with the language to encourage unbundling of parking. I suggest unbundling of parking might not be advisable in all cases, so perhaps the proposed language in the *Standards* should be softened. Landscaping should use only non-invasive species, but the draft language was not as clear as it could be. With respect to preferred bicycle racks, I suggest adding language that would allow whatever styles the Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee would approve, rather than stipulate particular styles.

Johnathon Bockian, Irving Street, the DCDP is doing an amazing job in putting this all together. Section 9.03(d), Site Plan Review: This is the only section in the Text Amendments that connects the *Design Guidelines* to projects. Instead of having a review at 4 or more residential units, now only projects at 10 or more units are reviewed relative to the *Design Guidelines*. I strongly suggest that the draft language be changed back: Apply to 4+ units. Understand the criticism of the cost of review at \$10,000. A lot of money for a project of 4 units. Perhaps adjust the fee on a sliding scale? Perhaps have the DCDP staff do the review in house, rather than the Design Consultant? Second point: the Design Guideline project review should be available to the public before the Community Meeting. Public needs to get the benefit of the design review. Third point: Design review process refers to the Zoning Board of Appeals Rules of Procedure. Design Consultant is appointed, and provides that the Petitioner can appeal the Design Consultant's selection. Public, however, does not have the ability to question the selection of the Design Consultant. Perhaps create a ten-tax payer appeal of the selection?

Section 4.11(e), Exceptions to Side Yard Setbacks, I question this section's relationship to Section 5.05(f), Contiguous Façade Limits. Under Section 4, there is an allowed zero yard setback and party wall. How does this relate to the requirement at 5.05(f) and limiting contiguous facades? Would there be more than 150 feet of building between adjacent lots with a zero side yard setback and a party wall? Special Permit allowance up to 250 foot contiguous structure seems too open ended.

Section 5.03(2), Transparency in buildings. This is a very good idea, this section should not be deleted from the draft Design Standards.

Gideon Schreiber, the proposed Section 5.03(2) was deleted because it was repeated in a following section of the draft Design Standards.

Jonathan Bockian, I also recommend that Section 4.10, Building Height, water tanks, satellite dishes and other things would not have to be screened. I suggest instead that larger rooftop elements should

be screened if visible from public views.

Joseph Levendusky, Templeton Parkway, I endorse the points that Jonathan Bockian brought up. He suggested that in a 4-10 unit projects, the Town should consider a lessor fee, perhaps a % of projected project cost, to make the Design Review more palatable.

John Hawes, as drafted, the proposed language states that the fee is “*not to exceed \$10,000.*” I suggest that this would provide the Town some flexibility in how the fee, or how much of a fee, was applied.

Joseph Levendusky, I agree but suggest that the main point is that medium to smaller projects should also get some type of design review as well. I stress that specific Design Guidelines are needed for different areas of Watertown, such as Coolidge Square. The certain proposed Design Standards may also not be readily applicable to Coolidge Square, such as a 300 foot façade. But the burden of proof that a project has outstanding architectural merit on the Petitioner to show cause for a longer, unbroken façade or a larger building massing.

John Hawes, where is the flexibility in façade variation? The size of a block varies from area to area in Watertown. I suggest that this would act to protect certain areas of Town from large developments, unless the Petitioner was able to assemble a number of properties on a block.

Steve Magoon, I acknowledge the need to develop design guidelines for different areas of Watertown, or smaller residential projects. The current drafts are for larger projects. One of the first questions is how to shape this effort to fit the Town? A key issue is where to apply the requirements geographically, and this in part would lead to applying them to the major road corridors.

Barbara Ruskin, Spring Street, I do not quite understand Steve Magoon's response to Joseph Levendusky's comments. I suggest that the Design Guidelines and Standards should apply to other areas in Watertown. I question the relationship of the Guidelines and Standards to zoning. Also the relationship of the Guidelines and Standards to Overlay Districts. The site plan review is good, and the public should be able to see and comment on the Design Report. We should be able to see the presentation before they see plans and other information. I am unclear about the Zoning Board of Appeals choosing the Design Consultant, this seems to be a conflict of interest. I recommend that more drawings be included in the draft Standards. That limitation on uses such as chain stores only appear in the PSCD District. These should be expanded. We need more ways to protect the waterfront. We need to require side entrances to sites and buildings, rather than driveways and entrances directly off Pleasant Street. Limit uses to family appropriate commercial ventures, such as a café but not a bar. On Section 2.55 – Change the language to allow residential, retail, commercial and/or office. It would allow more uses in a building. Buildings should also never have a zero setback. Don't believe it is ever appropriate to create buildings on separate lots to touch. It would create overly long buildings, and potentially block access to the Charles River. We need public ways between buildings, particularly for access to the River. Don't believe that overly long building facades are appropriate. If a longer façade is contemplated in the Zoning Code, I do not see how it could be prevented per Special Permit. I am concerned about buildings creeping upwards, as they attempt to be compliant and match the height of abutting properties. I am concerned about noise impacts to the Charles River, such as compressors in setbacks. 50% transparency requirement should be expanded to include the smaller business districts. We should also prohibit a property owner from having 50% transparency but then creating blank walls on the remaining 50%. I am concerned that there is no frontage limitation. Doorways have to be 50 feet apart, but the project could still have a long façade. A single project could have an overly large frontage. I am concerned that artist studios could be granted

commercial status. We should ensure the proposed zoning does not inadvertently prohibit live/work spaces for artists. Antennas should be visible so people can avoid them if they choose.

Jeff Brown, several speakers have suggested Design Standards and/or Guidelines for other areas of Watertown. Part of the intent of the proposed draft is to create some sense of similarity in height, color, materials, etc. as you move through Watertown. If something is submitted and relies on zoning as written to create the building envelope, such as an x-story garage, it does not mean that this will be what is finally permitted. The zoning ordinance is not static. The human interaction with the project is key to the review.

Tony Palomba, Town Councilor, I suggest that the proposed allowances for longer facades be capped at a maximum of 300 feet. I support applying the formal Design Review to residential projects of 4 projects or more. Smaller projects may be charged a smaller fee. I suggest that the statement about unbundling parking be more strongly encouraged.

Steve Corbett, Council Vice President, the Design Standards/Guidelines creation are to address larger projects along the major commercial corridors in Watertown. As such, it is to apply to transitions between the former or existing industrial sites to abutting residential areas. The Design Standards and Guidelines should not apply to small scale projects. I suggest that the cutoff should be 10 residential units. I understand the concern about the impact of large scale projects, but smaller scale ones don't have the same impact. The entire process of review creates a significant cost for smaller projects.

Maria Saiz, 83 Hovey Street, I emphasize the importance of extending the Design Standards and Guidelines to smaller projects. Hovey Street is an example of what's happening with smaller projects. 92 Hovey, an old house is being demolished and being replaced with two "boxes." There are no design aesthetics in the proposed project, and the impact to the neighborhood will be substantial if the tear-down is approved. We have to build projects in Watertown that enhance the community. Good design should not be restricted to just the major commercial corridors. Smaller projects have the largest impacts on neighborhoods. It appears to be an imposition of additional cost, but bad design is a cost shift from the developer to the entire community.

Joan Gumbleton, 47 Waltham Street, what are the requirements now for a one, two and three bedroom? In the PSCD, there was some discussion of reducing the parking requirements. Younger families may start out not needing vehicles, but those needs may change as family structure changes. I am concerned that reducing the parking requirements may cause off-site impacts. I am concerned about potential unbundling of parking spaces. People may have to move out of Watertown if they need a car in the future. I agree that the Standards and Guidelines should apply to projects with 4 or more units.

Gideon Schreiber, the current parking requirements are in the Zoning Ordinance. The larger the complex, the parking averages out. In a three-plus bedroom, the minimum is 2 spaces.

Steve Magoon, when the parking requirements were updated, the larger projects were foremost in the proposed revision. Parking standards for a one or two family home are not being adjusted. At the same time, the DCDP staff understands that one of the next steps is to look at Design Standards and Guidelines for smaller projects, too.

Marilyn Petito Devaney, 98 Westminster Avenue, I am dismayed that there is no formal presentation of the proposed Design Guidelines and Standards. The staff's summary is inadequate. I suggest that in prior cases, the Planning Director made a formal presentation to explain the implications of the changes. My vision of Watertown is different than that of Steve Magoon. I believe that things have

deteriorated since the creation of the Pleasant Street Corridor District. I am concerned that zoning is creating difficulties for maintaining the residential character of Watertown. The Town has several unique areas that deserve the same attention as the major commercial corridors.

John Hawes, the Design Standards and Guidelines development process has been ongoing since September 2014. There were several public meetings, including at least one held on a Saturday, to discuss and preview the proposed language. The DCDP staff and consultant have made several overall presentations of the draft language, including at smaller meetings and hearings. The language before the Planning Board at this meeting is a refinement of draft language previously discussed at Planning Board meetings. The language was designed to deal with the old Industrial Districts. I acknowledge that the language so far deals largely with the big projects, and mixed use. Residential zones do not allow mixed use, but the issue is of smaller projects having impacts in the residential zones. There is a need to look at different areas of Watertown, but it's important to remember the role the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals play in project review.

Elodia Thomas, 76 Marion Road, I commend the process of seeing what projects are being reviewed and how should be simplified. We need better understanding of the review process. Some developers summarize community meetings well, some don't. Planning Board process and deliberations are generally open and readily understandable to the public. I am concerned about follow up through at the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Jeff Brown, it is interesting that the various reviews and project meetings can refine a project before the Planning Board meeting. I recommend that people follow projects through the website. Are there still pieces to the draft language that may need more discussion?

Jason Cohen, 153 Common Street, what is the difference between *LEED Certified* versus *LEED Certifiable* language. Project size thresholds for LEED Certifiability in Boston and Cambridge. Would there be a similar threshold in Watertown's language? Scale is an important consideration in this case. LEED is a potential significant cost for a smaller project.

Steve Magoon, the Design Standards will amend the Zoning Ordinance, thereby applying to all zoning districts.

Gideon Schreiber, the focus has been largely on the Design Standards. These are the minimums and maximums. The Design Guidelines are more aspirational. The Standards set the box in which development can take place. We need some flexibility, which is why some of the requirements are based on a Special Permit review. Some concepts have been in Watertown since before zoning, such as common walls, and a uniform street front.

Tony Palomba, Town Councilor, the discussion of the applicability of the Standards and Guidelines to projects with 4 units or ten units is helpful. I understand DCDP Director's and staff's acknowledgement that something similar needs to be considered for smaller scale projects and in Watertown's residential neighborhoods. I am concerned that if the threshold is set at 10 units, what about the design of 4-8 units? Smaller projects have impacts, particularly in the neighborhoods. How do we deal with these impacts? We need to provide a way to explain the proposed draft in sections to the Town Council.

Neal Corbett, how did the change in language from 4 to 10 units for applicability of the formal Design Review come about?

Steve Magoon, some of the comments on the Design Standards and Guidelines have been in opposite directions. One of the comments was that a threshold of 4 units seemed too low. DCDP staff

discussed this issue, and suggested raising the threshold to 10 units.

Gideon Schreiber, the threshold discussion was more about the applicability of the formal Design Review using the Town's consultant. As a staff Planner, I would apply the Design Guidelines in all project reviews, because they are indicative of good design principles. As such, a 5-unit project would still be subjected to a design review, but not necessarily via the Town's Design Consultant. The proposed language is in part tied to the threshold at which a project is required to go through Site Plan Review and/or Special Permit. Projects of 4 units or greater must consider the Design Guidelines, but projects of 10 units or greater would be subject to the formal Design Review using the Town's Design Consultant. This would allow some design components to be included in the review of smaller projects, but not with the same level of process or cost, because the review would be integrated into the 9 criteria for a Special Permit. Projects of 4 or more residential units trigger the Special Permit process.

Neal Corbett, Gideon Schreiber's proposed language is a good compromise. I live in a 9 unit complex, and as such, I would welcome design review of some sort on a project of that size.

Jeff Brown, smaller firms may welcome the Design Guidelines, because they provide better design tools.

Steve Corbett, Town Council Vice President, I endorse Gideon Schreiber's suggested changes, to internalize the use and consideration of Design Guidelines in the staff and Special Permit review.

John Hawes, including units starting at 4 would include many more projects in the formal Design Review process. At the same time, the draft language is geared to larger projects. If projects are built by right, then the Design Guidelines would not apply. If the zoning changes, the box in which projects were built changed, then a by-right project would have to comply.

Vincent Piccirilli, Town Councilor, we are moving in the right direction. Town Council's vote to move ahead with the project was to have it completed by the end of 2014. I acknowledge the significant amount of public input. If Watertown was a mid-Western Town, where all the streets met right angles, then Design Review would be easy. Watertown is not that. We have never been able to create a perfect document. Guidelines are clear. DCDP staff can create 18 points describing all of the proposed changes. Let the good not be lost for the desire for perfect. This is not the end of the process, given the tasks also involved in the Comprehensive Plan. The sooner something is put in place, the better, as it will form a better baseline.

Cecilia Lenk, Town Councilor, we have tremendous amount of input, including public input. I suggest the focus was the bigger projects and the industrial zones. I worry about smaller projects, which can shape neighborhoods. I am reluctant to make the proposed language mean all things to all areas of Watertown. We need to make a start, and then move to create something for other areas of Town.

Susan Falkoff, Town Councilor, we need to get something in place before the next set of large projects comes into play.

Joseph Levendusky, we need to closely look at the smaller projects that are an insult to Watertown Square. We need to avoid such a bad result. Inclusion of more vegetation is very important. Another key factor is to try to mend the community's trust in terms of the project review. We need to create a sense of trust that the Town staff utilizes the Design Standards and Guidelines in a way to improve the community.

Steve Magoon, the project in question 22-24 Arsenal Street, was mixed use with 14 residential units, it would have been covered by the draft Design Standards and Guidelines and also a formal Design

Review.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta, the discussion is turning to the numbers, where things are actually applied to projects. Like the compromise that Gideon Schreiber suggested in terms of applying the Design Standards and Guidelines between 4 and 10 residential units. I question the comment made by Councilor Palomba. Maximum façade length of a potential of 300 feet by Special Permit is somewhat troubling. Could this issue have more discussion?

Chris Regnier, Goulston & Storrs, the façade length maximum of 300 feet with the ability to go longer by Special Permit is integral to a project under review now, Elan/Greystar. I thank everyone for all their time and effort. We hope that the project is seen as bringing back some of the community trust. Elan/Greystar may not be the only project that goes beyond 300 feet. We pushed for even more façade length and by right. The project will be subject to significant design review.

John Hawes, the ability to go beyond 300 feet in façade length by Special Permit is troublesome to me. I have sympathy for Elan/Greystar in terms of their having worked on the project for a long time, and using a particular set of expectations.

Neal Corbett, the draft Design Standards and Guidelines should advance to the Town Council. On the issue of a 300 foot façade length and the potential to be longer, I am not troubled by the draft language. I have a confidence that the Board and the community will make a rational determination about the relative merit of a proposal with a relatively long façade. Flexibility needs to be there. Some parts of Watertown need longer facades and higher densities. As for the language on LEED in the draft, it's fine, but the type of documentation required to show compliance should be included in the Design Standards. The intent is great, but we need to clarify the documentation and reference the most current edition of LEED.

John Hawes, the zero lot line be stricken. Why would this be necessary?

Gideon Schreiber, the proposed language is more tailored to smaller lots. Might want to build multiple structures together. Perhaps only two stories. Draft language brings it to the Industrial Districts.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta, I suggest alternate language for consideration about transportation amenities to better encourage transit. Strengthen the draft language for 9.03(c)(4). Perhaps include the requirement to fund part of a Transportation Management Association (TMA)?

Gideon Schreiber, we need clarification, something stronger than "*special consideration?*" We need to apply TMA requirement carefully. Perhaps reference in this section, too. I will address Steve Corbett's concerns about LEED documentation by noting the requirement is only for Mixed Use. Could have a white paper on what the documentation is needed to show LEED Certifiable.

John Hawes, I recommend that the language on the applicability of the formal Design Review be left at 10 units, with the incorporation of the compromise language suggested by Gideon Schreiber.

Linda Tuttle-Barletta motioned to approve the draft Watertown Design Standards and Guidelines, ordinance including leaving applicability of a formal Design Review at 10 units, but also with the incorporation of the compromise language suggested by Gideon Schreiber.

Neal Corbett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0 In Favor.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:45 PM

MINUTES APPROVED: _____

For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 4/30/15 which is available in the DCDP office.