



# Town of Brookline

## Massachusetts

### PLANNING BOARD

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

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## BROOKLINE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES By Zoom Event September 13, 2023 – 8:30 a.m.

**Board Present:** Steve Heikin, Mark Zarrillo, Andrea Brue, Linda Hamlin, Matt Hyatt  
**Staff Present:** Kara Brewton, Polly Selkoe, Emily DeHoog, Nicole Paré

**Materials related to each agenda item can be found at:**  
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/4425>

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

### 1) PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

There were no non-agenda public comments.

### 2) PUBLIC HEARINGS

#### 8:30 AM Consider support letter for a grant to rebuild Davis Path Footbridge

Kara Brewton introduced the item and provided background on the grant opportunity. She thanked Mark Zarrillo for his suggestion to add a lookout over Route 9 with a seating area.

Steve Heikin expressed his support. He added that he was frustrated that the MBTA was not willing to allow an at-grade crossing.

Andrea Brue asked what would be sent in as part of the grant application.

Kara responded that the application is over 50 pages long and includes support letters, the previously approved basic concept plans, demographic information, and some survey data.

Steve reiterated the importance of the Davis Path Footbridge as the only access point connecting neighborhoods and commercial districts across a half-mile stretch of the Green Line between Washington and Cypress Streets.

Matt Hyatt and Linda Hamlin both expressed a great need for the footbridge to be open as they live in the vicinity.

Kara added a sentence to the support letter pertaining to the importance of this north-south connection which would allow multiple neighborhoods access to Emerson Garden and act as a central social gathering place for this part of Town.

Steve made a motion to approve the support letter. Mark Zarrillo seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

**8:45 AM                      Crown Castle Modification to Upgrade Existing Telecommunication Facilities on Town-owned poles to 5G (List of nearby properties found by clicking on URL above for materials.)**

Polly Selkoe introduced the project and explained that wireless communication facilities on public property require Planning Board recommendation and Select Board approval per the Zoning Bylaws. She added that the proposal is for upgrades to existing pole-mounted equipment.

Ana Semashka, Crown Castle, provided a PowerPoint presentation.

Steve asked about the possibility of recommending a fee increase for these types of facilities which is under Select Board jurisdiction.

Linda asked how the applicant came about the paint/finish color for the different nodes.

Ana responded that the intent was to make the equipment blend in to the surroundings and to match existing equipment.

Steve asked why the shrouds were increasing in size.

Ana responded that the equipment was as small as possible while still being large enough to accommodate multiple service providers per node and that the 5G equipment was just larger in general.

Andrea suggested matching the equipment color with the existing pole.

Steve asked that color matching the equipment to the existing pole be added to the letter of recommendation.

Polly acknowledged that the language would be added to the letter.

Mark asked why the antennas couldn't be underground, at ground level, or located in a nearby mechanical enclosure.

Ana responded that in order to maintain adequate service levels the shroud and antenna had to be as close to each other as possible and that the shroud cannot be underground because the equipment requires ventilation.

Andrea suggested recommending smaller cabinets, dispersed on more poles, instead of larger cabinets for multiple carriers.

Brandi Spezzano, Crown Castle, pointed out that they would have to do a study to see if there are any other viable sites available.

Polly reminded the board that the design standards for wireless communication facilities on publicly-owned property recommend co-location.

Steve suggested adding to the letter that the Planning Board recommends smaller cabinets distributed on additional poles to accommodate 5G upgrades.

Jonathan Klein, 160 Saint Paul Street, spoke in favor and opined that pole-mounted equipment is less noticeable to pedestrians, safer, and that there is a need for better wireless service for Brookline residents.

Steve Heikin made a motion to recommend approval with the suggestion that the equipment be dispersed onto more sites with smaller shrouds. Linda Hamlin seconded. Mark Zarrillo abstained. Linda, Andrea, Matt, and Steve voted aye.

3) **PRESENTATION ON PLANNING PROCESS STUDY COMMITTEE**

On August 22nd, 2023, the Planning Process Study Committee voted to approve the Comprehensive Plan Request for Proposals. The Comprehensive Plan will be a two-year process, driven by community engagement and led by a consultant team. The purpose is to develop a vision for the future of our community along with implementation goals, strategies, and objectives to make that vision a reality.

The RFP document: 1) provides consultants with historical and demographic information about Brookline, 2) details guiding principles for the planning process, 3) highlights necessary community engagement elements, and 4) lays out four phases of the planning process with milestones and deliverables.

Under MGL, the Comprehensive Plan needs to be adopted by the Planning Board. The Planning Process Study Committee is seeking Planning Board approval of the RFP.

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Matt Hyatt left the meeting.

Linda Olson Pelhke, Planning Process Study Committee member, Precinct 17, introduced the item and gave some background information on the appointment of the Planning Process Study Committee (“Committee”). She highlighted the importance of community consensus and how the Committee had decided to hire a consultant to lead the effort as well as appoint a Steering Committee.

Emily DeHoog, Senior Housing Planner, Town of Brookline, provided a PowerPoint presentation.

Emily explained that the most recent Comprehensive Plan (“Comp Plan”) was the 2005-2015 Comp Plan which has been updated from time to time but which has not been active for the past few years.

Emily pointed out the desire for a community driven effort.

Andrea Brue asked about local business input in the process.

Emily responded that yes, she agrees, local business representatives should be included as engagement ambassadors as well as appointed to the Steering Committee.

Linda Olson Pelhke added that all local stakeholder groups including religious groups and non-profits, not just businesses, will be included in the process.

Matt Hyatt suggested providing a definitive number of stakeholder groups in the RFP to make it easier for consultants to estimate costs and timelines for community engagement efforts.

Linda Olson Pelhke responded that a definitive number may be difficult but that they could certainly provide a range. She mentioned the initial count for stakeholder groups was around 30 groups. She pointed out the importance of representing a diverse community.

Steve asked if there were any state funding opportunities.

Kara Brewton responded that staff applied for the Housing Choice Grant which could be used to supplement costs.

Steve expressed some hesitation with the vagueness of the RFP. He expressed that from the viewpoint of a consultant, a well-defined list of major planning issues faced by the community may help get more responses. He pointed out certain major topics of discussion faced by the Town such as a desire for a complete street network and the issue of housing affordability.

He also suggested waiting until after Town Meeting to see the response regarding zoning changes towards a more form-based code, such as the Harvard Street proposal.

Mark Zarrillo, also a member of the Committee, expressed that he had the same initial thoughts as Steve, but he explained that this is a different type of process in which the community will decide the major issues as part of the community engagement phase.

Linda Hamlin asked about how the Comp Plan process would address global and national issues such as climate change and suggested that the process look into those types of issues as well.

Linda Olson Pehlke responded that she sees the process helping to solve those issues as well. She said that the proposal was a synergistic approach to achieve goals rather than a one-off solution to issues.

Mark explained that the state requires master plans to address a list of planning topics. He also pointed out that if they don't get favorable responses they can go back to the drawing board with the RFP.

Steve pointed out that there was only one place in the RFP that discussed zoning and housing.

Linda Pehlke discussed a desire to create a thematic map as part of the process, which would show the overarching goals of the Comp Plan. She gave Somerville's thematic map as an example.

Kara Brewton pointed out that staff had met with some consultants prior to the RFP drafting to gauge its effectiveness and the responses were positive. She reiterated that the Planning Board would be involved with the selection of the consultant.

Steve made a motion to recommend approval of the RFP. Andrea seconded. Andrea, Mark, Linda and Steve voted aye.

Emily DeHoog said she would send the Planning Board Somerville's thematic map via email.

**The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.**