

WEST NEWBURY PLANNING BOARD  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
September 20, 2016

Pursuant to a meeting notice posted by the Town Clerk and delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the West Newbury Planning Board was held on September 20, 2016 in the Planning Board Office at the West Newbury Town Offices, 381 Main Street. Board Members Ann Bardeen, Raymond Cook, Brian Murphey and John Todd Sarkis were present. Board Member Richard Bridges was not in attendance. Planning Administrator Leah Zambernardi and Associate Member Dennis Lucey were also present.

Sarkis called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Downtown Economic Development – Discussion with Maria Nigro DiStefano, Northeast Regional Director, Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD)**

DiStefano asked all people in attendance to write down a sentence indicating what they would like for their downtown on an index card. After that exercise, DiStefano said the purpose of tonight's meeting is to see how she can help the Town further its Economic Development plans. She stated that she reached out to Zambernardi last spring to discuss MOBD and Zambernardi noted that West Newbury is a small Town with little industry and a small number of businesses. Zambernardi had DiStefano out regardless to learn more about MOBD and that is a reason DiStefano is here tonight. She explained that the Mass Office of Business Development administers the state's tax incentive program, including the local Tax Increment Finance program and the State Investment Tax Credit. She stated that Beverly and Amesbury are aggressive in pursuing these. She gave several examples of how these programs are used, answered questions from the Board Members and discussed the viability of the programs in West Newbury. DiStefano stated that she has many contacts beyond MOBD that can assist. Sarkis noted that this most likely would not translate into a huge savings for someone looking to develop in West Newbury. DiStefano stated that the tax programs are the bread and butter of the program. Board Members discussed how DiStefano might be able to help West Newbury. She stated that the regional economic development organization, the North Shore Alliance for Economic Development, put together statistics and found that 87% of this region has businesses that employ 5 people or less. She stated that there will not be many new projects each quarter for this region. Given this, as the Northeast Director, she visits communities in the region and informs them on resources that are available. She stated that she worked as the Business Director for Boston Main Streets under the Menino Administration. She stated before that she was the Executive Director for East Boston Main Streets. She stated she has helped micro-businesses, women and minority owned businesses in terms of how to help them get access to capital, find locations and develop business plans. DiStefano stated that her specialty is small business and that is why she was hired for this region – because it is mostly small businesses. She stated that MOBD is otherwise focused on larger businesses.

Cook asked if she has any assistance available for agricultural businesses. She does not, though she provided information to the Board about drought loans available through the Mass Growth Capital Corporation.

DiStefano stated that she would like to share her connections with the Town. She has contacts

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that can help assist in establishing a business group. She wanted to inform the Town about what she can offer. She can also offer Board Development, meeting facilitation, etc. The Board discussed the “if they build it they will come” strategy. DiStefano asked why the Town wants more retail. Sarkis stated that development should occur out of necessity, because there is a need. Bardeen stated she does not think there is much demand because goods and services are available elsewhere. She stated this is a Town where many people commute and are happy getting their goods elsewhere. Cook stated there might be a business that would be successful here. He stated he was skeptical about a bank going in, but Haverhill Bank decided to locate in our downtown. Zambarnardi stated that Route 113 generates traffic during peak hours. Sarkis stated that beyond the chicken and egg question, the Town needs assistance with visioning. He gave the example of the food mart and assisting them in growing. He stated that might help the people next to them grow. DiStefano stated the Town could also think about low interest loan façade programs. Mass Growth Capital is another option that can do a smaller loan for improvements. DiStefano asked the Board to think about what the destination would be for new business. Sarkis stated that any new business would be difficult because of lot sizes, parking and septic issues, which are greater challenges to the Town than getting financed. Cook stated that a local treatment plan for the downtown area would solve one hurdle. DiStefano mentioned that MassWorks has infrastructure grants. Cook stated it is worthwhile to look at. Murphey mentioned the home brewery issue and possibly expanding the business district to accommodate such uses, perhaps by special permit. DiStefano stated she can play a role by making initial connections with consultants the Board might want to use. She mentioned SCORE, which is a group of retired executives that offer services to help small businesses.

### **279 Main Street – Haverhill Bank – Review of Height Clearance Sign on Drive Thru Canopy**

Zambarnardi stated that Haverhill Bank would like to put up a height clearance sign on the canopy for safety reasons. She stated that the bank has had a couple of episodes of vehicles hitting canopies in the past. Members discussed the request and concurred that this does not constitute a minor modification, but rather it is more of a field change.

Cook made a motion to consider the request a minor field change, noting that it would not be lit. Murphey seconded the motion and it carried 4-0.

### **Discussion of Zoning Bylaw Amendments – Signs**

The Board tabled the matter to the next meeting.

### **General Business**

- Minutes – Members
- Vouchers – Payment to Meridian and an invoice for 2017 MAPD dues.
- Correspondence – Zambarnardi stated the Board received a notification under the Wetlands Protection Act of an ANRAD at the Morley property at the corner of Middle Street and Archelaus Hill Road. Members discussed whether or not the property was sold. Zambarnardi stated that Newburyport sent a notice that they are considering a regulation to require that developers replace, reconstruct, repair sidewalks and trees on public property that are impacted by their projects. She stated that
- Administrative Details – Zambarnardi stated she received 30 applications and she is reviewing applications for the recording secretary at this point. Zambarnardi handed out

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a draft of the Planning Board's Annual Report for FY2016. She stated that she took a different approach by adding what the Board and staff do. Members made some amendments.

Cook made a motion to accept the annual report with amendments. Bardeen seconded the motion and it carried 4-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

Leah J. Zambarnardi, AICP  
Planning Administrator