

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
Town Hall Council Chambers
Ordinance Committee Meeting
December 9, 2019, Monday

Present: Ken DiFazio, Chair
Rebecca Haugh, Councilor
Christopher Heffernan, Councilor

Not Present: Michael Smart, Vice Chair
Arthur Mathews, Councilor

Chair DiFazio called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

19 107-Rezoning Request for the Historic Mill District

Chair DiFazio reported that the committee has met and deliberated this issue and held a joint public hearing with the Planning Board. Councilor Haugh read the Planning Board's recommendation, which they received on December 5, 2019 into the record:

“On November 18, 2019, the Planning Board held a joint public hearing with the Weymouth Town Council to consider public testimony related to Measure 19 107 proposing the addition of a Historic Mill Overlay District to the Town of Weymouth Zoning Ordinance. The public hearing was closed that same evening.

On December 3, 2019 the Planning Board convened their regularly scheduled meeting to discuss the merits of the proposal and to recommend action to the Town Council.

The Board carefully considered the details of the proposal as well as the testimony of nearby residents. It was understood that the current industrial zoning had existed for decades as a reflection of the historical use of these properties. In general, the board found the concept of imbedding heavy industrial areas within an established residential neighborhood contrary to modern planning principles. Although in recent years existing industrial uses have had minimal impact on abutting property owners, the board recognized that residents currently have little or no protection should properties change hands in the future.

The adoption of the Historic Mill Overlay District would provide additional options for the future use of included properties without taking away the existing rights of the property owners. It would also provide an incentive for a private entity to restore and preserve one of the few remaining mill buildings in the town.

Finally, the board was cognizant of the proximity of the existing industrial site to the Back River and associated ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern)

and agreed that a future use would be less impactful than a potentially more intense industrial use.

As such, on December 19, 2019, the Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend that the Weymouth Town Council take favorable action on Measure 19 107 as submitted.”

Chair DiFazio reported that he attended the Planning Board meeting at which the vote was taken. He asked Mr. Luongo whether any changes to the proposal were made since the committee last met, or after the planning board vote? Mr. Luongo responded no.

Mr. Luongo assured the committee the measure was well vetted to the public. He met with residents over a year ago to present the issue of the Industrial zone and potential threats to the neighborhood. No plan was before the administration at that time. They reviewed the strengths of the site, any weaknesses or potential detriments by changing the zoning. Staying industrial includes uses by right. It was not meant to scare residents. If someone were to buy the 4 properties, there were potential uses that could be detrimental to the neighborhood. Density is an issue- they don't want to overcrowd, but still provide incentive to develop. It was important to preserve the character of the building. Mr. Francer was there. Over the summer, they decided they should try to introduce some zoning. Director Luongo and Chair DiFazio sent a letter inviting the area residents to a public meeting. They created a list of residents (under the proposed zoning change, they were only required to advertise). They extended notification to residents in Jackson Square, Unicorn Ave., and the Immaculate Conception Church area. The program was televised and a recording is available. It was received favorably, but with some concerns around traffic to the neighborhood. On September 12, 2019 they sent out a letter and a follow up on October 21, 2019, and provided a copy of the draft ordinance and informed them they were willing to meet with any individuals, groups etc., and provided contact information. Emails have been received. He explained they wouldn't be contacting them again, and gave detailed instructions on accessing meeting schedules. This was done with maximum public outreach. At the public hearing they did not hear many concerns. This was a great outreach to the community.

Councilor Heffernan asked if the individual concerns brought up were remedied? Mr. Luongo responded yes; he confirmed passing the ordinance doesn't necessarily mean development will happen. The local zoning bylaws would govern.

Mr. Luongo acknowledged that traffic is an issue and once they get a proposal, permitting would be subject to a traffic study and any possible mitigation.

Councilor Haugh asked about the FAR's in the ordinance. She's read some comments. What is the maximum number of units that will be allowed? Mr. Luongo responded that if they tear down the building, about 60. If they were 2-bedroom units it would be less. If it were a restoration, they could probably do 70-75 units (75% restoration). A developer would likely try to squeeze in as much as he can, which is why a special permit is

required. There will not be 100 units; it would overwhelm the neighborhood and it would not pass.

A motion was made by Councilor Haugh to forward measure 19 107 to the full Town Council with a recommendation for favorable action and was seconded by Councilor Heffernan. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

19 111-Safety Zone (20 mile per hour speed limit) on a Portion of Pleasant Street

Owen MacDonald presented the measure. In essence, it's the area between Torrey Street and the Post Office parking lot. This is where the square tends to be most congested. Speed limit is 20 mph statute under Safety Zone. Discussion on other areas beyond the measure were explored and the goal is to ease congestion and increase safety. This is fairly low cost since they have been unable to get the funding. There was a question on flashing beacons- these are high priced and if installed by in-house labor, the hardware is \$10K per crosswalk. At foundations, it would be \$12-13K per installation.

Chair DiFazio provided some background. Union Point was to contribute to mitigating (provision of EIR from previous base developer). Mr. Luongo noted that they had the engineering costs to design improvements to the square. They met with LSTAR who was hesitant about coming up with the funds. At that time, they were not aware that LSTAR was failing—the town had paid for the study. They considered the concept of signalization (\$40K) to look at the situation. Signals would bring more problems than not. The final concept to implement was decided after meeting with area businesses and residents. It would cost \$510K to bring the whole plan with bid-ready documents. They received a grant from the state for \$180K and a match of \$50K from the town. This will do up to 25% design and the town will have to figure out how to come up with the remainder. It will be at least a year before a master developer is on board in Union Point. Meetings have commenced with SRA to vet proposals. In the interim they still want to get 100% design done, and have it be the first thing to hit the new master developer with. This measure is to address some of the traffic, as part of a series of measures to be done in the interim – striping, bold color for pedestrian crosswalks, and after the beginning of the year, making Chauncey Street a one way with angle parking for merchants. There were signs along both ends of the square but they were not legal nor enforceable. These are short-term measures to bring some order to it.

Chair DiFazio asked how many signs? Mr. MacDonald responded it will be one on each end and at the far end, a total of 4 – 2 for 20 mph, 2 for safety zone. The chair asked if they will remain or just during the interim? Mr. MacDonald responded there's no reason they can't stay. He was asked if the business owners have provided any feedback. Mr. Luongo responded that one owner is in the audience and he expressed his support for the measure.

Gerry Bober, who has been involved three years said he thought the purpose of this meeting was to approve the signs to come up. There was a brief discussion—Sgt. Brendan Fogarty had noted the signs in place are advisory signs, and not enforceable.

Councilor Heffernan stated that he feel better about supporting the measure after reviewing the information. He asked about changing Chauncey to a one-way street. Mr. Luongo responded they will notify residents on Camelot, and intersecting streets. There will be temporary bump outs also- but these don't require Town Council action. No new sidewalks will be installed until a master developer is on board.

Councilor Haugh noted the memo clearly outlines this is a low cost solution. The public wanted expansion and lights etc. The question was asked if the public will be invited? Mr. Luongo responded they had a meeting with businesses owners. and will have another once this goes forward. There will be a consensus on the final full plan, but are anxious to begin the interim measures. Columbian Square improvements have been on their radar since the base redevelopment began.

Gerry Bober responded this has been an issue for a while. He understands they have done a great job with limited resources. Do they need someone to give them the go ahead to put up some signs instead and when will the signs go up? The chair responded it may happen tonight. He also advocated for painting bright colors in crosswalks that might catch people's attention. They need to do anything they can to make that area safer.

Mr. Bober suggested installing rumble strips. He didn't think they cost a lot of money. The chair asked if it was discussed with the police. Mr. Luongo responded that the DPW had some concerns.

Councilor Haugh asked if there will there be any warning signs on Union or Columbian? Caution entering safety zone will be posted coming down Union Street into the square and up Columbian by the theatre. Mr. MacDonald responded these would require speed studies. Pleasant Street is the more critical issue. The chair suggested they could bring back other measures if they think it would help. Councilor Haugh asked about procedure. Will they need to come back to put up entering safety zone signs. The chair responded that the measure does not say a specific number of signs but specifies Pleasant Street. Mr. MacDonald responded he will look into it. They couldn't enforce anything on either of these streets.

Mr. Bober noted there are "your speed is" signs around that flash- if they had at least one on Pleasant entering the square- it can be moved if they get new signs; by Adrian's Jewelers and Baileys. The chair asked if this would be under this measure or as a separate one? It was requested that administration bring it back before the committee when funding becomes available.

A motion was made by Councilor Haugh to forward measure 19 111 to the full town council with a recommendation for favorable action and was seconded by Councilor Heffernan. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

19 112-Traffic Regulation-Bus Stops, New Bus Route 226

Mr. MacDonald reviewed the rationale. Replacing Route 225 C that was an extension. This new route leaves Braintree station, comes through Weymouth Landing up

Washington Street, and up Federal. Stops are needed at Weymouth Landing. The original proposal had a bus stop in front of Dunkin Donuts and Fire Escape Ministries. At Councilor Kiely's request, they met up in the field and came up with fairly minor changes. the northernmost in front of Dunkin Donuts was revised to in front of the Napoli Pizza location. The chair asked if they will amend the measure? Mr. MacDonald responded yes. If the bus was parked there when people are trying to get into the church; its backed up now. He agrees with changing this one. Councilor Heffernan agreed. Mr. Luongo tried to reach the owner of the Napoli building (it was recently purchased by an Asian group who plans to knock down and redevelop). Owner is out of the country at the moment. If it is a problem, they can come back and move it. There is plenty of parking in the lot for the businesses. The chair asked the frequency and duration of bus runs? It is expected to be one trip per hour; 2 per hour in rush hours. Stops will be less than 30 seconds; higher if passenger is challenged. The chair asked about layover adjustment. Mr. MacDonald responded that the layover is changed to Columbian Square. The other stop in question; Fire Escape Ministries has been shifted to the Eclipse Hair Salon. The church has no parking. If these don't work out; they can revisit. Councilor Heffernan asked if this is all ADA compliant. Mr. MacDonald responded that the bus ramps can accommodate without any additional changes. Councilor Haugh asked if any inbound stops were being added. Mr. Luongo responded they are on the 225 Route. When the bus comes down Washington Street, there is a stop at Weston Auto but this is a state highway, so it is not within the Council's purview. The measure will be amended to note the revision.

A motion was made by Councilor Haugh to forward measure 19 112 to the full town council with a recommendation for favorable action and was seconded by Councilor Heffernan. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:31 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made by Councilor Haugh to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Councilor Heffernan. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Kenneth DiFazio as Ordinance Committee Chairman
Voted unanimously on 21 January 2020