

**PLANNING BOARD
MARCH 24, 2015 at 7:30 PM
TOWN HALL, 41 SOUTH MAIN STREET**

In attendance:

Members: Kate Connolly, Judith Esmay (Chair), Joan Garipay, Iain Sim; Nancy Carter (Selectmen's Representative)

Alternates: Kelly Dent

Staff: Vicki Smith, Judith Brotman

Others: See Attendance Sheet

1. PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED WEST WHEELOCK GATEWAY ZONING AMENDMENTS FOR TOWN MEETING 2015

Proponent: West Wheelock Working Group ('Group')

Group Members: Chip Brown, CARTER, CONNOLLY, Anne Duncan-Cooley, Julia Griffin, Chris Kennedy, Jolin Kish, Barbara McIlroy, Tim McNamara, Robin Nuse, Kevin Purcell, Shannon Purcell, Sue Reed, SIM, Vicki Smith, Joanna Whitcomb, Andrew Winter

Adopt a new zoning district, Table 204.11 West Wheelock Gateway (WWG) District, replacing the current GR-2 zoning district on the north side of West Wheelock Street. In addition, the northern parts of Map 33, lots 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 81, 82, 87, and 90 would become part of the WWG district. Also a wedge of area north of the existing GR-2 portion of Map 33, Lot 22 and a portion of Map 33, Lot 83 north of lots 82 and 87 would become part of the WWG. The easternmost portion of the existing GR-2 district which is part of Map 33, Lot 83 would be zoned "I" district.

The GR-2 zoning district south of West Wheelock Street would be modified as follows: the northeast portion of Map 33, Lot 88 and the northwest corner of Map 33 Lot 7 would become part of the SR-1 zoning district; the northeast corner of Map 33, Lot 7, the southeast corner of Map 33, Lot 73 and the northern part of Map 33, lots 8, 13, 64, 65, 66, 67 and 68 would become part of the GR-1 zoning district. All of Map 33, lots 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 71, 72, 73(except the southeastern corner), 77, 78 and 79 would become part of the WWG district. The new district would be shown on the town zoning maps.

This new district is established to promote increased residential use with very limited retail use. A specific set of dimensional controls (setback, height yard and building front wall) and parking standards are proposed to encourage dense residential development with limits on building massing and the location of building front walls. A number of complementary amendments in Table 204.4, and sections 201, 303, 309, 313, 323 and 404 are proposed to guide development in the WWG. The definition of "family, unrelated" would be modified to allow under certain circumstances, no more than 5 unrelated persons in the WWG district. The definition of Neighborhood Retail Sales would be amended to allow such use in WWG. Definitions of build-to area, laundromat, property management office, story and yard are proposed.

Smith said changes to the proposed amendment since the March 10th public hearing include: (1) changing the language in the second table under building lengths; (2) replacing “basement” in the definition of “story” with “subgrade space”; (3) changing the proposed southern district boundary to follow property lines, rather than the existing GR-2 boundary; and (4) excluding 1 Sargent Street and portions 15 Downing Road and 16-18.5 Sargent Street from the district.

Board & Staff Comments/Questions:

- SIM questioned whether the definition of “yard” had been changed.
 - Smith said no. The distinction is made between “setback”, which is measured from the property line, and “yard” which is measured from the building. Setback and yard may overlap, but they are not the same.
 - Brotman said her understanding of this proposal is to not allow buildings to abut to each other.
- CARTER asked if this applies to buildings located underground.
 - CONNOLLY said no.
- DENT questioned the implications of including the small area next to 43 West Wheelock Street in the WWG.
 - Smith said the proposed district border in that area follows the existing GR-2 zoning district boundary.

Public Comments/Questions:

- Ruth Lappin, Kendal resident and ZBA member, reiterated comments made at the March 10th hearing about delaying this a year, the need for additional outreach to the general public, the maximum population build-out, and the precedent this would set regarding increased building heights and tenant capacities in other parts of town. She said this is not a vacant area that will be turned into a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood community. There have been no statements made relative to the ability of the Town’s water and sewer services to handle the proposed maximum build-out. Who will fund any improvements that might be necessary? This establishes a new type of zoning utilizing innovative land use controls including inclusionary zoning. There has been no explanation why workforce or affordable housing is not included in the proposal. Architectural standards for this district should be developed before the amendment is presented for a town vote.
 - Chip Brown, of Etna and Group member, said this corridor has historically been a student and faculty based residential neighborhood. We are trying to build on that.
 - Smith said Peter Kulbacki, Hanover DPW Director, sat in at the beginning of the Group meetings. He says there is plenty of water and sewer capacity. Any necessary utility improvements will be funded by the individual developer, as is the case with any development in town. Smith said the number of units was not projected because there is not a density limitation here. The Committee described a building form that allows a builder to put in as many units as they wish. Building codes address unit sizes and space needed for kitchens, bedroom, etc. Smith said there were at least three people associated with affordable housing in the Group. The Committee talked about incentives and encouraging workforce housing. The Committee did not see how we could structure that into this scenario. Development will occur parcel by parcel or as adjoining property owners want to work together. It will be very

- piecemeal; it will not change overnight. This will create a variety of development, not like what was depicted in the maximum build-out.
- CONNOLLY said she believes the water and sewer lines were redone when the bridge was reconstructed. She said most of the tenants of this proposed corridor will be somehow associated with Dartmouth. Providing housing proximal to Dartmouth will decrease the pressure to provide it in adjacent neighborhoods. She added that the Group has been working simultaneously on amendments to the Site Plan Regulations for this district relative to architectural standards.
- A female speaker asked whether the creation of a turning lane will increase traffic on West Street.
 - Chris Kennedy, Group member and Hanover resident, said it would be more likely to have a turning lane access the campus side of West Wheelock Street, rather than West Street.
 - Joanna Whitcomb, of Reservoir Road, Group member, and employee of Dartmouth, congratulated the Town and Board for starting this planning back in 2013, hosting the charrette, working with the professional groups, neighbors and landowners in that corridor, and coming up with the proposed ideas and concepts. She said the charrette touched on this being a pretty ratty looking corridor. This is an opportunity to redevelop the corridor, make it more attractive, improve infrastructure through stormwater control, improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and create a tree lined corridor to slow traffic down.
 - Darryl Hotchkiss, owner of one unit at 23 West Wheelock Street, said just like the West End Overlay District, this may just fly past everyone. He said he had not heard a thing about this and agreed with Lappin that it should be delayed a year. Hotchkiss said Master Plans are used whenever they are convenient. The Regional Master Plan includes a bridge crossing the Connecticut River in Wilder, yet here we are planning for greater pedestrian traffic and density. Development will occur according to property ownership. He asked of the public benefit, stating that all we are talking about is the ability of a certain entity of property owners to hyper-develop their properties in an area that cannot support the traffic and pedestrian traffic that already exists.
 - Smith said notices of weekly meetings are posted in accord with State law, including the new law that requires direct mailing to affected parties of proposed zoning changes. Mailings to the affected parties were sent out for each of the public hearings. Notices are also posted at the Howe Library and an attempt was made to post notices at the Co-Op.
 - Greg Franklin, of Laramie Road, asked of the changes to the church property.
 - Smith said it was omitted from the district in response to concerns that encouraging development there might jeopardize what many believe to be an historic building.
 - Arthur Gardiner, of Sargent Street and ZBA member, said the amendment, as written, would enable a landowner in this district to have five unrelated people in a three-bedroom apartment without requiring redevelopment.
 - Robin Nuse, of Sargent Street, said allowing larger buildings will enable increased density. Why does the number of tenants allowed per unit need to increase?
 - SIM said allowing more people becomes more attractive for development.
 - Lappin asked for rationalization why these changes should become effective immediately if adopted.

- Smith said we want to allow people to start planning new housing now. We are looking for increased density in this area of town. There are only 29 three-bedroom units in this area. If two people are added to each unit, as would be allowed per this amendment, there would be 58 more people in this area.
 - Brotman said it is deceptive to suggest that this will result in an increase of only 58 occupants. What will prevent property owners from converting living room space to additional bedrooms, thereby creating more three-bedroom units? Brotman said she would prefer to see this implemented a year from now when a lot of these questions have been solidly knocked out and thought through.
 - Smith said the creation of new bedrooms would require permitting and would have to conform to building code requirements.
 - Lappin said there will be increased pressure on the ZBA and Zoning Administrator from people in adjacent parts of town to have increased occupancy. It seems like favoritism to allow an increase in this district.
 - CONNOLLY said a legislative process is needed to increase density in other areas of town. She said based on her experience such proposals would be opposed greatly.
 - Hotchkiss asked if it is possible to limit the increased density to new structures only. He said there is already a problem with enforcing the three-unrelated tenant limit.
 - Smith said we've taken a step forward in addressing the occupancy issue with the Selectmen's adoption of a Rental Housing Ordinance.
 - SIM said it is clear in the amendment that allowing increased density is anticipated through redevelopment.
 - Brotman said if it is not clearly defined in the Ordinance, the ZBA will have to follow what the Ordinance language says.
- Jolin Kish, of Currier Place, Group member and property owner within the corridor, said the College envisions providing graduate housing on their side of the street, consisting of four-bedroom units with two baths.
 - ESMAY said a limit of three unrelated individuals to an apartment unit would discourage that type of development.
- A suggestion was made to limit increased tenant numbers to four-bedroom units.
 - Brown said the purpose for rezoning is to encourage new development properly.
 - CONNOLLY said there is not enough time to revise the amendment any further. It must go on the warrant as is, or not at all.
- A female speaker said it is unrealistic to expect tenants of a two- or three-bedroom unit to have only one car. Parking is a critical issue in Hanover. There is not enough parking allotted for this project.
 - Smith said the proposed parking requirements are based on the parking practices of the current tenants in this area as reported by the landlords.
 - Whitcomb said research of people in the 18-30 age bracket indicates that they don't want to drive. They want to use public transit, zip-car® type or rideshares. Recent planning trends are not to add more parking, as parking leads to increased traffic. We should be looking at alternatives.
 - Brotman said she too believes that people really like their cars. This will add to parking problems that already exist in this part of town.

- Ann Crow, of Etna, said the Zoning Administrator's concerns about enforcement are important to consider. The discussion has been focused on students and density. Crow said her concern is how this will affect people that use this corridor on a regular basis. This corridor is a part of the whole community.
 - Brown said the district is designed for people to live close to town and walk to town rather than drive into town and park. This should improve traffic conditions through the corridor.
 - Kennedy said development trends are moving from focusing on what works for the car, to what works for pedestrians and the quality of living space we can provide. Retail opportunities will improve; selling more items needed day-to-day rather than tourist-targeted items. Creating well-managed, attractive density, close to all of the things people are trying to get to, is a win-win. This was not lightly considered nor intended to make it a boom for specific landowners in any way. It was envisioned to improve the town.
 - CARTER added that the Group worked on this for nine months.
- SIM said pedestrian impact is being overstated. There will not be 150 people looking to cross the street at 8:00 AM to enter campus because many will already be living on that side of the street. The staggered development will provide opportunities to improve pedestrian and traffic issues.
- Shannon Purcell, Group member and West Wheelock Street landowner, said this neighborhood is mainly multi-family. This is where you want to increase density.
- A male speaker said when you ask the populace to make a decision on this it would be helpful to be able to say here are the assumptions we have been working on. This is how we have come to believe they are appropriate. Then we know the variables we're dealing with and can make better informed decisions.

ESMAY closed the public hearing.

Board Comments:

- CONNOLLY said this is the place for increased density. Topographically it is also a good place for denser housing. Over time, we've compromised many things in this amendment. It is worth doing. It is necessary. It will work. She said she does not see many changes being made in a year's time.
- GARIPAY said there is an advantage to engaging more of the community. She asked of the disadvantage to delaying this a year.
- SIM said waiting another year will not get us to perfection. There will always be some opinion that it should be done differently. This should go forward. Now is the time to make a decision and put this in front of the voters. There may be possibilities to do outreach to the public before Town Meeting.
- CARTER spoke in favor of voting for this as it stands. She said there is nothing that will focus our community like having it as part of Town Meeting. CARTER said she does not see that we will be in a very different place a year from now. Everyone is in agreement that the whole build-out will take time. We have to start somewhere.
- DENT spoke in favor of the amendment, but said she would prefer there be more public education.
 - Smith said there is the entire month of April and beginning of May to perform outreach.

It was moved by CONNOLLY, seconded by SIM, to move this proposed amendment forward to the Warrant for Town Meeting 2015. THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY IN FAVOR OF THE MOTION.

2. DISCUSSION ABOUT ZONING ORDINANCE RE-ORGANIZATION [Previously discussed 02/17/2015]

Copies of a red-lined version of the proposed revised Ordinance (comparing the 01/14/2015 and 12/11/2014 versions) were provided to the Board. EDWARDS and SIM will update their 02/17/15 spreadsheet and report back to the Board at a later date.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

ESMAY mentioned the Municipal Association announcement, provided in the meeting mailing packet, of education opportunities for Planning Board members.

4. ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Rivard