

**Town of Westwood  
Islington Center Task Force Meeting  
Thursday, November 10, 2016  
7:00 PM  
Thurston Middle School, Cafeteria, 850 High Street**

**Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Helen Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM

**Task Force Members Present:**

Helen Gordon, Trevor Laubenstein, Nancy Donahue, Trish Tucke, Nora Loughnane, Abby McCabe, Trish Tucke, Nicole Banks, Mary Beth Persons, Danielle Sutton, Michael Reardon, Michael Jaillet, George Hertz, Paul Sicard, and Rabih Shanshiry.

**Members Absent:** Michael Walsh, Kela Klosi, Tricia Perry, Albert Wisialko, Pam Dukeman, and Todd Korchin.

Also present was Jim McCarthy, the town's Facilities Manager.

**Review of Task Force Mission:**

The Task Force members reviewed the mission statement drafted earlier in the year.

*The Islington Center task Force will review and discuss the physical attributes and uses of privately-owned and municipally-owned properties in the vicinity of the Washington St./East St./School St. intersection, focusing on Washington Street between Fairview Street and Clapboardtree Street, on School Street between Washington Street and Pine Lane, and on East Street between Washington Street and the East Street Railroad Bridge. The Task Force will identify the most significant character-defining elements of Islington Center, consider obstacles and opportunities for improved pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation, and encourage building, site, and infrastructure improvements appropriate to this area's unique village style of development. The Task Force will serve as an avenue for transparent and respectful discussions to encourage positive and pro-active redevelopment in the Islington area. The Task Force will make recommendations to the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen as either board considers decisions affecting Islington Center.*

**Discuss Schedule and Content of Future Meetings**

The Task Force reviewed an updated schedule for the winter and spring as follows:

- January Meeting – Workshop of Task Force to Discuss Layout Proposals 1 and 2
- February Meeting – Workshop of Task Force to Discuss Layout Proposals 3 and 4
- March Meeting – Workshop of Task Force to Discuss Layout Proposals 5 and 6
- April Meeting – Workshop combining ideas from December, January and February Meetings to finalize possible layout combining ideas created during previous meetings.
- May Meeting – Vote on recommendation to the Board of Selectmen on final layout proposal for potential economic analysis and traffic and parking study.

The group agreed that they may not need a full meeting to consider some of the alternatives before them, as some alternatives may be eliminated early. The members agreed to shorten the schedule if possible, which might result in consideration of a recommendation to the Selectmen at the April meeting.

The Task Force members considered January 5, 11, 12, 18 and 19 as options for the January meeting date. Ms. Loughnane will check with the members that are absent and will get back to the group when a final date has been selected.

**Miscellaneous updates:**

Ms. Loughnane reported that the MBTA's East Street Bridge 30% design plans are complete and a public hearing will be scheduled soon. She reported that a new Hogan Tire building is under construction at 14 Washington Street, with opening of the new facility expected in the winter. She also noted that façade improvements and exterior work is underway at the Post Office/Islington Pizza building at 315 Washington Street, and stated that this work is expected to be substantially complete by the end of the year with site working continuing in the spring. Ms. Loughnane told the Task Force members that an ice cream parlor has received approval to operate in the former hair salon place in the Islington Pizza building. She also stated that a building permit was issued for work to begin at the new three-story mixed-use building at 323 Washington Street, and noted that completion is anticipated for summer 2017. Mr. Reardon reported that construction of Fire Station II is expected to continue into the winter. Ms. McCabe added that the Planning Board approved a new gas station and small convenience store at 390 Washington Street, the site of the old gas station and service shop that has been closed.

Mr. Jaillet added that there will be a public meeting on November 17 hosted by the Recreation Commission to discuss options for tennis courts. He encouraged interested residents to attend.

**Review of Visioning Plans**

Maps from July's Visioning Session were displayed in the room and shown on the overhead projection screen. Ms. Loughnane summarized what was shown on each of the visioning maps from July's meeting, as well as a few additional maps completed at Westwood Day. The maps are also available on the Task Force's webpage.

**Discussion of Islington Community Center Capital Improvement Needs Assessment and Replacement Reserve Analysis report conducted for the Town of Westwood by On-site Insight**

Ms. Loughnane and Mr. McCarthy distributed a capital improvement needs assessment report for the ICC building. The report was distributed to Task Force members and can be found on the Task Force's webpage on the Town's website at <http://www.townhall.westwood.ma.us>. Ms. Loughnane and Mr. McCarthy explained the needs assessment was prepared by a consultant to provide a comprehensive listing and estimate of updates and improvements to the ICC. Mr. McCarthy explained that study found that it would cost an estimated \$1.7 million to complete necessary repairs such as replacing the roofing, siding, windows and doors, repairs to the foundation, electrical and fire alarm system upgrades, retaining wall repairs, reconstructing the existing entrance ramps, and updates to bathrooms and other interior renovations. He noted that this estimate does not include making the building fully accessible or building code compliant, but addresses those areas that can be corrected without a complete replacement. Ms. Loughnane noted that the estimate does not include adding an elevator or central air conditioning, and stated that the needs study only addresses that hard cost for necessary capital repairs.

Mr. Jaillet explained that the Town purchased the building in 2004 in order to keep the property from being developed in a manner that the Town did not want. He said that it was offered at a very good deal by the Islington Community Church, at half of the assessed value, and the Town saw the purchase as an opportunity to help keep the Mothers Morning Out nursery school in Islington for at least 5 more years. Mr. Jaillet said that the Town signed a 5-year lease with MMO and then extended that lease for another 5 years. He noted that the Town and MMO have had 1-year leases for the past few years.

Ms. Persons asked if the Town would produce a similar analysis for the Library building. Mr. McCarthy replied that he was in the process of commissioning a capital improvement needs assessment for Wentworth Hall. He said that he expected to have that report in late December and would be happy to share the report with the Task Force at the January meeting.

Mr. Shanshiry asked how the ICC repair work would be funded. Mr. Jaillet responded that the work could either be funded through a bond or as individual budgeted capital improvement projects covering each specific item. He said that both funding options would need Town Meeting approval.

Ms. Banks asked what the estimate would be for a complete reconstruction of the ICC. Ms. Loughnane responded that the Town had not prepared an estimate to demolish and reconstruct the ICC Building. She said that she would expect the Town's cost to do that to be higher than a developer's cost to do the same work because the Town would have to pay prevailing wages. Mr. Jaillet noted that if the Town pursued an estimate for demolition and reconstruction, it would include soft costs such as design work and legal fees.

Mr. Reardon commented that he believes it is the Town's responsibility to keep the ICC building safe and make sure the fire alarm and safety systems are functioning. He said that the proposed repairs would have to be sufficient to do that.

Mr. Jaillet concluded that the capital needs study estimates costs for needed work that can be determined from a visual review of the existing conditions, and that it does not propose a completely new building. He said that the proposed work is only that needed to maintain continued use of the existing building, rather than to create a more functional building or add new space.

### **Petruzziello Properties Presentation of Layout Option 6**

Peter Zahka, attorney representative for Giorgio Petruzziello of Petruzziello Properties, Proponent Giorgio Petruzziello, and project architect Michael McKay of McKay Architects were present. Mr. Zahka stated that he submitted three studies to staff and the Task Force in response to questions at the last meeting about the impacts of rental apartments on neighboring property values. Mr. Zahka stated that the studies from MIT, Tufts and the Urban Institute found that there is often little or no negative impact, and there has been some positive impact, on single family home values. He also noted that the studies were based on large housing complexes.

Mr. McKay presented "Option 6" which was a rendering of the corner of East and Washington Street. He said that this option would involve replicating the former church exterior for first floor retail and residences above (1.5 stories of residential) with underground parking. He noted that the "L" shape portion at the corner of the existing building would not be reconstructed. Mr. McKay said that the remainder of Option 6 would be similar to Option 2. He said that Option 6 was essentially a refined Option 2 siting intended to recreate the church exterior that many people have supported at past meetings. Mr. McKay said that the Proponent had taken into consideration comments requesting reuse of the existing building, but that when they reviewed the building with respect to code compliance, they found that it would not be feasible to reuse the existing building.

Mr. McKay also presented an Option 7 showing how the privately owned properties could be redeveloped independently. He said that Option 7 shows what can be accomplished under the current FMUOD zoning without having to use the Town-owned properties.

Mr. Hertz asked about the size of the proposed bedrooms in the various options. Mr. Petruzziello responded that they would be approximately 740 to 900 sq. ft. in area.

Mr. Laubenstein asked if CVS would consider being on the first floor of a new building with residential units above. Mr. Petruzziello replied that CVS has said that they would not agree to that. He noted that CVS only considers that type of development in urban settings.

### **Public Comments & Questions:**

A question was asked: How many apartments are proposed in Option 6? Why are condos not proposed?

The Proponent responded: Option 6 anticipates between 25 and 30 apartments. As discussed at a previous meeting one-bedroom apartments are proposed to limit school impacts and one-bedroom condos do not sell. Additionally, there is less control over who moves into an owner-occupied unit, but with apartments the landlord can perform background checks and has more control over the tenants than if the units were offered for sale.

The commenter stated his preference for Option 6 over the former proposal for CVS to be located at the corner and added that he considered this option more visually appealing.

A question was asked: How much revenue is expected from MMO?

The Proponent responded: He was not sure at this time.

A question was asked: How many apartments are expected in Islington?

Staff responded: The Task Force is not yet in a position to determine how many residences could be developed in Islington. The Task Force is now just reviewing early concept plans for recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. If the Selectmen decide to move forward with consideration of a development involving Town's land, then a Development Agreement would be negotiated which could cap the number of residential units to be included in that project.

A question was asked: How many Task Force members live in Westwood and in Islington?

Staff responded: Fourteen of the twenty-one members of the Task Force, and all 11 voting members are Westwood residents. Of those 11 voting members, 7 are Islington residents. There are three area residents who serve as the Islington neighborhood resident representatives and two Islington business representatives. Eleven of the members are the full voting members and all Westwood residents representing Islington or other Westwood boards and committees and the other ten members are Town staff and are ex-officio members.

A question was asked: Does the FMUOD zoning set a limit on the amount of residential development?

The proponent and staff responded: The FMUOD section of the Zoning Bylaw limits the maximum amount of residential development to be no more than 50% of the total gross floor area of any project within the FMUOD.

The commenter encouraged the Task Force to listen to the neighborhood.

A commenter expressed concern over a potential shortage of parking with additional apartments and new commercial development. The commenter encouraged the Proponent to consider condos rather than apartments.

A question was asked: What are the buffer and setback requirements?

The Proponent responded: All Options include designs that comply with the FMUOD buffer and setback requirements.

A commenter expressed an opinion against the Town selling, moving or trading land and noted that a petition to that effect was submitted earlier in the week.

A question was asked: What can the Developer propose on his own, and will it save the Town money in the long-run?

Staff responded: Option 7 hasn't been fully reviewed, but this option was presented by the Proponent to demonstrate what can be accomplished under current zoning on private property. The potential benefits and impacts of each proposed option will be considered by the Task Force over the course of the winter. The Selectmen will then further consider financial benefits when that board reviews the proposals.

Mr. Hertz commented that he believes the Town has a unique opportunity and should give very careful consideration before investing significant money into existing buildings. He said that he believes the Task

Force will consider all aspects of the proposed options and try to meet the needs of the residents and establish a good public-private partnership.

Mr. Shanshiry asked the public to provide the Task Force with any credible information they have pertaining to potential negative impacts on property values of similar projects. He said that he has heard such an the assertion at the last few meetings and would find it very helpful if any residents could provide documentation of such impacts for the Task Force to consider.

A commenter expressed concern for pedestrian safety in light of proposed additional apartments, and stated an opinion that renters do not invest in their community.

A commenter stated that the Selectmen might consider conditioning any project approval on the type of use proposed, so that, if a project was to move forward which proposed retail uses, the resulting buildings would be limited to retail use rather than office use.

Ms. Banks stated that the Recreation Department wants to carefully review the proposed 5,000 sq. ft. community space to see if it would be suitable for their needs.

Mr. Petruzzello said that he would like to meet with MMO representatives to discuss their needs in greater detail.

### **Approval of Minutes of October 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

The Task Force approved the minutes from October 13, 2016 as written.

### **Assignments for next meeting:**

Ms. Loughnane encouraged all Task Force members to come prepared to the January meeting to give their opinion of the pros and cons of the various options, and to begin discussions on the details of each potentially feasible option. She said that everyone was encouraged to download the project map and sketch their ideas for what might be best for Islington Center.

The Task Force adjourned at 9:50 PM.

### **List of Exhibits:**

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| Municipal Capital Needs assessment and Replacement Reserve Analysis, prepared for Town of Westwood, prepared by On-Site Insight RECAP Real Estate Advisors or Boston, MA, final report entitled "Islington Community Center, Westwood, MA" dated October 29, 2016. |
| Housing Study, MIT Study "Effects of Mixed-Income, Multi-Family Rental Housing Development on Single-Family Housing Values"  |
| Urban Land Institute: Higher-Density Development Myth and Fact   |
| Tufts University Study: On the Ground: 40B Developments Before and After   |
| Options 6 and 7 visual presentation from Petruzzello Properties, available on Town's website under "Islington Center Task Force" webpage at <a href="http://www.townhall.westwood.ma.us/">http://www.townhall.westwood.ma.us/</a>                                  |
| Petition: "Town of Westwood – Preservation of Islington Community Center, Library and Parking Lot" (8 pages), received 11/7/16 by Board of Selectmen and Islington Center Task Force   |