

**Town of Westwood
Islington Center Task Force Meeting
Thursday, October 13, 2016
7:00 PM
Thurston Middle School, Cafeteria, 850 High Street**

Meeting Minutes

Chairman Helen Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM

Task Force Members Present:

Helen Gordon, Michael Walsh, Nancy Donahue, Trish Tucke, Nora Loughnane, Abby McCabe, Trish Tucke, Tricia Perry, Nicole Banks, Danielle Sutton, Danielle Sutton, Michael Reardon, Todd Korchin, Michael Jaillet, George Hertz, Rabih Shanshiry, and Albert Wisialko.

Members Absent: Trevor Laubenstein, Kela Klosi, Mary Beth Persons, Pam Dukeman, Tricia Perry, Paul Sicard, Jack Patterson, and George Hertz.

Miscellaneous updates:

Ms. Loughnane reported that a new gas station and convenience store was approved by the Planning Board to locate at 390 Washington Street, the site of the old gas station and service shop that has been closed. She also noted that façade improvements and exterior work is underway at the Post Office/Islington Pizza building at 315 Washington Street, and that the building permit was recently issued for work to begin at the new three-story mixed-use building at 323 Washington Street.

Discussion Regarding Proposal for the Redevelopment of Property in Islington Center – Petruzzello Properties:

Peter Zahka introduced himself as the attorney representative for Mr. Giorgio Petruzzello of Petruzzello Properties, and then introduced developer Giorgio Petruzzello and project architect, Michael McKay of McKay Architects. Mr. Zahka said that since the last meeting in September his team has been working towards the ultimate goal of designing a project that makes sense for the Town and one that makes sense for Petruzzello Properties – one that makes economic sense and one that appeals to the Town and its residents. He explained that they prepared five different alternatives (Options 1 thru 5) in response to comments and concerns expressed at the September task force meeting.

Mr. McKay reviewed the project sites and existing photographs of the Islington properties. He summarized each of the options presented for consideration by the Task Force. The Proponent's presentation can be viewed here:

<http://www.townhall.westwood.ma.us/townofwestwood/file/ICTF%2010-13-2016%20Presentation.pdf>

Option 1: This is the original proposal submitted in response to the RFP that was detailed at the September meeting. Site 1 consists of the west side of Washington Street and was proposed to include a number of small ground floor commercial spaces along Washington Street and the corner of School Street (9,000 Sq. Ft. total), with 28-one bedroom apartments on the upper two stories, with parking for the residences and commercial tenants underground, and with parking for visitors in surface spaces on the lot and in a relocated municipal parking lot to the rear of the proposed mixed-use building. This proposal also includes the restoration of the Blue Hart Tavern on Site 1 in the rear. Site 2 consists of the east side of Washington Street and proposes a new one-story, approximately 12,000 sq. ft. CVS building at the corner of East and Washington Street where the Islington Community Center (ICC) building now stands, with the branch library moved to where CVS is presently, along with 76 parking spaces to serve these proposed uses. A new basement would be constructed under the library and a new 10,000 sq. ft. addition would be

built behind the library to provide approximately 5,000 sq. ft. of community space for Westwood's Youth & Family Services and Recreation Departments, plus approximately 5,000 sq. ft. for the MMO (Mothers Morning Out Nursery). This proposal includes preserving the steeple by relocating it to the new MMO/Community Space addition. It also includes a pharmacy drive-through window for the proposed CVS, which would be located on the northeast corner of the proposed new building, adjacent to the shared parking lot.

Option 2: This option proposes a new one-story, approximately 12,000 sq. ft. CVS building on site 1 at the corner of Washington and School Streets, a restored Blue Hart Tavern moved to Washington Street where the municipal parking lot is today, and relocation of Wentworth Hall (the Islington Branch Library building) across the street to a location next to the Blue Hart Tavern. The Municipal parking lot is proposed to be moved to the rear of these buildings. In this option, Site 2 is proposed to include a new mixed-use building on the corner of Washington and East Street, with 28 one-bedroom apartments on the upper two stories and 10,000 Sq. Ft. of first floor commercial space, with underground parking for building tenants and surface parking for visitors and customers. This option also calls for renovation of the existing CVS/ building to house a new MMO and Community Space, along with a small retail store where Crown Cleaners is today.

Option 3: This proposal is similar to Option 1, but alters the design of the proposed mixed-use building for Site 1 on the corner of Washington and School Streets by increasing the ground floor retail space from 9,000 sq. ft. to 14,000 sq. ft. and decreasing the number of one-bedroom apartments from 28 one-bedroom apartments to 20 one-bedroom. The mixed-use building would be redesigned to be 2.5 stories instead of 3 stories. The proposed municipal parking would remain in the rear of Site 1, and Site 2 would be the same as in Option 1, with a new CVS at the corner of Washington and East Street with the relocated Library and Community Space/MMO addition where the CVS/Crown Cleaners building is today.

Option 4: This proposal includes a new one-story, approximately 12,000 sq. ft. CVS building on Site 1 at the corner of School and Washington Streets, and relocation of Wentworth Hall and the Blue Hart Tavern to the west side of Washington Street as in Option 2. Under this option, changes to Site 2 would not affect the ICC. Building. Existing town office, community space, and MMO operations could remain in the ICC building where they are today, with town funding of necessary improvements to that building. A new mixed-use building would then be constructed on the east side of Washington Street to accommodate 28 one-bedroom apartments and 14,000 Sq. Ft. commercial space with parking in the rear.

Option 5: Under this option, Site 1 would include a proposed new mixed-use building on the corner of School and Washington Streets with 14,000 Sq. Ft. commercial space and 20 one-bedroom apartments. The Blue Hart Tavern would be moved to the front of 9 School Street and municipal parking would be relocated to the rear of that parcel. This proposal would not alter any portion of Site 2. The existing town-owned buildings on the east side of Washington Street would remain unaffected. Existing town office, community space, and MMO operations could remain in the ICC building where they are today, with town funding of necessary improvements to that building. No addition or upgrades would be made to Wentworth Hall, and the CVS/Crown Cleaners building could be addressed as a separate project outside of the RFP process.

Discussion, Questions and Comments:

Chairman Gordon opened the discussion to questions and comments from the Task Force:

- Mr. Shanshiry asked about signage proposed for CVS.

The Proponent responded that the signage would comply with the zoning, which is likely to be wall signs with gooseneck or external lighting.

There were no further comments or questions from the Task Force members and Chairman Gordon opened the discussion to public comment.

Public Comment:

- The commenter thought that the financial aspects of the proposal would be “break even” and questioned the merits of the proposal and the impacts to the Town.
- The commenter was supportive of options 4 and 5 and encouraged consideration be given to improved dedicated left turn signal for traffic turning from southbound Washington Street onto East Street.
- The commenter thought that there would be an impact to the schools under all proposed options.

Ms. Loughnane responded that Westwood’s experience with apartments at University Station might be helpful in predicting potential project impacts on our school system.. She stated that 68% of the 350 one-bedroom and two-bedroom units at the Gables Apartments are now occupied, and a total of 23 children from those apartments have registered to attend Westwood’s public schools. She noted that this would equate to 37 students at full occupancy, compared to the pre-approval projection of 49-63 school children for the University Station apartments. She also noted the town could draw on its experience with the redevelopment of the Colburn School Building on High Street, which now contains six two-bedroom apartments with no school children.

- The commenter expressed a preference for keeping the ICC building as is today. The commenter was concerned with parking located close to residential lots and questioned how much it will cost to renovate the ICC building.

Ms. Loughnane responded that the Department of Public Works has commissioned a study of the extent and projected cost of improvements needed to keep the ICC functioning in its current capacity. She stated that the results of that study would be available in early November.

- The commenter questioned the impact to property values with apartments vs. condominiums.

The Proponent responded that they will look into impacts to property values and report back at the next task force meeting.

- The commenter questioned why there was only one response to the RFP.

Ms. Loughnane responded that several developers took out the RFP and two development teams attended the site visit in the spring. Ultimately, only one proposal was submitted. She noted that at least one of these prospective respondents was interested in renovating the ICC building for housing, but that developer found that the cost to upgrade the building and find obtain land for parking made the project economically unfeasible. Ms. Loughnane added that another developer was interested in purchasing the ICC building and the Wentworth Hall property, but only if they could also obtain the adjacent CVS/Crown Cleaners property, which the Proponent was not interested in selling to that developer.

- The commenter suggested keeping the three facades of the former church/ICC building to remain facing Washington/East Street/side and renovating the rest of the building.
- The commenter questioned the need for apartments and asked why the town wanted more apartments when there are vacancies at University Station.

Ms. Loughnane responded that the administration has not expressed a preference for or against apartments. residential uses add vibrancy to commercial areas.
The Proponent responded that they have already had many inquiries for the building across the street where construction has just begun on the apartments.

- The commenter expressed the opinion that the Town should own all land, buildings and parking if being used.
- The commenter asked if the town could convert the former church/ICC building into a for-profit business use.
- The commenter wished to discourage consideration of a drive-through at CVS.

The Proponent responded that one of major reasons CVS is willing to consider relocating is to obtain a drive-through for their pharmacy.

- The commenter expressed the opinion that the construction across the street at the Post Office/Islington Pizza building is progressing nicely, but questioned if the Town's options were becoming more limited over time.

Ms. Loughnane responded that an alternative proposal for the renovation and capital improvements for the ICC building will likely be brought to Town Meeting at the same time as any proposal related to the RFP.

- A commenter questioned why no upgrades have been made to the ICC building over the last twelve years.

Town Administrator, Mike Jaillet, responded that repairs have been made, as needed, and there have been incremental expenditures for such items as a new boiler and repairs following leaks, but no major improvements. He noted that this is because the property was not originally purchased to serve as a long-term facility for town services and uses.

Mike McKay responded that there could be an additional alternative – option 6 – to be considered which would include an adaptive re-use of the corner of the ICC building. He said that he would look into this option for the next meeting.

- The commenter asked if the Community Space and Blue Hart Tavern be town-owned.

The Proponent responded that in Option 2, the Community Space and Blue Hart Tavern would be turned back to the Town after restoration and construction.

- to the commenter recommended incorporating more green space into the design.

Minutes

On a motion made by Mr. Walsh, seconded by Mr. Wisialko, the minutes from the September 8 and September 15, 2016 meetings were unanimously approved as written.

New Business: Discussion of next meeting

The Task Force discussed holding a meeting in November and several dates were considered. November 9, 10, and 17 were discussed as possible options. The majority of members present were in favor of meeting next on November 17th. The second best date appeared to be November 10th. Ms. Loughnane

said that she would check in with those members who were not in attendance this evening, and would select the date that resulted in the greatest number of task force members being able to attend.

On a motion made by Mr. Wisialko, seconded by Ms. Tucke, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.