

NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

October 25, 2021

The Needham Planning Board Virtual Meeting using Zoom was remotely called to order by Paul Alpert, Chairman, on Monday, October 25, 2021, at 12:14 p.m. with Messrs. Jacobs and Block and Mmes. McKnight and Espada, as well as Planning Director, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Mr. Alpert took a roll call attendance of the Board members and staff. He noted this is a special meeting to discuss the Town Meeting Warrant that is being held remotely because of Governor Baker's executive order on March 12, 2020 due to the COVID Virus. All attendees are present by video conference. He reviewed the rules of conduct for zoom meetings. He noted this meeting does not include any public hearings and there will be no public comment allowed. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call. All supporting materials, including the agenda, are posted on the town's website.

Discussion of Warrant Articles for October 2021 Special Town Meeting.

Ms. Newman reviewed the protocol for the Special Town Meeting. There will be a short presentation from Mr. Alpert and Mr. Block. She sent Mr. Alpert a map of the Chestnut Street Business District. Mr. Block asked if anyone could think of any technical questions that may come up for the Outdoor Seating. Ms. McKnight stated she watched his presentation and he did not mention the Select Board's role in approving outdoor seating on public ways and in parking spaces. Mr. Block noted he commented the Planning Board has jurisdiction over private property and the Select Board has jurisdiction over public sidewalks. He may not have been clear enough. Mr. Alpert asked if it was anticipated the Select Board would continue to use parking spaces in the streets. Mr. Block will let the Select Board respond to that if it comes up. Ms. Newman noted the Select Board should respond as regards to public spaces. It was noted masks must be worn even when speaking.

Mr. Alpert suggested the Board talk about the Emery Grover Building. Ms. McKnight stated the Finance Committee opposes the motion for design funds for the renovation of the Emery Grover Building. They want the Facility Financing Plan in place. An amendment will be presented to reduce the amount of money from \$1.5 million to \$350,000; to "delete funding for design plans" and "delete creation of off-street parking at Stephen Palmer Center." Mr. Alpert stated the \$350,000 will be used for engineering and design for the renovation of the Hillside School as temporary quarters of school personnel while the Emery Grover issue is looked at.

Mr. Block asked what the condition was the school needed to be returned to after use. Ms. Newman stated the Board allowed them to keep the fence in place but gave them a year to let them know what the plans were for the school. They wanted to retain the parking lot in the form it was and allow them to keep that. Mr. Alpert asked when they will vacate the property. Ms. Newman stated the police are still there, but the Fire Department is asking for an occupancy permit for Fire Station 2. Ms. McKnight noted this appropriation is only for design funds. Work will be needed for swing space for the school personnel to move in there.

Ms. McKnight asked what the Planning Board role is. Mr. Alpert is not sure there is a role for the Board. She noted that the Board does have an interest in the Stephen Palmer off-street parking under the affordable housing plan. Ms. McKnight stated she is planning to offer an amendment to "delete off-site parking at Stephen Palmer." They should not be considering using it for accessory parking for any other use. A discussion ensued. Mr. Alpert stated the Planning Board needs further discussion. If Ms. McKnight wants to make a motion it would be without Planning Board approval and not as a Planning Board member. He would need to see the revised plans.

Report of Planning Director and Board members

Ms. Newman stated she was contacted by John Fogarty of Beth Israel Deaconess Needham. The hospital has been doing Covid testing out of the parking lot. He asked if the Planning Board would give approval for testing to be done at the old emergency access at the back of the building during the winter. She noted their permit does not allow anything to happen at that access due to neighbor concerns. Mr. Alpert felt it should be a minor modification without a formal amendment.

Mr. Block and Ms. Espada left the meeting.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Jacobs, and seconded by Ms. McKnight, it was by a roll call vote of the three members present unanimously:

VOTED: to continue the meeting through the end of Town Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

Adam Block Vice-Chairman and Clerk