



Town of Brookline

Massachusetts

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PLANNING BOARD

Steven A. Heikin, Chair
Mark J. Zarrillo, Clerk
Andrea Brue
Linda K. Hamlin
Blair Hines
Matt Hyatt

BROOKLINE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES By Zoom Event August 9, 2023 – 8:30 a.m.

Board Present: Steve Heikin, Mark Zarrillo, Andrea Brue, Linda Hamlin, Blair Hines, Matt Hyatt

Staff Present: Beccah Mapure, Nicole Paré

Materials related to each agenda item can be found at:
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/4393>

A recording of the Zoom meeting can be found at:
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/2422/Recordings>

Steve Heikin opened the meeting.

1. Presentation by the MBTA-CA Multifamily Permitting Committee

The MBTA-CA Multifamily Permitting Committee will identify, develop, and analyze potential options for complying with the MBTA Communities Act, in parallel to the work already underway along Harvard Street, so that Town Meeting can be presented with credible and meaningful alternatives in considering how best to comply with that Act's requirements. The Planning Board may review and potentially vote to endorse the proposal.

For more information:
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/3608/MBTA-CA-Multifamily-Permitting-Committee>

Richard Benka presented a PowerPoint presentation on behalf of the MBTA-CA Multifamily Permitting Committee ("Committee").

Steve congratulated the Committee and Richard for the presentation and work done.

Blair Hines urged the Committee not to include parking requirements as the purpose of the MBTA Communities Act is to incentivize development around transit and some developers may choose not to provide parking at all.

Andrea Brue expressed her general support but stated that certain design requirements were too limiting. Andrea encouraged the Committee to broaden design requirements to allow for more modern architecture and materials. She suggested replacing brick with “masonry” to allow more flexibility.

Steve stated that he agrees with the issue of specificity of design and the regulations being too restrictive.

Mark Zarrillo agreed with the Committee’s idea of using the existing M districts to satisfy the MBTA Communities Act.

Mark asked if the proposed definition of dwelling unit would limit occupants to families only and suggested that as part of site plan review streetscape and neighborhood context should be considered.

Richard responded to Planning Board member comments and explained that under the proposal the Select Board could amend the design standards with a recommendation from the Planning Board.

Andrea suggested requiring a street level elevation showing adjacent structures and streetscape.

Linda Hamlin suggested looking at materials being taught in architecture schools as a way to find out what modern materials are being built in today’s context. She also urged the Committee to consider affordability of materials and also how young families want to live.

Matt Hyatt thanked the Committee for the amount of work put into the proposed zoning amendment and stated that he thought it was a clever way to leverage what exists with the goals of the MBTA Communities Act. He stated that as a practicing architect he appreciates when specific materials are allowed or restricted rather than defining allowable styles. He suggested broadening the allowed building materials to include modern building material applications such as thin terra cotta over rain screens and cast in place concrete and stated that traditional clapboard can become a maintenance issue but more modern applications may be suitable.

Richard asked if Matt could send him a list of building materials. Matt agreed.

Steve stated that the existing zoning allows up to 50-foot height limits so in some cases the proposed overlay district regulations may be more limiting. Steve asked members of the Planning Board to send him comments so that he could compile them and send them to the Committee.

Steve expressed some concern over including more remote M district areas in the proposal and suggested dropping some of those areas from the proposal and focusing only on existing high-density areas near Harvard Street. Steve expressed a desire to define site plan review as also including architectural design review. Steve also suggested dropping Beacon Street given that design review is already required under current zoning and preservation regulations and also given the unlikelihood of redevelopment on Beacon Street.

Steve asked how the proposal will address demolition of historic structures which already require design review and preservation review.

Richard responded that the Committee looked at areas in M-1 districts where demolition would be more likely and stated that the Committee will look at potentially carving out some high demolition risk areas as well as Beacon Street.

Steve opened the meeting for public comment.

Jonathan Klein, precinct 17, 150 Saint Paul Street, stated that as a town meeting member he appreciates seeing innovative and sustainable building types and materials. Jonathan asked for clarification on whether or not a project could utilize existing TPOD regulations for reduced parking under the proposed regulations.

Richard clarified that yes, applicants could utilize both regulations.

Jonathan asked how many multi-family housing units are estimated as a result of the proposal.

Richard responded that Kara Brewton came up with the number around 375-380 potential units.

Michael Rubenstein, precinct 13, 130 Willard Road, urged the Committee to reduce the size of the M district in order to meet the goals of the MBTA Communities Act.

David Gladstone, precinct 16, expressed concern over available parking for small businesses.

Steve pointed out that as a part of the Harvard Street zoning proposal they are looking at regulations for allowing dual use parking for commercial users during the day and residents at night.

Andrea Brue reiterated that the purpose of the MBTA Communities Act is to incentivize housing development around transit so that people do not need to drive as much and can walk to commercial businesses.

Michael Sandman urged the Planning Board not to leave design standards to the Select Board, expressed support of contemporary design, and concern about affordable housing only around BHA properties.

Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert expressed concern over the Select Board adopting design standards and also that they are too restrictive.

Lawrence Madoff, 15 Coolidge Street, asked to see the zoning map.

Richard provided a slide showing the zoning map.

Steve Heikin called for a motion to support proceeding with M District compliance plan without precluding other options. Blair Hines seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Martin Rosenthal, 62 Columbia Street, expressed support but urged the Committee to look at walkability of neighborhoods.

Ken Lewis provided a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed Walnut-High Overlay District.

Steve Heikin, Linda Hamlin, and Mark Zarillo expressed support for the Walnut-High Overlay District.

Steve Heikin amended the vote to include the Walnut-High Overlay District. Linda Hamlin and Mark Zarillo voted to support the amended motion.

Steve stated that he would check back with the members who left to formalize the amended motion.

The meeting was adjourned.