

January 19, 2017

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION: FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR WAVERLY SQUARE AND  
SOUTH PLEASANT STREET**

2017 MAR 23 AM 9:16

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Note: This was a public discussion, not a formal meeting, scheduled by the Planning Board to hear the views of property owners and residents in these areas

Present: Elisabeth (Liz) Allison, Charles Clark, Joseph DeStefano, Raffi Manjikian

Staff: Jeffrey Wheeler and Spencer Gober, Office of Community Development

Ms. Allison opened the public discussion by thanking the many in attendance and providing a handout summarizing existing zoning in these areas. She then gave a PowerPoint presentation describing the PB's rationale for looking at these areas and criteria for evaluating ideas about their future direction. She emphasized that the purpose was to hear ideas from the community and that the PB would be in purely listening mode during the evening. She followed this by inviting speakers to come to the microphone and repeating her usual plea that they give their names before speaking.

## **Waverley Square Discussion**

### **I. Criteria**

- PB criteria are commercially oriented. Also want to focus on additions to Waverley that build community and culture [Peter Dorfman]
- Waverley area has some of the most important 19th century buildings in Belmont, so would want to see historic preservation added to list of criteria [Lauren Meier, Chair Historic District Commission]

### **2. Uses**

- Density of area could be substantially increased – need to add housing and especially affordable housing [Rachel Heller, member Housing Trust]
- Important to leave open space, particularly in center of the Square where commuter rail station is now [Judith Sarno]
- Waverley Square like most of the business districts in Belmont backs up onto residences; important to take this into account in thinking about commercial development [Bob Sarno]
- Need to increase vitality with more gathering spots, like the Dunkin Donuts, which currently fills some of that need. New businesses should fill in gaps, such as a family restaurant, not just another bank [Jan Kruse]

### **3. Concerns**

- Important to integrate with Community Path work, which could involve covering the train station [Laura Vanderhart]
- Train station is very important and need ways to make station handicapped accessible [Judie Feins, Co-chair, Housing Trust]
- Green space is scarce and would not like to lose green triangle. Traffic is terrible problem and need to think about how to mitigate with any development [Elizabeth Schmidt]
- Have concern with massing problem of larger scale developments [Kevin Cunningham]
- Have concern with mass of any building - need to be very careful about both height and mass; also loss of hill vista [Tony Alcorn]

### **4. Process**

- Should hold meetings within neighborhood to make it easier to attend [Kevin Cunningham]
- Lots of work was done in 2009: is that going to be the starting point or incorporated into the process? [Phil Lawrence] Note: several others asked this question as well.

### **5. Other issues/concerns**

- The result of commercial development should not be that Belmont adopts a split tax rate with higher taxes on commercial property [Alex Corbett]
- Unlike Belmont Center and Cushing Square, Waverley does not have a business association [Laura Vanderhart]
- Waverley used to be a village and it is important to keep that in mind [Jane Sherwin]
- Need to think about Waverley Square and South Pleasant Street together because not really distinct [Michael Wong, representative of Tocci- Chiafaro Group]
- Want to see green building, however developed [Jan Kruse]

## **South Pleasant Street discussion**

**1. Criteria** – covered under Waverley Square discussion; no additions

### **2. Uses**

- Last automobile dealership of what used to be many – don't want to be rezoned [Bernard Gibbons, representative of Empire RE]

- Would like to see mixed-use, active lifestyle, transit-oriented developed with active lifestyle considerations in mind. Melrose is a good local example of a nearby town that has done this [Michael Wong, T-C Group]
- Would like to see mixed-use with affordable housing [Gloria Leipzig, Co-chair, Housing Trust]

### 3. Concerns

- Traffic management - traffic is bad now and could get much worse with major safety issues [Jan Kruse]
- Traffic management is issue with wide street and lots of traffic [Doug Koplow, chair Cushing Square Neighborhood Association]
- Some of these things may be pie in the sky and work out badly in practice...need to look at details [Bob Sarno]

### 4. Process

- What is going to be the governmental mechanism for moving forward? It needs to be open and transparent [Kevin Cunningham]
- There should be a town-wide process, perhaps a formal charette to plan for this area [Lauren Meier, Chair, HDC]
- Would be good to look at City of Somerville vision, which is on their website, and work toward something like that [Bernard Gibbon]
- Really need to look at both areas in single process with emphasis on walkability from North to South [Phil Lawrence]

### 7. "Redirect" issues

- Are we certain that zoning or any of the other issues listed on the PB slides are the reasons there has not been more commercial development? Can we identify the reasons that there has not been more development? Seems like the right place to start [Tony Alcorn]
- Belmont is a hard town in which to get a business going. Rather than focus on zoning, should start by getting department heads to make it easier to get a business started [Don Mercier]

### 8. Widely shared views

- Pub would be valuable addition
- Family restaurant would be valuable addition