

**Town of Westwood
Islington Center Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, January 10, 2018 – 7:00 PM
Sanctuary, ICC, 288 Washington Street**

Meeting Notes

Task Force Members Present:

Nora Loughnane, Abby McCabe, Paul Sicard, Trish Tucke, Michael Walsh, Kela Klosi, Rabih Shanshiry, Trevor Laubenstein, George Hertz, Michael Jaillet, Al Wisialko.

Members Absent: Pam Dukeman, Jack Patterson, and John Deckers.

Miscellaneous Updates:

Chairman Walsh and Ms. Loughnane, Director of Community and Economic Development, reported on various items affecting Islington Center, as follows:

Islington Center RFP Project

The Board of Selectmen and Petruzziello Properties are co-applicants on an application for a Flexible Multiple Use Overlay District (FMUOD) special permit for the Islington Center Redevelopment Project. The first session Planning Board's special permit hearing is scheduled for January 16th beginning at 6:30 pm in the Downey School Cafeteria. Additional hearing sessions will be scheduled as needed.

Open Space & Recreation Plan Update

The Open Space & Recreation Planning Committee (OSRPC) will hold a Visioning Session on February 1st beginning at 7:00 pm in the Thurston Middle School Cafeteria to solicit resident input for consideration in updating the 2000 Open Space & Recreation Plan. All are encouraged to attend and participate in discussions.

FMUOD Petition Article

The Board of Selectmen received a Petition Article proposing a Zoning Bylaw Amendment to reduce the number of residential units that could be allowed by special permit in the Washington Street FMUOD6 and High Street FMUOD7 overlay districts to a maximum of 30 units per district. This article repeats most of the language from the article that had been jointly sponsored by the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board at the November 2017 Town Meeting, but reduces the residential unit cap from 90 units to 30 units. This Petitioner Article would have no effect on the Islington Center RFP Project for which a special permit application has already been filed. However, if the proposed Zoning Amendment article is approved by a 2/3 majority at the May 2018 Town Meeting, and the Islington Center RFP Project is approved at that same meeting, then no other properties within the Washington Street FMUOD6 district would be eligible for mixed-use development.

Islington Center Redevelopment Proposal:

Ms. Loughnane presented the most recent plans for the RFP Project. She explained that the residential component of the project had been changed from 28 apartments to 18 condominiums. Ms. Loughnane also noted that the project included new space for the Mothers Morning Out (MMO) Nursery School on the lower level of the existing CVS building. She told the Task Force that the CVS drive-thru has been eliminated and the Blue Hart Tavern is currently proposed for commercial use on the first floor with residential use above. She noted that concerns remain about the expense of renovating this historic building for continued use. Ms. Loughnane also noted that new community space, not yet shown on the special permit plans, would be developed on the west side of Washington Street as an addition to the relocated Wentworth Hall.

Task force members discussed various aspects of the special permit plans, including the potential phasing of the proposed redevelopment that would be necessary to avoid interruption of existing commercial and non-profit uses.

Ms. Loughnane explained that the Board of Selectmen will be negotiating a Land Disposition Agreement while the Planning Board considers the Special Permit Application. She noted that decisions would need to be made by both boards before Town Meeting would be asked to consider approving land transfers for the redevelopment project to move forward. Ms. Loughnane stated that Placeholder Articles have been placed on the Town Meeting Warrant. If the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen believe they will be ready to make those decisions in early spring, then these Placeholder Articles will be finalized for the May 2018 Town Meeting. If either board is not ready to move forward at that time, then the Placeholder Articles will be withdrawn and could be resubmitted at a future Town Meeting.

Task Force members were asked to review the FMUOD application and plans and to consider attending the Planning Board's January 16th public hearing. The Task Force will review these plans at its next meeting on February 7th, and may choose to send a recommendation to the Planning Board at that time.

Comprehensive Planning – Review and Discuss Town Center Element of 2000 Comprehensive Plan and Proposed Draft Updates for Future Consideration by the Comprehensive Steering Plan Committee

Ch. Walsh moved onto discussion about updating the Town Center Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Loughnane reviewed suggestions received by email from Task Force members. Those suggestions included suggestions that the updated Comprehensive Plan should:

- Clarify delineation of Town Center boundaries;
- Expand on potential for multi-family housing;
- Call Islington Center and High Street Center "Village Centers" rather than "Town Centers";
- Increase diversity of housing and commercial uses;
- Encourage active social and destination uses;
- Promote shared parking and circulation;
- Connect High Street and Washington Street centers;
- Consider intersection and signalization improvements;
- Encourage provisions for bicycle, pedestrian and shuttle bus uses;
- Increase vegetation and greenspace in centers;
- Encourage investment by commercial property owners;
- Encourage defined street edges and reduced setbacks;
- Implement signage standards;
- Add on-street parking in both centers;
- Add dedicated bicycle lanes;
- Reduce the number of traffic lanes on High Street;
- Encourage environmentally sustainable low impact design;
- Improve facades of civic buildings; and
- Increase accessibility to all buildings.

Task Force members discussed existing traffic conditions in both centers. Concerns were expressed about the cut-through traffic in neighborhoods around High Street, and about potential re-timing of traffic signals to encourage traffic to stay off side streets.

Additional suggestions for the Comprehensive Plan Update included defining what "Village Character" means, encouraging the formation of Merchants' Associations for both Islington center and High Street Center, and improving public transportation with shuttle buses for all residents, but especially for youth and senior citizens.

Ms. Loughnane explained that the Task Force would take the first step in drafting an update to the Village Center Element of the Comprehensive Plan, and would send that draft to the Comprehensive Steering Committee for further consideration. She explained that the Steering Committee would then invite further public input, especially in regard to the High Street village Center. She noted that further discussion of the goals, policies and implementation strategies for the Town Centers Element of the Comprehensive Plan Update will be scheduled for upcoming Task Force meetings.

Ch. Walsh asked Task Force members to send further comments on the Comprehensive Plan to Ms. Loughnane and Ms. McCabe in advance of the February 7th meeting.

Public Comments and Questions:

The Chairman opened the meeting up to public comments and questions.

In response to discussion regarding a specific definition for "Village Character", a resident suggested that the Task Force should begin with what its members believe defines this term, and then should invite others to react to that definition.

Approval of Minutes:

The Task Force members reviewed draft minutes from October 11, 2017 Islington Center Task Force meeting, and notes from discussions held on November 8, 2017 when the lack of a quorum prevented an official Task Force meeting.

On a motion made by Sgt. Sicard, seconded by Mr. Hertz, the minutes of October 11, 2017 Islington Center Task Force meeting were approved as written.

Scheduling of Next Meeting: The Task Force previously selected the following meeting dates.

- Wednesday, February 7, 2018
- Wednesday, March 14, 2018

On a motion made by Mr. Wisialko and seconded by Mr. Jaillet, the Task Force adjourned at 8:00 pm.

List of Exhibits:

Draft minutes from October 11, 2017 ICTF Meeting
Meeting notes November 8, 2017 when the ICTF did not have a quorum
Town Center Section of 2000 Comprehensive Plan, redlined for 2018 update
Comments received on Comprehensive Plan Village Center Element