

Meeting Minutes, July 17, 7:30-9:00 PM (via Zoom)

Committee Members Present: Jonathan Klein (chair), Steve Heikin (minutes), Kimberley Richardson, Alice MacGarvie Thompson, Teronda Ellis, Marion Freedman-Gurspan

Committee Members Absent: Amy Schectman, Rita McNally

Staff Present: Jessica Jean-Louis, Community Engagement Assistant

Guest/Presenter: Katha Seidman, Member, MBTA-CA Multifamily Planning Committee (MMPC)

1. Call to Order, Public Comment, Minutes -- Jonathan called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. The minutes were approved. He asked if there was any public comment, and, with 2 individuals as "Participants," none asked to comment.

2. Update on MBTA Communities Act Planning, including Harvard Street Corridor, Multifamily District Proposal, and Walnut/Juniper (BHA) Rezoning (presentation by Katha Seidman, member of the Select Board's MBTA-CA Multifamily Permitting Committee)

Kathe explained Brookline's path to compliance with the MBTA-CA: creating a district with 6990 "theoretical" units of multifamily housing. The district must be "as-of-right"; cannot require ground floor commercial; and must be adopted by 12/31/23, meaning it must be passed by Fall Town Meeting. There are two tracks being pursued: a Harvard Street district being developed by DPCD, and a multifamily (M) district, being studied by the Select Board's MBTA Multifamily Permitting Committee (MMPC).

The Harvard Street district builds on the ongoing (2.5 year) Multifamily Study; it covers 65 acres – 48 on Harvard Street and the remainder in adjacent M districts. A form-based code approach is being developed with the aid of a consultant experienced in these types of codes, Opticos. As presently conceived, this district will need a 2/3 Town Meeting vote (as is generally required for any warrant article involving zoning change). It does not qualify for Housing Choice, which would allow a 50% majority vote.

The Select Board's charge to the MMPC requires two solutions: (1) an approach that will achieve technical compliance with the MBTA-CA, though not necessarily resulting in the near-term creation of additional multifamily housing; and (2) an approach that will incentivize the creation of 699 units of new housing (10% of 6990), possibly including the Harvard Street proposal.

Background – Technical Compliance: The M districts, which encompass 325 acres, were downzoned in 1973 from an allowed height of 85 feet and an FAR (Floor Area Ratio) of 4.0 to a 50 foot height limit and a maximum FAR of 2.5 – with substantial areas of lower FAR. Most of the M districts are fully built out, except for the M-1 districts, where there are a number of single- and two-family houses. It would be hard to devise a form-based code for the M districts with such a wide diversity of building types.

Also, without change in the buildable envelope (defined by height, FAR, and setbacks), the proposed M district, though technically compliant, will not produce new housing. It is, however, designed to pass by Housing Choice, allowing for a 50% majority vote at Town Meeting.

Background – Incentivized Housing Approach: The MMPC is looking at creating a district around the Brookline Housing Authority’s Juniper/High property, which currently contains 100 units in a mix of family and senior housing. A redevelopment of this property could provide an increase in the number of units to 175-225. A compliant MBTA-CA district for this site may be proposed that would meet Housing Choice standards.

A second strategy to incentivize multifamily housing development would simply be to relax the residential zoning for the nearby Emerald Island Special Overlay District to permit multifamily housing. Currently, only age-restricted (senior), live/work, and micro units are allowed. This also would comply with MBTA-CA and Housing Choice requirements.

3. Discussion regarding possible engagement of consultant

A member of the committee expressed concern that the AHOD process was moving too fast with the Comprehensive Master Planning process underway. It was agreed that the AHOD process needs to stay connected to the Comprehensive Planning process as well as to the MBTA-CA and MMPC work. There was also concern that an AHOD proposal would lose support if allowed rents or purchase options included families at the 120% of AMI level.

Teronda Ellis noted that development costs of new units are currently around \$750,000/unit – whether they are affordable or market rate – and that costs are rising. Costs can reach \$900,000/unit with high end finishes. It might be necessary to pair market rate developers with affordable housing/mission driven developers to create projects under these conditions.

4. Scheduling for future meetings. The Committee agreed on the following meeting dates. We will not meet in August (vacation from meetings!).

- i. September 18
- ii. October 16
- iii. November 13
- iv. December 11

5. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.