

Planning Board

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**TOWN OF DEDHAM
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
October 14, 2015, 6:30 p.m., Endicott Estate**



Present: Michael A. Podolski, Esq., Chair
John R. Bethoney, Vice Chair
Ralph I. Steeves
James E. O'Brien IV
Richard J. McCarthy, Jr., Planning Director

Call to order 6:45 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Plans, documents, studies, etc., referred to are incorporated as part of the public records and are on file in the Planning and Zoning office. Mr. Aldous was not present for this meeting due to illness. The acoustics at the Endicott Estate were poor, resulting in difficulty hearing speakers.

**PUBLIC MEETING
Transit Oriented Development
Metropolitan Area Planning Council**

Present: Eric Halvorsen, Assistant Director of Transportation, MAPC
Cynthia Wall, Principal Planning, MAPC

Time: 7:22 to 9:22 p.m. Assessment and plans for the commuter rail stations were discussed. In April 2009, Town Meeting adopted the Town of Dedham Master Plan. This specifically referenced Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and encouraged the Planning Board to look into the potential to encourage this as a major transportation opportunity. Mr. Podolski read the definition and specifics of this. The Board is simply looking and studying, and has no plans to do anything at this time, and Mr. Halvorsen was not being hired or paid by the Town.

Mr. Halvorsen gave a brief presentation on the area around Dedham Corporate Center for Transit Oriented Development. Land use scenarios and transportation activities were discussed, particularly with regard to Dedham's rising population. Household size has decreased, which triggers the need for more housing. According to MAPC's projections, one in four residents will be over 65 by 2030, but there will not be enough options to fill the number of senior households. Seniors and younger households want very good access to different types of transportation. Housing is becoming increasingly less affordable in Town. A study of commuter rail stations was done as possibilities for development. In this case, the study area was from Route 95 to Legacy Place and down Providence Highway to Wigwam Pond, specifically the Allied Drive area; development would not take place in wetlands. The goal of studying the Dedham Corporate Center was to re-assess the policies and zoning of the area to determine the opportunities for access, transit,

walking, and biking. A property owners' meeting showed a lot of interest in mixed use, residential, retail, and office. Walkability, ease of connection to the transit station, and traffic issues were also issues discussed. At the residents' meeting, discussions were similar, with integration of open space, sidewalk improvements, lighting improvements, bike facilities, accessing Wigwam Pond, and traffic issues.

Fred Civian, Master Plan Implementation Committee said that people seem to like things the way they are. He asked what will be developed if nothing is done. The area is mostly RDO, which has very few as-of-right uses per the Zoning Bylaw; these uses were explained at length. Comparison between HB and RDO was made as to as-of-right uses. Four or five allowed uses have been permitted in the past five years, but no as-of-right uses that require a Special Permit or variance have been permitted. Mr. Bethoney said that the RDO zone has had no productivity because the uses are so limited and the dimensional requirements are so broad; this has failed to attract any type of interest in redevelopment. Parcels are owned by multiple owners or trusts, some who want to sell their properties, and some who want to keep them. They expressed interest in more flexibility, as the zoning is very restrictive.

Mr. Halvorsen discussed other towns' efforts to redevelop around transit, including mixed use or multifamily residential uses in the form of apartments. Many abutters felt that this was the last thing needed in the area, and it was unfair to them. Mr. Bethoney asked Mr. Halvorsen if he had considered the number of units the town has; he said a market study was done of the area. Demand is huge, and the State is suffering from lack of housing, particularly within the Route 128 corridor. If housing is built, it will be filled, and from a market perspective, housing around public transportation makes common sense. People who own single family dwellings in Dedham will need a place to go at some point. Mr. Podolski explained that Mr. Halvorsen is giving a vision of what the Town may want, and people need to be open to what he says. He said there will be no vote at this time. Mr. O'Brien said that some of these units are 40Bs, and the developer had nothing to do with the Town. Something will be developed sooner or later, and the Board is trying to determine what the best choices would be. Mr. Bethoney did not want the audience to think the Board is making long-range goals. The Master Plan Committee, Master Plan Implementation Committee, and the Master Plan itself said this should be discussed. If something is to be done, the Board will only do it if it will make the Town better. This meeting is part of that process.

One abutter asked if General Dynamics required a Special Permit. Mr. Podolski said they did, and fulfilled every requirement of the Zoning Bylaw. Traffic issues are being watched carefully. Jim Maher, 22 Sherman Road, said that people are more invested in a community when they own homes. Mr. Halvorsen said they are discussing single family dwellings on small lots, townhouses, multi-families, and 55+ communities, as well as mixed use and offices. He showed images of these and what uses would be in the various areas. He noted that the MBTA is considering opening up some parking spaces for office use. There would be pocket parks and playing fields integrated into development. Abutters on Robinwood Road were concerned about sidewalks and lights on Rustcraft Road, as well as their feeling that traffic is unsafe because people do not know where Legacy Place's entrance is, people turn left despite signage prohibiting this, and people taking U-turns. Neighbors need reassurance that sidewalks will be installed in a timely manner. The Board is currently in a study phase regarding the sidewalk. It is coming, but it cannot happen overnight. Mr. Civian suggested a separate Planning Board meeting to discuss what is wrong with the conditions now and the complaints he has been hearing. Mr. Podolski is fine with that.

With regard to the size of buildings, height is the criteria, not the number of stories. Robert Curran, Town Meeting Member, Precinct 5, asked if a taxation study has been done comparing mixed

use/residential to corporate, and if the Town would prefer mixed use or corporate. Mr. Podolski said there two taxes rates, one for residential and one for commercial. The MBTA is on board with upgrading services if the Town builds around them, but they do not have the funds at present. Tax revenues went from \$500,000 to \$2.3 million in the Legacy Place area. A financial impact assessment must be done as part of a major residential development.

Mr. Halvorsen explained the benefits/drawbacks of transit oriented development.

Benefits of TOD	Potential Drawbacks to TOD
<p>Other transportation options; very walkable, mixed uses Potential increased tax revenue</p> <p>Serve the needs of aging population by integrating housing with different densities and prices Traffic/transportation mitigation, i.e. sidewalks, infrastructure improvement Potential recreation accessibility, i.e., open space accessibility at Wigwam Pond Redevelopment/improvement of underdeveloped or unsightly areas</p>	<p>More traffic if businesses are attractive</p> <p>Possible increase in service demands, i.e., fire, police, ambulances, schools Congestion</p>

Mr. Halvorsen said this is the start of a transit oriented development because there is an already established mall (i.e., Legacy Place, Costco, BJs, Dedham Plaza, Best Buy), an established commuter rail system, and major intersections.

Different uses were discussed in four focus areas. Joe Federico owns the gravel yard adjacent to Legacy Place, and is interested in doing something different in the future, i.e., mixed use or residential in the form of single family dwellings or, because the area is smaller, townhouses. Mr. Halvorsen was asked if he has seen a true residential development in such a commercial district. He said that people would like to live within walking distance of grocery stores. There are ways to buffer the uses. Stephanie Radner, Open Space and Recreation Committee, said that there is a dust bowl at the gravel yard, and most people are unaware that there is a pond there. Creating access is an important point, and deserves consideration.

Robert O'Connell, 101 Jersey Street, said that people bought their homes knowing what they were getting. They like what is there and do not want the increased population. Mr. Podolski said that one option is to do nothing. An abutter said that Westwood just opened up a large area to retail less than a mile from Legacy Place. There are also a number of apartments. He said that this is an extension of the proposal, and there are enough apartments. Mr. Civian said he would like a house in a location that he could walk to things. He suggested small studios near Wigwam Pond. He wanted to see higher density, single family homes or townhouses, as well as an open area for access to Wigwam Pond. Carol Hills, Master Plan Implementation Committee, also said that she hoped that future planning will have pedestrian/bike access to recreation areas. Mr. Dellolacono was in favor of a hotel at the gravel pit area, and others wanted to see pocket parks. Jessica Porter, Master Plan Implementation Committee, said there is a huge opportunity for office redevelopment, as well as a hotel at the gravel pit. Other people wanted to see medium to low income townhouses, public access for cars and pedestrians at the pond, and sidewalks on

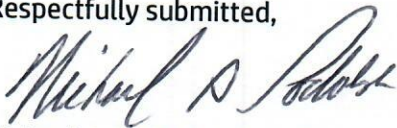
one side of the road. Sen. Michael Rush said that he and Rep. Paul McMurtry have proposed a bill to protect natural areas.

Mr. Halvorsen advocated for parking changes, i.e., leaving the commercial/office parking the same, but instead of requiring a blanket parking requirement for any size residential unit, he suggested, i.e., one-half to one space per unit for a studio, one to one-and-a-half spaces for a one bedroom, and one-and-a-half to two spaces for a two bedroom. Mr. Bethoney said these are already in place, and the requirement is very low. The Board does not require a lot of parking, particularly in CB where the majority of developments are. Mr. Halvorsen discussed Areas 1, 2, 3, and 4 and the preliminary ideas for each, i.e., sidewalks on Rustcraft Road, bike travel lanes, a walking path around Wigwam Pond, retail or offices long Legacy Boulevard, residential areas, 55+ developments, mixed use, retail, and restaurants.

Open space is the #1 priority of residents of the area. Residents asked for consideration in what is put before the neighbors if a housing development is chosen, and for consideration in what the makeup of the Town will be in 2030. The need is for a 55+ community, and the demand on services for this is lower than in places like Jefferson Station. Traffic is lower, and there is no demand on schools. Robert Schortmann, 277 Walnut Street, said he wanted all open space, and asked why every spot needs to be built on. Mr. Bethoney agreed to a degree, saying that this is privately owned property. Mr. Halvorsen wants owners to be able to take advantage of different uses. The Town cannot tell the owners what to do, and the Board is not talking about re-zoning on Town property. Another neighbor suggested a parking garage at the end of Allied Drive for train users, but the MBTA will not donate its property for that. There were suggestions for medical facilities, mixed use, and residential uses. Mr. Podolski said the issue with office buildings is that no one is building them because they do not make money.

Mr. Bethoney asked Mr. Halvorsen for a summary of what was done this evening, and then another meeting would be held. He agreed. Anne Frasca, 358 Central Avenue, said it would be important to have a valid sample of the neighborhood, and wanted a mailing to go out to those who are impacted. Mr. Civian wanted to hear what the Town wants. Mr. Podolski said that the role of Town Meeting Precinct Chairs is to discuss issues with people in their districts and to come to an understanding of what they want. The Board will consider ways to get people informed, including robocalls. It will be posted on the Town of Dedham website. Notes will be made available for residents to see at the next meeting, the date of which is undetermined. It will probably be at the Middle School.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael A. Podolski, Esq., Chair