

**Waban Area Council
Meeting Minutes
Nov 10 2022 7:30 pm
Held via Zoom**

WAC: Rena Getz, Christopher Pitts, Dinah Bodkin, Sallee Lipshutz, Drake McCabe, Megan Meirav, Bill Bracken, Isabelle Albeck

Community: Jeremy Freudberg (NHNAC), Larry Epstein, Carol Todreas, Sarah O'Malley, Kathy Pillsbury, Alice Ingerson, Barbara Darnell, Brian Ghoshhajra, Carol Vaghar, David Roberts, Isidore L. Berenbaum, MaryLee Belleville, Peter F. Harrington, Phyllis Scher, Renata Selig, Sam Moskowitz, Sharon Sasanow, Tom Elkind.

Tax Override: SL relates that Waban resident called her very upset that much of the override is going towards operating expenses, "the equivalent of mortgaging your groceries." RG: not yet ready to have WAC write a letter re the override. Need to go over all the details. Public will vote on three questions. 1. Operational override of \$9,000,175 2. Debt exclusion for Franklin School renovation (\$3.5 million) 3. Debt exclusion for Countryside (2.3 million). Renovation of Horace Mann will be part question 1, the operational override. RG displayed charts showing breakdown of the operational override. Also showed calendar of informational sessions. All is available at <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/mayor-fuller/override/complete-override-proposal>. A calculator on that website shows the added taxes for any given address. Difference between operational override and debt exclusion explained. Debt exclusion is a one time expense (ie school renovation) that is paid via municipal bonding over a thirty year period. Unlike the operational override, debt exclusion does not form part of the tax base. According to Tom Elkind, Mayor Fuller argues that the debt exclusion part of the override improves the city's bond rating. The question arose re unspent federal money, why is that money not used for the city's needs rather than raising taxes. General agreement that the elementary schools in question are in dire need of renovation. Also general skepticism re the need for an operational override; this was coupled with the feeling that the public had not been properly informed. Tom Elkind lauded the projects, but expressed skepticism as to the need to raise taxes as opposed to other mechanisms to pay for needed projects. RG states that discussions have been ongoing for the past six months. RG will invite Mayor Fuller to come to WAC in January or February (when she has availability) to discuss override in detail. Several meeting attendees express that the town hall information sessions are informative and helpful. Tom Elkind recounted his experience from a town hall meeting where his question was not satisfactorily answered and where he felt the mayor and city government had not made the case for increased taxes. RG asks TE to possibly report back to WAC anything that he learns from the informational meetings. Mayor also proposing tax relief for elders and others who may be experiencing financial distress. The actual limits have not yet been determined.

Zoning Reform: RG shows timeline of zoning reform. Planning Department Memo was released today with the draft maps. Councilor Humphrey has met with Planning Department and was told that the first draft maps will be significantly altered. RG shows slide of "ideal" village center. The main consideration for Waban is that Waban Village as defined by the pattern book is only fourteen lots or 12 acres. Waban is the smallest village center, considered a "convenience village." Showed map with VC1 and VC2 designations (<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>). Waban now has significant VC1 designation just outside actual Waban Village. MBTA Communities Act is important element in current planning. Requires that areas be zoned to allow density of 15 units per acre and that 90% of those rezoned parcels be within one half mile of the rapid transit hub. Newton is a rapid transit community due to presence of green line. Examples of VC1 and VC2 by right

buildings were shown. 1172 Beacon St as example of VC1 by right building and 20 Kinmonth (currently under construction) given as example of VC2 by right. Much discussion of heights of current buildings and how they would compare to new “by right” and special permit heights.

There was general agreement that Waban is being rezoned beyond any recognition of its current state. Given Waban’s character as a “convenience village” the changes being proposed drastic. MBTA Communities Act requires that the zoning be in place to meet density requirements regardless of the buildings that exist in a current location. Discussion of practical considerations in view of the MBTA Act that only zoning be provided. Ie, would a developer tear down existing structures only to build back more or less the same? 20 Kinmonth and 60-70 Wyman St. meet the density requirements and could be rezoned to fulfill MBTA Communities Act. Some Waban buildings are landmarked and therefore protected from being torn down to meet density requirements. Historic preservation discussed as one tool to protect existing housing.

RG reiterates importance of attending upcoming meeting with Planning Department where Waban specific map will be discussed. WAC will host forums with city councilors.

October Meeting Minutes Approved. Treasurer’s Report Unchanged.

Braeburn Golf Course: IA sent a letter to every board member stating that club was treating neighbors in a less than desirable manner. Letter sent Oct 31, just about the time that a tall fence was erected at the part of the club bordering the end of Windsor Rd. Approximately two weeks later IA received phone call from general manager stating the fence was needed to protect their property. There have been break ins to their buildings. How those break ins provide justification for the fence is unclear. IA wrote to Vicky Danberg (Ward 6 Councilor at Large), who wrote to Cynthia Creem and Kay Kahn. IA wrote to Ruth Balser. All agreed that matter has to be handled at state level. Law governing tax breaks for “open space” and how those entities give back to the community is a state law. RG: Problem is now in an arena where hopefully something can be done. Thank you Isabelle.

Meeting adjourned 9:20pm.

Respectfully submitted by Dinah Bodkin, Dec 2 2022