

**PLANNING BOARD**

John R. Bethoney, Chair  
Michael A. Podolski, Esq., Vice Chair  
James E. O'Brien IV, Clerk  
Jessica L. Porter  
James McGrail, Esq.  
Andrew Pepoli, Associate

Planning Director  
Jeremy Rosenberger



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Administrative Assistant  
Jennifer Doherty

Assistant Town Planner  
Michelle Tinger

**PLANNING BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES**

**TOWN OF DEDHAM  
450 WASHINGTON STREET  
DEDHAM, MA**

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
VIA TELECONFERENCE  
JANUARY 5, 2021, 6:30 P.M.**

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

John R. Bethoney	Chair
Michael A. Podolski, Esq.	Vice Chair
James E. O'Brien IV	Member
Jessica L. Porter	Member
James McGrail, Esq.	Member

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF:**

Jeremy Rosenberger	Planning Director
Michelle Tinger	Assistant Planning Director
Jennifer Doherty	Administrative Assistant

Minutes prepared by Mary-Margaret Scrimger of Minutes Solutions Inc. from an audio recording.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chairman of the Planning Board, Mr. Bethoney, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. PLANNING BOARD ASSOCIATE MEMBER**

Mr. Podolski apologized for not being part of the discussion due to an urgent family matter. Mr. O'Brien thanked all the candidates, noting that it is a shame that there is only one position with three outstanding candidates. He recommended they search for another position within the township. Ms. Porter noted that she was grateful for the interest and the high caliber of candidates.

**A motion was made by Mr. James McGrail to appoint Mr. Andrew Pepoli to the Associate Member on the Planning board. The motion was seconded by Mr. James O'Brien. A roll call vote was taken:**

**James McGrail: Yes  
Jessica Porter: Yes  
James O'Brien: Yes  
Michael Podolski: Yes  
John Bethoney: Yes**

**Motion passed unanimously, 5-0. Mr. Andrew Pepoli was appointed as the Associate Member of the Planning Board.**

**3. NEW AND OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Rosenberger addressed the question regarding an update on the Providence Highway project. The project has been renamed an action plan as it is a continual process to connect the town and Boston. The roadway study was funded by Senator Rush and Representative McMurtry, who allocated \$250,000.

The objectives are to create a new vision that takes into consideration all modes of transportation and recreation. Currently, consultants are gathering data, such as traffic patterns and crash data. A survey was recently released to the communities, and focus groups will be used. The data will be analyzed and presented at the end of February.

Mr. O'Brien asked for the survey to be circulated more broadly for a deeper understanding of concerns. He also noted that the sidewalks along that route do not get plowed in the winter.

**4. JOINT MEETING: PLANNING BOARD AND SELECT BOARD**

The Select Board joined the Planning Board. The Select Board consisted of Dr. Dennis Teehan, Mr. James MacDonald, Ms. Dimitria Sullivan, Mr. Kevin Coughlin, and Ms. Sarah MacDonald and Assistant Town Manager Nancy Baker. Also joining were consultants David Gamble, James Carrico and Barry Abramson.

Chairman Bethoney handed the chair role to Dr. Teehan. He called the Select Board to order, and the pledge of allegiance was recited. Dr. Teehan noted that the joint meeting is to discuss the development of Dedham Square. With the approval of the Public Safety building, decisions need to be made regarding the former police station site. This is a unique opportunity to develop the Keystone site and use the former police station site as temporary parking as Dedham Square plans are solidified. This is an opportunity to benefit all Dedham residents if it is done correctly.

Mr. Gamble presented the strategic plan and property analysis, noting that there are many elements of a thriving downtown, such as historical buildings and large open spaces. A highway cuts through the core, but it can be shielded by the Keystone development options. The distance between the Keystone and police station lots is relatively small. Along High Street, there is a small network of parks. Mr. Gamble noted that there is a significant portion of asphalt that could be converted to green spaces.

For a vital downtown, it is essential to have interesting items, such as architecture and green spaces, within walking distance. Mr. Gamble recommended rebuilding the police station as a town common, a replacement for Memorial Hall, which was a gathering space in Dedham's earlier days. This town common could be a square or a garden and will allow the town to have a center.

Mr. Gamble outlined different ways to reuse the police station. For example, demolishing the front building and using the back building as a pavilion. Private developments are an option, such as housing with ground-floor retail. However, this is a less attractive option due to the civic nature of the area. Public space would be a better use. Widening sidewalks and increasing the tree canopy were also suggested.

Regarding the Keystone lot, there is a slope that can be utilized to maximize parking. The structure can span the highway and act as a shield. While there is a concern to have a four-story building, this would be beneficial to block the highway. The mixed-use development was also suggested to bring vibrancy to the downtown core.

The Dedham Square plan needs to be done to facilitate more green space; increase pedestrian safety while accommodating parking; and a greater variety of uses in the downtown core.

It was noted that parking would likely not be a challenge in the future. Upon the Public Safety building completion, there will be an increase in the parking supply for Dedham Square. Also, the police station currently takes three to seven street parking spaces. Capacity will be resolved in time, but other elements such as signage, wayfinding, and organization of public and private spaces need to be addressed.

Mr. Abramson noted that the police station was investigated to be repaired, but it does not warrant that due to costs. An office was considered, but it would challenge parking demands and was not feasible logistically. A library was investigated, but funding would take a significant amount of time, only covering half the costs. Although COVID-19 has changed shopping patterns to be more online, retail was another consideration, which means it could not be the primary use. Residential was also a consideration. Rental would be challenging, but a condo development could be feasible in this area. With the recent local change, there needs to be 15% inclusionary housing.

Mr. Abramson felt the town commons could be an active area with a pavilion that allows for businesses, artists, and community uses. Pavilion space could be rented out for short periods of time and change the use of the area to engage the community. Management could be done by the town or a small economic group.

Mr. Abramson presented financials to sell the Keystone land for a condo or residential development. He projected a sale of around two million, but it could be much higher or lower. Public parking could be incorporated. He noted that condos would generate higher real estate taxes than rental development. This would offset the bond payments used for the initial capital expense needed to construct the public area and create revenue for the long term. There is also the possibility for grant funding or for community-engaged crowd funding.

A town common would have benefits that cannot be measured financially but would allow for the community's development. A condo development would positively impact local economic transactions.

Regarding the RFP process, the town will control the program and the project design. While many proposals can be taken, the town has control.

The floor was opened to questions from the Select Board. Ms. MacDonald was interested in the town common to develop programs within public spaces. For example, in the spring, the town looked at picnic tables in public areas, but this was a challenge due to urban development. As per the presentation, she noted that there is a significant amount of paved surface in downtown Dedham.

Mr. MacDonald requested that the presentation be sharpened for the public. There are many moving parts, and there needs to be clarity regarding the different possibilities. He also asked that spaces outside of Dedham Square be discussed in relation to these projects. Ms. Sullivan also asked for clarity on the projects and more parking information. It was clarified that if Keystone were developed into condos, there would need to be roughly 100 parking spaces that the town would control. Mr. Coughlin agreed with the lack of clarity about the presentation.

The chair was handed to Mr. Bethoney, who opened the floor to questions from the Planning Board. It was noted that community engagement is paramount to the project's success. It was pointed out that no environmental assessment has been done. The Keystone site was a freight site and train station, and there are concerns of environmental considerations for development. There was discussion regarding what other communities have done, successes, and failures to influence how to proceed with these projects.

**A motion was made by Mr. James MacDonald to adjourn the Select Board meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kevin Coughlin. A roll call vote was taken:**

**Dr. Dennis Teehan: Yes**  
**Jim MacDonald: Yes**  
**Sarah MacDonald: Yes**  
**Dimitria Sullivan: Yes**  
**Kevin Coughlin: Yes**

**Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.**

**5. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The Planning Board will hold its next meeting on January 13, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

**A motion was made by Mr. James McGrail to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Podolski. A roll call vote was taken:**

**James McGrail: Yes**  
**Jessica Porter: Yes**

**James O'Brien: Yes**  
**Michael Podolski: Yes**  
**John Bethoney: Yes**

**Motion passed unanimously, 5-0. The meeting was adjourned.**