

**Westwood Planning Board Meeting Minutes  
(Planning Board Attendance at Finance and Warrant Commission's Meeting)  
Monday, March 6, 2017 – 7:30 PM  
Community Meeting Room, Library, 660 High Street**

The Planning Board attended the Finance and Warrant Commission (FinCom)'s meeting relative to the public hearing for warrant articles for Annual Town Meeting.

Planning Board Members Present: Christopher A. Pfaff, Steven H. Olanoff, David L. Atkins, Jr., Michael L. McCusker, and Trevor W. Laubenstein.

Staff Present: Nora Loughnane, Director of Community and Economic Development, Abby McCabe, Town Planner and Janice Barba, Land Use Specialist.

**Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article Sponsors:**

- Petition Articles – Islington Center Zoning Articles – Deborah Conant
- Petition Article – Housing Article – Jerry Wolfe
- Board of Selectmen Articles
- Planning Board Articles

**Petition Article A and B – Islington Center Zoning Article (as shown in the FinCom's Public Hearing Packet). Article A – Removal of Multi-Family Housing, Article B – Remove Footnote**

Ms. Conant of 21 Strasser Avenue and Ms. Rollings of 86 Green Hill Road, as lead petitioners, gave a presentation on the proposed zoning articles. The first zoning article is to delete the multi-family residential use in the FMUOD 6 & 7 (Washington and High Street Business Districts) zones and the second article presented was to remove the footnote market 1 in the alternative dimensions table 9.5.9 related to minimum project area.

Article A -

Ms. Rollings begin with the proposed article to remove the multi-family housing use from the Washington and High Street FMUOD zones, stating that the article has been submitted in response to the opposition of Westwood residents for the proposed Islington Center redesign, which includes proposals for residential apartments and objections about the building currently under construction in Islington at 317-323 Washington Street. Ms. Rollings explained that this article proposes removal of the multi-family housing use because it alters the character of the area, there is a potential impact on schools, other areas are more appropriate for mixed use development such as University Station and 22 Everett Street, and the zoning as written is not consistent with the input on the recent community survey.

Article B –

Ms. Conant presented the proposal to remove the footnote marker 1 from Section 9.5.9 of the Zoning Bylaw, which describes the minimum project area in the FMUOD to include parcels that are separated by a right-of-way or road way that are effectively continuous and remove this from the FMUOD 6 and 7 zones. She explained that the article is proposed to maintain the small town

character and charm, to not allow projects to continue down the street, to address concerns with height, this article will limit the large buildings, and to protect the residential quality of life.

Chairman Chris Pfaff reported on the Planning Board's recommendation to not support article A as discussed at the Planning board's February 28 public hearing for the following reasons:

- The Planning Board proposed the multi-family housing use two years ago, which was adopted by Annual Town Meeting in May 2015 and maintains its continued support because allowing the opportunity and flexibility for housing in the village business areas is an economic development and smart growth tool
- Encourages redevelopment of existing buildings by providing an economic incentive
- People living in the village centers creates vibrancy and supports local businesses
- Removing the multi-family residential uses doesn't provide much incentive for development under the FMUOD, and development will likely be under the Local Business zone where we have not experienced much change
- Proposal is not in keeping with the Comprehensive Master Plan's stated goals of providing more diverse housing opportunities
- Housing in the village areas encourages walking and use of public transportation because of the location near the commuter rail and town services
- Article not in keeping with the FMUOD's states purpose of "providing a desirable mix of land uses or promoting walking, biking and use or public transportation"
- Article decreases chances of providing affordable housing opportunities because FMUOD requires affordable units for projects of 8+, which helps Westwood reach minimum 10% required for state's subsidized housing inventory
- This article removes the opportunity for a special permit to be submitted and reviewed, not adopting this articles does not approve any housing developments but allows the opportunity for a project to be submitted
- The Planning Board continues to support the multi-family use for housing in the FMUOD 6 & 7 and believes it's the best opportunity for a development plan.

The hearing was opened to public comment. The Planning Board and town staff answered questions regarding the allowed uses in the FMUOD 6 & 7, parking, the Local Business zoning districts, the application and public hearing process, municipal properties, the pending request for proposal review, and questions related to the Islington Center Task Force.

Planning Board Chairman Chris Pfaff reported that the Planning Board held a hearing on this article last week on February 28 and voted to recommend the Fin Com indefinitely postpone this article for the following reasons:

- He explained that the footnote was added last year when a private property owner on University Avenue was nearing a settlement agreement with the Town for a takings that occurred years ago. The owner had land on either side of University Ave. and across railroad and wanted clarification in the zoning. Questions also arose last year when considering the special permit on Washington Street and the Board added the note to help clarify the Board's common practice to consider properties when they're next to each other as one project.

- This article eliminates the Planning Board’s ability to consider more than one parcel as part of one project even when not across any streets and owned by than one owner, which has been the practice of the Board for example the Shell Station on Rte. And the High St plaza with Comella’s.
- Removal of this foot note could make the Board vulnerable to challenges in any project when considering more than one parcel even in a different zoning district elsewhere in town.

**Article C – Housing Petition**

Mr. Jerry Wolfe, 46 Buckmaster Road, introduced himself as the lead petitioner and explained that he would like to make an amendment on Town Meeting floor to update the article because of an inconsistency in the article (it was intended to be a one year moratorium but it says three years). He explained the intent of the article is to slow down development that tears down smaller single-homes to create larger homes. He believes a one year moratorium will help preserve smaller starter homes. Mr. Wolfe reviewed some assessed values and recent sales for property in town.

Chairman Chris Pfaff reported that the Planning Board applaud’ s the applicant’s motives behind the proposed article but held a hearing on this article last week and voted to recommend the Fin Com indefinitely postpone this article for the following reasons:

- Because the article is broad and applies to the demolition of all residential dwellings it does not achieve its stated purpose of preserving smaller entry level homes
- A one year moratorium is not likely to result in measures that will achieve the article’s goal

The Board of Selectmen’s articles were reviewed and discussed next.

The public hearing for the Planning Board sponsored warrant articles was continued without discussion to the following night on Tuesday, March 7 at 7:30 pm in the Community Room at the Library, 660 High Street.

Planning Board adjourned at approximately 10:45 p.m.

<u>List of Exhibits:</u>
Finance and Warrant Commission Public Hearing Packet/Agenda for March 6, 2017
Memorandum from Abby McCabe, Town Planner to Finance and Warrant Commission, Re: Zoning Amendment Request – Islington Center Zoning Article A, dated March 1, 2017.
Memorandum from Abby McCabe, Town Planner to Finance and Warrant Commission, Re: Zoning Amendment Request – Islington Center Article B, dated March 1, 2017.
Memorandum from Abby McCabe, Town Planner to Finance and Warrant Commission, Re: Zoning Amendment Request – Housing Moratorium Petition C, dated March 1, 2017.
Memorandum from Planning Board Members to Finance and Warrant Commission Members, Re: Planning Board Warrant Article Summaries for Annual Town Meeting, dated March 1, 2017.