

ARTICLE 12

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money to pay costs of designing, relocating, constructing, originally equipping and furnishing a relocated and expanded Wentworth Hall, including the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto, such facility to be located on property across from the current location of the Islington Library, and to determine whether this amount shall be raised by taxation, transfer from available funds, borrowing or otherwise, or to take any other action relative thereto.

(Board of Selectmen)

The Finance and Warrant Commission, by a vote of 10 in favor and 1 abstention,

MOTION

RECOMMENDS: *That the Town appropriates \$3,500,000 to pay costs of designing, constructing, originally equipping and furnishing a new Islington Library and Community Center, including the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto, and that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Selectmen, is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. c. 44, §7(1), or pursuant to any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefor. The amount authorized to be borrowed by this vote shall be reduced to the extent of amounts realized by the Town upon the sale of the current Islington Library, net of any transaction costs associated therewith. Any premium received upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this vote, less any such premium applied to the payment of the costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with Chapter 44, Section 20 of the General Laws, thereby reducing the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs by a like amount.*

The Finance and Warrant Commission voted to recommend approval to Town Meeting of each of the three Articles related to the Islington Center Redevelopment Proposal (10 yes with 1 abstention). One member not able to attend the meeting sent in a letter in support of the three articles.

The Finance and Warrant Commission considered these articles together and recommends that Town Meeting also discuss them together. Approval of all three Articles by Town Meeting is necessary for the Islington Center Redevelopment Project to move forward.

Article 11 addresses the acquisition, transfer and disposition of Town-owned and developer-owned land for the purpose of (1) relocating, renovating and expanding Wentworth Hall (Islington Branch Library) and (2) transferring the Islington Community Center property. It also authorizes the town to enter into and execute any agreements and instruments necessary for the Town to complete these actions, including the Land Disposition Agreement.

Article 12 requests authorization for the Town to secure the funding necessary for the renovation, relocation and expansion of Wentworth Hall. The estimated cost of the project is \$3.5 million which will be offset in part by a minimum of \$2.2 million in funds provided by the developer to the Town as part of a Land Disposition Agreement discussed below.

Article 13 presents amendments to the Official Zoning Map necessary for the Islington Center Redevelopment Project. This Article expands the Boundary of Local Business B (LBB) and Flexible Multiple Use Overlay District 6 (FMUOD 6) to 277A Washington Street and 9 School Street.

To view a detailed map in color depicting the requested zoning changes, please go to the town of Westwood's website and click on "Department of Community and Economic Development". Under "Explore", click on "Zoning Amendments" and then click on "Article 13-Zoning Map Changes".

LAND DISPOSITION AGREEMENT

As a key component of this project, the Town and the Developer will enter in a Land Disposition Agreement for the transfer of respective parcels of land owned by the Town and the developer to one another through a three-year phased process. This Land Disposition Agreement also includes three phased payments of a minimum of \$2.2 million from the developer to the Town.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In May of 2016, the Town through the Islington Center Task Force appointed by the Board of Selectmen, issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) to solicit development proposals utilizing the parcels of land owned by the Town in Islington Center. The town parcels consist of the Municipal Parking Lot, Wentworth Hall (Branch Library), the Islington Community Center (ICC) which houses town-run Youth and Family services and a privately run day center known as The Mothers Morning Out program (MMO), and a driveway parcel. The Town previously acquired a former gas station lot, which became the town parking lot in Islington, and a church in Islington center, which became the Islington Community Center (ICC). The RFP required a minimum payment to the Town of \$1,950,000 for the sale or disposition of its 4 parcels of land.

One proposal was received in response to the RFP, from Petruzziello Properties in June of 2016. The Islington Center Task Force held public meetings, conducted surveys and solicited input from town residents and made many recommendations which the developer incorporated into its plans. The Islington Center Task Force recommended in April 2017 that the Selectmen moved forward with their own deliberations on the proposed project. The Selectmen conducted their own review and held multiple public hearings and meetings on the Islington Center Redevelopment proposal. The selectmen signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the developer in September of 2017 that authorized the developer to submit permit applications to the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. Petruzziello Properties submitted a FMUOD special permit application for Planning Board consideration in December 2017 which was revised through April 2018.

After conducting many public hearings and meetings, on February 27, 2018, the Planning Board voted four to one to recommend approval to the Finance and Warrant Commission and the Selectmen of Article 13 for Zoning Map Amendment Changes. On April 10, 2018 the Planning Board voted four to one to grant the FMUOD Special Permit to Petruzziello Properties for the

Islington Center Project. The Planning Board's decision included 50 Conditions of Approval which the developer must meet and comply with. On April 25, 2018 the Conservation Commission gave its approval to the Islington Center Redevelopment Project.

FINANCE AND WARRANT COMMISSION DELIBERATIONS:

In reviewing these three Articles, the Finance and Warrant Commission held four public hearings and meetings and received input from town staff, the Islington Center Task Force, the Planning Board, the Selectmen and from residents of Westwood. One of the factors that impressed the Finance and Warrant Commission in its deliberations is that throughout this process, the developer has made many changes to the project to address concerns raised by residents. For example, the proposed CVS building has been reduced from 15,000 square feet to slightly less than 10,000 square feet and the proposed drive through exiting onto School Street has been eliminated. The developer has also changed the housing components from 28 apartments to 18 condominium units. The new mixed-use building which replaces the ICC building has been designed to replicate the appearance of the existing structure including the columns and spire and maintain the village view that is important to residents.

Consultants hired by the Town to review the project have confirmed that the parking plans are reasonable and that the developer has made reasonable efforts to minimize the project's impact on traffic. The project will include signalization improvements at the East Street-Washington Street intersection. It also includes an expansion of the East Street right of way that could be used for widening of East Street in the future. It has been noted that the majority of traffic on Washington Street is pass-through traffic and that this project will have only minimal impact on existing conditions.

FINANCIAL REVIEW:

In reviewing the financial components of this project, the Finance and Warrant Commission noted that the cost of bringing Wentworth Hall (Branch Library) up to standard was estimated at \$275,000 and the cost of updating the ICC building could range from \$1.9 million for critical needs to as much as \$5.0 million for a fully handicapped code compliant building still with limited functionality.

In the current proposal, the Town would exchange the 4 parcels of land that it owns for (1) the greater of \$2.2 million or (2) the appraised value of the Wentworth Hall, ICC and East Street Parcels. Payments are scheduled to take place over three phases. In addition, the developer will construct a new municipal parking lot on Washington Street and convey that fully constructed lot to the Town. The Town's annual net property tax revenue receipts would, upon project completion, grow from approximately \$62,000 to \$470,000. The Town would appropriate \$3.5 million to move, renovate and update Wentworth Hall (Library) and create new Community Center Space for Recreation and Youth and Family Services.

OTHER FACTORS:

Additional Affordable Housing

The Town receives an important affordable housing benefit from this project in the Land Disposition Agreement. By working with the developer, the Town is able to add 12 units to its count of affordable housing. This is extremely important if the Town is to meet the 10% threshold of affordable housing in 2020, when the state will conduct its next affordable housing

census. If the town does not comply with this 10% requirement, the town would be subject to an “unfriendly” 40b multi-family development project over which the Town has little or no control.

MMO and Other Existing Businesses

The current non-profit day care program (MMO) will be able to enter into a lease on financial terms similar to what the program pays to the Town of Westwood. The MMO will operate in 5,000 square feet of new space provided in the developer’s facilities. Other existing business will continue to operate in newly renovated space. The plans also include maintaining land available for an interested party to fund, develop and update the historic Blue Hart Tavern.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

Change in any part of town always raises concerns. In this case, the town is trying to leverage the use of its assets to encourage development in Islington that will include quality projects that need to combine residential and commercial components to be financially viable.

The process pursued by the Town of Westwood to encourage economic development and add affordable housing stock to the community has been a long but open process where residents, elected town officials, and elected and appointed board members have participated in the evolution of this project. The developer has listened to residents and town officials and has incorporated many changes into his final plans. In today’s economy, development beyond single-family housing requires a mix of uses – in this case a combination of residential and commercial components - for a project to be economically viable. The Town has a unique opportunity to leverage its assets which consist of a town owned parking lot and a former church building currently used as a Community Center.

If the project is approved, the Town will end up with a renovated and updated Wentworth Hall Branch Library and new community space for Youth and Family Services. It will avoid the multi-million dollar cost required to update the ICC which still would not be functionally suitable. A new CVS will be located in Islington and a multi-use commercial and residential building will architecturally replicate the iconic aspects of the ICC. MMO will continue to operate in new space provided by the developer.

Based on these factors and after an economic review of the project, the Finance and Warrant Commission has recommended approval of the Warrant Articles 11, 12 and 13, all of which are necessary for this project to go forward.