

Planning Board

Michael A. Podolski, Esq., Chair
John R. Bethoney, Vice Chair
Robert D. Aldous, Clerk
Ralph I. Steeves
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**TOWN OF DEDHAM
PLANNING BOARD**

MEETING MINUTES

April 12, 2016, 7 p.m., Lower Conference Room

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



Call to order 3:30 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.

MBTA: Discussion re: Transit Oriented Development, Allied Drive

Present: Michael Travalini, Massachusetts Realty Group, handling all MBTA real estate transactions
James Kern, Town Manager
John Sisson, Economic Development Director

The property on Allied Drive, which is in the RDO district, was identified two years ago as a prime TOD site. There has been dialogue with the Town for the last two years about an overlay district over the parking area. It has not happened thus far, but Mr. Travalini hopes it will. The overlay would include some sort of 40R with a residential component. Some developers are attracted to the office and medical research district aspect of the current zoning. If there is resistance in putting an overlay district there because of foot traffic, circulation, or traffic generation, it is possible that some type of office space may ease the concerns. The market needs to be weighed, as does developer interest in the parcel. Currently, the Town wants to keep the zoning as is, and see what develops. The capital markets team at JLL said there would be an abundance of interest even if there is no overlay. The use of the rail line will remain, and at least 300 parking spaces are required; there are currently about 500. Even if the developer moves the spaces around, safety and access to the platform would be required. They want to ensure that there are enough parking spaces to satisfy the current users, and to be able to forecast any increase in demand in the future.

The MBTA will be involved with putting out the invitation to bid out into the market, drumming up developer interest, designating a developer, making sure the project is realistic, and supporting the developer as they work their way through the permitting process with the Town. They want to be sure that the project closes, and make sure the Town is on board so they do not have any problems that would cause them to lose this opportunity.

Mr. McCarthy reviewed what is allowed in the RDO district. It is limited with regard to residential. The current subsidiary apartment is capped out at 30 units. Other uses include medical, hotel, office, and other commercial enterprises. The property is over 5 acres and is eligible as a Planned Commercial Development (PCD). The Board would establish the parking requirements, setbacks, density, floor area ratio, and height. The MAPC TOD study has not been completed yet. The number of units in the initial draft for the entire TOD study area was 350-400. There were several public meetings, and feedback was mixed. At the last MAPC meeting, there were a lot of existing circulation issues that residents wanted addressed. MAPC will issue a report that will be a "how-to" with things that need consideration, i.e., pedestrian and vehicular movement.

The Town has gone to MassDOT for the Rustcraft Road sidewalk project. The project does not score well. It would have to succeed on some intangibles, i.e., economic development, and because it is a sidewalk, it would not be equal to an intersection that has cars speeding and crashing. People would use the sidewalk for recreation or leisure activities such as walking. There are a number of hotels and restaurants in the area, as well as Legacy Place. People now walk on the grass for safety, but with sidewalks, there would be six or seven times the number of pedestrians. There is also a lot of private sector support for sidewalks, including all three hotels in the area, General Dynamics, the owners of 333 Elm Street, and Legacy Place.

Mr. Sisson put in for a capital project to do a study of the area from a private sector viewpoint. Connectivity is needs to be improved. This is a gateway to Dedham that has been overlooked for a long time. He suggested a fully accessible platform, maybe a station or development around the station, and then connectivity to Legacy Place. Everyone on Allied Drive would like a much better pedestrian route and for children playing in the park. The loose timetable would be to release the ITB in May 2016, have bids due 6-8 weeks after that, and then in a month or so make sure that the MBTA is on board with designating a bidder. The earliest would be in August 2016. They do not want to rule out any possibilities after someone is designated. Mr. Sisson said his study could be done in six weeks. There are a lot of other parcels in the TOD area, but he was just looking at Allied Drive. There are some buildings that are partly in Dedham and partly in Westwood. Mr. McCarthy said that there are some properties that may be worth consideration for redevelopment. Westwood does not see anything that would be all residential. In that case, it would need to be mixed use. If it was not residential, what is allowed in that zone pretty much matches up with Dedham's zoning.

Mr. McCarthy said that they would have the "guts" for the recommendation for a PCD when Mr. Travalini is ready for proposals. He asked what would happen if things go in a different direction. Mr. Travalini explained what they have done in some instances, which is putting a per unit value of \$23,000 on the number of units above 60 units. Zoning was obtained for 84 units. The bid was increased from 1.3 million to about 1.85 million. Something similar could possibly be done in Dedham, but with the timetable, they really do not know, and the number of units could make a really big difference. They originally thought of doing something like

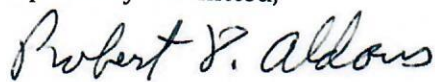
that, but they have been in a holding period for so long that they might want to get fair value market. Potential interest and demand for a use that is not so vehicle-dependent was discussed. This would be particularly for people who are looking at the site because of the commuter rail. A diverse group of developers, i.e., office or medical research developers, will be looking at the site, but Mr. Travalini did not think it would scare away residential developers. They do not want a developer to be awarded the parcel in August or September, have a waiting period because he thinks there would be an overlay or a variance, and a year later they still have not found anything. Mr. McCarthy thinks the project would realistically be next year at the earliest, possibly longer than that. People are still being educated about this. Mr. Travalini said that the MBTA's fears can be assuaged if a residential developer was the highest bidder with a residential plan, and was paying a hefty amount of pre-construction or construction period rent. The MBTA may be willing to wait a little longer in this case because they are receiving payments while the developer is working through permitting issues. It is also possible that an office developer makes an offer that blows people away. He does not think the current zoning will scare as many people away as might be thought.

Mr. Kern said that part of the vision is in favor of residential so it can reduce the dependence on cars, but it would not be a bad thing to have an office development. Mr. McCarthy noted that a safety improvement was done at the interchange of Route 128 where there was a higher rear-end accident rate. However, it now creates congestion with the two lines and traffic backed up to Endicott Circle. This will come up with a development project, so having a strategy for this would be necessary. He asked if there are users who are looking into tapping into people coming and going on the rail and not driving there. Mr. Travalini said they stress this in all their projects. They do not require this from a parking perspective, but at the same time they are replacing 300 parking spaces. Either way it will cut into what can be built. Taking public transportation is encouraged when possible. Mr. McCarthy asked him to send information so it can be compared with the ZBL; this will prevent misunderstandings when it is presented to bidders. The information can be included up front for a consistent explanation. Mr. Podolski said the ZBL information can be provided as an attachment to the bid process.

Mr. Sisson said level of service on the Franklin line will be a topic of conversation. The Town is interested in reverse commuting from the city to Dedham and Westwood. If this was available, it would be helpful in terms of mitigating traffic. Mr. Travalini said, if there was an office development, he would encourage bidders to give a breakdown of the Legacy Place benefit, the Dedham tax revenue going up, etc. Mr. McCarthy said there is discussion about working with the MBTA for the Legacy Place route.

Mr. Steeves moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Aldous, voted unanimously. The meeting ended at 4 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert D. Aldous, Clerk