

Submitted by: Linda Olson Pehlke, TMM Pct. 2, Paul Warren, TMM Pct. 1, Gina Hahn, TMM Pct. 3, M. David Lee, President Stull and Lee Architecture and Planning, Pct. 6

MOVED that the Town will Adopt the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, it would be in the Town’s best interest to engage in a Town-wide, progressive planning and zoning reform project responding to the need for greater resiliency in the face of the climate emergency and pandemic disruptions, plus the critical need for equity, housing affordability, and business vitality; and

WHEREAS, the Town, its residents, businesses and non-profits, and potential property developers struggle with an antiquated zoning bylaw that is difficult to understand, does not reflect modern community goals, and does not produce predictable, context-appropriate outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Nearly 600 residents of Brookline have signed a letter to the Select Board calling on the Town to engage in an inclusive, community-driven planning and zoning reform process that would chart a thoughtful and informed course for our future; and

WHEREAS, our Zoning By-Law does not adequately reflect evolving new trends in housing, commuting, lifestyle choices, and the growing awareness that our health and well-being depends on access to the outdoors and recreation; and

WHEREAS, our Zoning By-Law and other Town policies do not adequately address the disparities made evident by the pandemic and detailed in the recently published Disparity Report 2021 under the auspices of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations; and

WHEREAS, the Select Board identified Objective #11 in the FY 2022 Financial Plan which states, “To pursue re-codification and an update to the zoning by-laws that meets Town Needs and objectives”; and

WHEREAS, WA 34 from Fall 2020 Town Meeting urges the Select Board to determine whether adding substantial new housing is in the Town’s best interests after consideration for impacts to Town facilities, infrastructure, and services, as well as open space and the historic streetscape; and

WHEREAS, the Town has developed new and effective methods for community engagement such as those being used in the Boylston Street/RT 9 Corridor Study; and

WHEREAS, community engagement across the entire town is the keystone of a community-driven planning and zoning reform effort. Starting with a detailed inventory of our current environment, this engagement process will allow stakeholders to identify common goals and values along with strategies for implementation; and

WHEREAS, these shared goals and values should be translated into a new, reformed Zoning By-Law incorporating progressive planning tools; and

WHEREAS, current corridor planning studies and other ongoing planning efforts should continue and should not be impeded by this broader planning project; and

WHEREAS, by doing the work to define our shared goals, we as a community can work together to respond to the broad set of future community needs and also strengthen and enhance the quality of life for all who live, work, study, or visit in Brookline; and

WHEREAS, MGL Title VII Chapter 41 Section 81D: Master plan, requires that a planning board “shall make a master plan of such city or town and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan”, and the last completed Comprehensive Plan in Brookline was done in 2005; and

WHEREAS, several neighboring cities and towns have either finished or are starting the process to develop comprehensive plans to inform potential zoning reform, such as Somerville (Somervision 2040), Boston (Imagine Boston 2030), Medford (Medford 2030) and Cambridge (Cambridge Envision 2018);

NOW THEREFORE BE IT:

RESOLVED, that the Select Board, in consultation with the Director of Planning and Community Development, appoint a Planning Process Study Committee to work with the Planning Department and other Town staff to develop a work program, budget, and scope for an inclusive, community-driven planning and zoning reform process; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Select Board appointed Planning Process Study Committee seek input and be informed by a full spectrum of stakeholders, including but not limited to: marginalized communities, subsidized housing residents, non-profits, faith-based organizations, business interests, neighborhood associations, Brookline residents with professional expertise in planning and zoning, as well as, advocacy groups for affordable housing, historic preservation, climate action and resiliency, green space, parks and open space, active and public transportation, and senior citizens; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Process Study Committee shall endeavor to (i) examine the 2005 Comprehensive Plan with a view towards determining how a future comprehensive plan could be more effective, and (ii) devise a planning process that will develop a shared fact base of existing conditions, develop demographic and land-use projections, analyze possible land-use scenarios, inventory infrastructure and future infrastructure needs, identify Town service and facility usage metrics and capacities, develop a statement of town-wide values and goals with metrics, and generally complete the analysis necessary to identify potential impacts from contemplated land-use scenarios; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Process Study Committee contemplate the potential application of progressive planning and zoning tools such as form-based zoning, environmental performance standards, green infrastructure, and placemaking; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Process Study Committee identify project work products that can help guide future zoning reform work, such as defining areas where development or redevelopment potential is appropriately supported, areas where public realm enhancements are needed, and areas or parcels that should be conserved; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the current corridor studies including Lower Boylston and the planned Upper Boylston study, the Fisher Hill study, the Housing Production Plan, the Climate Action Plan, and other ongoing planning studies will continue without impediment; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Process Study Committee should devise a community-based planning and zoning reform process that centers marginalized communities in its consideration of strategies and initiatives that provide greater equity in all realms of the built environment and to further environmental justice; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Process Study Committee should contemplate a community engagement strategy that incorporates the lessons learned from the engagement strategies of the Boylston Street/RT 9 Corridor Study and the Housing Production Plan and be designed with input from Brookline's Community Engagement Specialist; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Select Board endeavors to seek and provide adequate funding to retain all necessary consultants and additional planning staff to successfully complete the work of Planning Process Study Committee and the implementation of its recommendations; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, the Planning Process Study Committee will provide a progress report and/or recommendations to the next Annual Town Meeting.

Or act on anything related thereto.