

Town of Westwood
Islington Center Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, February 15, 2017 - 7:00 PM
Thurston Middle School, Cafeteria, 850 High Street

Meeting Minutes

Task Force Members Present:

Helen Gordon, Trevor Laubenstein, Nancy Donahue, Nora Loughnane, Abby McCabe, Trish Tucke, Mary Beth Persons, Danielle Sutton, Michael Reardon, Michael Jaillet, Rabih Shanshiry, Michael Walsh, Kela Klosi, Tricia Perry, Nicole Banks, Paul Sicard, and Pam Dukeman.

Members Absent: Trish Tucke, George Hertz, Al Wisialko, and Todd Korchin.

Chairman Helen Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM, summarized the agenda and explained the meeting procedures to all present. She also noted that Westwood Media Center was present to record the meeting.

Miscellaneous Updates

Ms. McCabe, Town Planner, reported that there are no updates on the new gas station and convenience store which was approved by the Planning Board for 390 Washington Street. She said that Bertie's Creative Creamery, a new ice cream parlor, is undergoing renovations and expected to open at 315 Washington Street this spring.

Ms. Loughnane, Director of Community and Economic Development, reported that the new Hogan Tire Center located further north on Washington Street is expecting to open in early March. She also noted that the Town has launched a new website and encouraged everyone to sign up to receive electronic notifications of meetings by signing up at www.townhall.westwood.ma.us/mycity/.

Ms. Loughnane reminded the Task Force members that two zoning amendments were received by citizen petition for consideration at Annual Town Meeting in May which could have an impact on Islington Center. Shea explained that one article proposes to eliminate "multi-family" as a permitted use in the Flexible Multiple Use Overlay Districts (FMUOD) 6 & 7 (Washington and High Street) business districts, and that the other article proposes to remove a footnote regarding calculation of minimum project area in those two overlay zones. Ms. Loughnane stated that Town Meeting first adopted FMUOD zoning beginning in 2011 with the FMUOD1 through FMUOD5. She said that Town Meeting then adopted the Upper Story Residential Overlay District (USROD) in 2012, principally to allow for the redevelopment of the historic Colburn School on High Street, which includes a bank/retail use on the first floor and two floors of residences above. Ms. Loughnane said that the Planning Board recommended, and Town Meeting adopted, new FMUOD districts for Washington Street (FMUOD 6) and High Street (FMUOD 7) in 2014. She explained that the Planning Board noted at that time that they were proposing a two-step process, where the second step was the addition of "multi-family" as a permitted use up to a maximum of 50% of the gross floor area for a project. Ms. Loughnane told the Task Force that the purpose of allowing housing was to provide an added economic incentive for redevelopment and investment in the town's aging village centers, by allowing a limited amount of housing above commercial in order to better sustain the businesses within these districts. She noted that the Planning Board proposed, and Town Meeting approved, this amendment to the FMUOD section of the Zoning Bylaw in 2015.

Ms. Loughnane reported that the Board of Selectmen, at its meeting on February 13th, voted 2 to 1 to join Petruzzello Properties in submitting applications for Preliminary Subdivision plans and ANR plans to freeze the zoning on the town-owned and privately-owned parcels involved in the Islington Center Redevelopment proposal. She explained that there is a provision in state law that allows property owners

to submit plans to freeze the zoning prior to a zoning change which might otherwise affect the developability or value of a property. The submission of Zoning Freeze applications will allow the Task Force and Selectmen to continue to consider the project now under review.

Task Force Review and Discussion of Layout Options 4 and 5

Ms. Gordon began the review of Options 4 and 5. She summarized Option 4 as proposing 1) construction of a new CVS on the northwest corner of Washington Street and School Street; 2) relocation of the Blue Hart Tavern and Library to the west side of Washington Street; 3) construction of a new mixed use building on the east side of Washington Street where the CVS and Library presently exist; and 4) no changes to the ICC/Community Space/MMO building at the corner of East and Washington Streets. Ms. Gordon summarized option 5 as proposing: 1) construction of a new mixed use building with 14,000 sq. ft. commercial and 20 residences on the West side of Washington Street with parking in the rear at 9 School Street and on the north side of the building; and 2) no changes to the existing CVS, Library and ICC/Community Space/MMO building on the east side of Washington Street.

Mr. Reardon, Deputy Fire Chief, commented that he did not believe either Options 4 or Option 5 was acceptable to the Town in light of the extensive improvements needed to the existing Town buildings. He said that he did not believe either of these two options would be beneficial to the Town.

Ms. Banks, Recreation Director, commented that she agreed with Mr. Reardon. She noted that the Recreation Department uses these spaces now and that they are not ideal for their programs. She said that she would prefer to see a space that is improved and designed to better fit the Recreation Department's needs.

Mr. Sicard, Public Safety Officer, commented that he does not like the three-story mixed use building on the west side of the street proposed in Option 5. He said that he is also concerned with continued use of the playground serving MMO in its current location off of East Street near the parking area.

Mr. Laubenstein, Planning Board representative, stated his preference to see the mixed-use building proposed in Option 5 broken up so there isn't a "mega block". He said that he would also like to see more open space.

Ms. McCabe, Town Planner, commented that she liked the locations of the MMO/Community Space/ICC building at the corner of East and Washington Streets, but did not like that these options included no improvements to the existing buildings. She noted that the Task Force and the Planning Board each held several meetings at the ICC. She said that the space was not fully functional, which is more recent meetings have been held in school buildings. Ms. McCabe said that the Task Force was created to help identify a master plan for the area, rather than just allow redevelopment of one parcel at a time. She noted that Options 4 and 5 do not help to achieve a "master plan" for the area.

Ms. Klosi, Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety representative and Islington resident, said she felt neither of these two options were her favorite. She said that she was not supportive of the ICC/MMO spaces remaining at their current locations and without improvements.

Ms. Gordon, Islington resident representative, said that she did not feel these two options really captured the desired village feel. She said that both options included many challenges and did not exemplify a partnership between the town and the private property owner.

Mr. Shanshiry, Islington resident representative, said that after further review of these two options he no longer feels either of these are viable. He said that he prefers Option 6, which was discussed in detail at the January 18th meeting. He noted that he originally thought options 4 and 5 were good candidates

because they preserve the ICC building, which the Task Force has heard is very important to many residents, but ultimately he thinks that Option 6 is the best option because it recreates the ICC building.

Ms. Perry, Library Director, stated that she did like these two options, but they did not seem to be consistent with the Town's economic development goals and would have a big financial impact on the town. Ms. Perry noted that, after reviewing the needs analysis of improvements needed at both buildings, she concluded that repairs are very costly and that Options 4 and 5 do not help the Town with the needed capital improvements.

Mr. Patterson, Islington business representative and Islington resident, stated that he did not feel that either of these options is ideal.

Ms. Donahue, Historic Commission representative, commented that she liked that the Library and Blue Hart Tavern were located next to each other fronting on Washington Street in Option 4, but said that Option 6 remains her preferred option.

Ms. Sutton, Director of Youth and Family Services, expressed support for Options 2 and 6, and not for Options 4 and 5. She explained that the Town's Youth and Family Services Department has offices and program space in the existing ICC building. She said that they do the best they can with the space, but the current set up does not work well, which ultimately interferes with the department's functioning. Ms. Sutton said that a new and improved space will allow them to deliver better and more services to the community.

Ms. Dukeman, Finance Director, stated that she felt getting new space to carry on the uses currently taking place in the ICC is critical. She said that the \$2 million of improvements that were determined necessary by the recent studies must be considered.

Ms. Persons, Library Board of Trustees representative, stated that Options 4 and 5 are her least favorite options. She said that she doesn't think Option 5 is even worth further consideration because it doesn't achieve the group's original goals. She suggested changing the CVS back over to the east side of the street and designing the new building to look more like the ICC building. Ms. Person said that she would like to see more of a campus feel.

Mr. Jaillet, Town Administrator, stated that he felt Options 4 and 5 are totally unacceptable. He noted that these options were submitted early in the process by the applicant in response to initial comments. Mr. Jaillet said that he is supportive of Option 6. He added that Options 4 and 5 do not provide the Town the opportunity to make desired intersection improvements at Washington and East Streets because the buildings remain in the way of any possible street re-alignment.

Ms. Loughnane, Director of Community and Economic Development, commented that Options 4 and 5 have no merit for the community. She said she prefers Option 2.

Mr. Walsh, Board of Selectmen Task Force representative, expressed his support for a modified Option 4 that removes the "L" portion from the back of the ICC building adds a new addition to that. He said that he would keep the mixed-use building where it is proposed in Option 4, on the site of the existing Library and CVS/Crown Cleaners buildings, but would move the Library to the rear portion of the School Street lot, and would change the shape of the CVS building. Mr. Walsh said that he would add in more green space, and keep the community space at the front of the ICC in the existing building, with elevators added to make the old portion and the proposed new portion accessible.

Mike McKay, project architect for Petruzzello Properties, responded to Mr. Walsh's suggestion involving the improvements to the front portion of the ICC with an addition to the rear and the addition of an elevator serving the old and new portions of the building. He said that the costs would be too great to make this a feasible option. Mr. McKay said that the Proponent's team considered this when working on

Option 6 and determined that the extent of improvements needed to the existing building were too expensive and it was more feasible to construct a new building.

Ms. Gordon stated she would also prefer to see the playground associated with the MMO relocated to the interior of the site, away from the street. She said that she would like to see the Library near the street rather than tucked in the back of the School Street lot.

Mr. Shanshiry encouraged Petruzzello to seek tenants that are compatible with each other in any development that may move forward.

Summary of Submitted Research Articles

Mr. Shanshiry said that several articles had been received by the Task Force from the developer and from interested residents:

Traffic Congestion Reduces Property Values, 2002 Study

Report: The Future Economic and Environmental Costs of Gridlock in 2030, Cebr, Report for INRIX, July 2014

Study: How Congestion Pricing Reduces Property Values, by Amihai Glazer and Kurt Van Dender, University of California, Irvine, dated April 16, 2002

Noise Pollution Impacts

Factors that Determine the Reduction in Property Values

Do Rentals decrease Nearby Property Values, Bankrate.com

Counting the Future Cost of Gridlock

Tufts University Study; On the Ground: 40b Developments Before and After

MIT Study: Effects of Mixed-Income, Multi-Family Rental Housing Developments on Single-Family Housing Values, April 2005

Higher Density Development, Myth and Facts, Urban Land Institute

Mr. Shanshiry said that he had read each article and commented on its findings. He reviewed all of the articles submitted by residents, and said that he will review the last two articles submitted by the developer at the next meeting.

Ms. Klosi said she agreed with the MIT study as it related to rental impacts on single-family homes. She said that she found this article applicable to Westwood where land is often more valuable than the houses on that land.

Petruzzello Properties Response to Task Force Comments and Questions

Mr. Zahka, attorney for Petruzzello Properties, said that his client would consider condominiums rather than apartments if that is what the Town wants. He noted that condos would have to be designed with two or three bedrooms where apartments would have only one-bedroom.

In response to a question from a previous meeting about who is likely to live in the proposed residential units, Mr. Zahka responded that they have not yet marketed the building currently under construction at 323 Washington Street. However, he noted that his client has already received many inquiries from local residents and from people who work in Westwood.

In response to a question about leasing options, Mr. Petruzziello responded that the terms of each lease will depend on the proposed use. He said that he hasn't secured tenants yet and that leases are usually no less than 5 years, with 10 years preferred.

Public Comments and Questions:

Question: What are the traffic improvements that were noted as not being possible in Options 4 and 5?

Mr. Jaillet responded that a traffic study found that the southbound lane turning left onto East Street from Washington Street should be improved by trimming back the corner on the east side of Washington Street to reduce the sharpness of the turn. He said that in Options 4 and 5, the building is in the way of this proposed intersection widening. Ms. Loughnane added whatever option moves forward for consideration must include a traffic study with recommendations for possible roadway and signal improvements. She said that the traffic study would be part of the Planning Board review process.

Question: What is the benefit to the town if one of these options moves forward?

Ms. Gordon responded that that is what the Task Force is currently reviewing. She explained that the members are weighing the pros and cons of each of the proposed options, and will make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen at the next meeting.

Question: A resident asked if they could to post the next meeting of the Task Force on a bulletin board at the Islington Post office. The Task Force responded that the next meeting is planned for Wednesday, March 22 in the same location at Thurston Middle School, 7:00 pm. Ms. Loughnane said that the meeting will be posted at the Town Clerk's Office and listed on the Town's website. She said that links to the online agenda would also be emailed to those who signed up on the new Town website. Mr. Jaillet said that any resident could print the agenda and either post on the bulletin board or share with neighbors.

Approval of Minutes:

On a motion made by Ms. Persons, seconded by Ms. Donahue, the meeting minutes of January 18, 2017 were approved as written.

Scheduling of Next Meeting:

The next meeting dates were selected as follows:

- Wednesday, March 22, in the Thurston Middle School Cafeteria, beginning at 7:00 pm.
- Wednesday, April 12, in a location to be determined, beginning at 7:00 pm.

The agendas for these meetings will be posted on the town's website at least 48 hours in advance of each meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 pm.

List of Exhibits:

Draft minutes from January 18, 2017 meeting.
Updated option 4 and 5 (floor sheets) on screen and distributed at prior meeting.
Traffic Congestion Reduces Property Values, 2002 Study
Report: <i>The Future Economic and Environmental Costs of Gridlock in 2030</i> , Cebr, Report for INRIX, July 2014 (67 pages).
Study: <i>How Congestion Pricing Reduces Property Values</i> , by Amihai Glazer and Kurt Van Dender, University of California, Irvine, dated April 16, 2002, (14 pages).
Noise Pollution Impacts
Factors that Determine the Reduction in Property Values
Do Rentals decrease Nearby Property Values, Bankrate.com
Counting the Future Cost of Gridlock
Tufts University Study; On the Ground: 40b Developments Before and After
MIT Study: Effects of Mixed-Income, Multi-Family Rental Housing Developments on Single-Family Housing Values, April 2005
Higher Density Development, Myth and Facts, Urban Land Institute