

Vision21 Implementation Committee (VIC or “the Committee”) minutes

September 6, 2023

DATE: October 19, 2023

TIME: 9:39 AM

VIC Members in attendance: Taylor Yates, Erin Lubien, Gang Zhao, Allison Lenk, Dan Barry, Max Colice

Called to order at 7:13PM

MOTION: Approve July 26, 2023 joint EDC / Vision21 meeting’s minutes

Unanimously approved

Proposed Language for Reform of Parking Restrictions

- Proposed language would bring Belmont in line with peer towns, changing it from 1 parking spot for every 2 seats to 1 parking spot for every 4 seats
- This has been discussed at length and the language is very simple

MOTION: Endorse language provided by consultant regarding parking for presentation to Town Meeting

Unanimously approved

Proposed Language for Adding Restaurant Definitions and Changing Use Table

- The new language would distinguish only between restaurants and formula based establishments
- Restaurants would be allowed by right in all business districts
- Formula based establishments would be allowed with a special permit in all business districts
- The committee had several questions
- Why is take out not permitted in LBI?
 - What’s the rationale behind that?
 - Theory: take out would bring vehicle traffic but not foot traffic
 - Theory: it was a typo
 - LBI Near the town’s largest parking lot, the train station, and a bus line, which seems like it would make LBI well-suited for take out
 - By singling out a single restaurant type in a single area, we are confusing the conversation
- Why are the definitions in the use table not the same as the new ones given?
- Why are we making a carve out for formula based restaurants?
 - The restaurant industry is shifting towards formula based restaurants, would this create issues in the future?
 - The committee’s best guess is that this is a meaningful distinction that voters care about, and we are responsible for enacting their will
 - Should we vote to revisit this in a year?
 - Not necessary to obligate ourselves to revisit this issue, as circumstances will dictate whether we need to revisit this

MOTION: Endorse language provided by consultant regarding allowing restaurants by right and formula based restaurants with a special permit in all business districts for presentation to Town Meeting with provision that Restaurant, Take Out be allowed by right in LBI, unless a compelling reason is provided for exclusion

Unanimously approved

Next steps

- Present to the Planning Board on September 19th
- Some kind of public engagement between the Planning Board meeting and Fall Town Meeting

Public invited to comment

Doug Koplow, Head of Cushing Square Neighborhood Association

- Encouraged the Committee to consider what outcomes are prevented by existing rules, especially 10k+ sqft restaurants
- Are the changes we're going to make going to allow chains coming in and degrade the streetscape
- Parking could be an issue because it could overflow onto the side streets

Judith Sarno, TMM Precinct 3

Special Permit hearings are opportunities for neighbors to weigh in on neighborhood disruptions

- How do residents weigh in on dumpsters, lighting, and employee parking without hearings?
- Pickup time for dumpsters can be disruptive

VIC Member comments:

- We live in an urban environment, especially people who live near a town center
- There are restaurant regulations, and the Planning Board may not be the right venue for these kinds of concerns

Andrea Masciari

- Via chat: We are mandated by the MBTA to change zoning near train stations and bus stops. Current small buildings can and will increase in size and will be able to accommodate a McDonald's or a Burger King.

Judith Feinleib, TM Precinct 6

- Regarding Andrea's comment, we need to be careful with the language

MOTION to adjourn at 8:18 PM

Unanimously approved