

**MELROSE PLANNING BOARD  
ZONING SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, October 15, 2014**

**7:00 PM**

**Mayor's Conference Room, Second Floor, City Hall, 562 Main Street**

**PRESENT:** Anne DeSouza-Ward, Paul King, Carla Morelli, and Sharon Petrillo

**ABSENT:** None

Denise Gaffey, Director and City Planner, Erin Zwirko, Assistant Planning Director, and Manisha Bewtra from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) were present.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM by Ms. DeSouza-Ward.

BC District Zoning and Map Changes

Denise Gaffey indicated that Manisha Bewtra prepared a presentation to help bring the members of the Zoning Subcommittee up to speed. Ms. Bewtra explained that the presentation will provide an overview of the larger goals of the rezoning and the map amendments. There are five BC Districts spread throughout the city. Ms. Bewtra noted that the Commuter Rail Corridor Vision Plan and the rezoning work is drilling down into the details.

Ms. Bewtra explained the schedule. The Zoning Subcommittee has two more meetings scheduled with the goal of presenting draft rezoning text and map amendments to the Planning Board at their November 17 meeting. If necessary, the Subcommittee could delay until the December 15 meeting in order to have more time to prepare. The rezoning and map amendments would be presented to the Board of Aldermen in January. Ms. Bewtra noted that the technical assistance from MAPC ends this year.

Ms. Bewtra noted that there are a few items to keep in mind while considering text and map changes. She asked the Zoning Subcommittee whether there is a benefit to consistent zoning at the station areas, especially for Wyoming Hill since the BA-1 District is so similar to the BC District. Ms. Bewtra suggested that maybe there is a specific station zoning district that should be created and applied. Ms. Bewtra noted that it appears a goal is to encourage multi-story development, and if so, does the Zoning Subcommittee need to require a minimum number of stories. Ms. Bewtra asked if multifamily housing is a goal, or is mixed use development preferable. Ms. Bewtra indicated that the parking requirements will need further discussion as well as consideration of current and future non-conformities.

Ms. Bewtra provided an overview of density, uses, and parking within the various zoning districts. In particular, Ms. Bewtra called out the height, allowances for multifamily and mixed use, as well as parking requirements.

As part of the presentation, Ms. Bewtra began to describe the Highlands BC District. Around the Highlands commuter rail station, it appears expansive and underdeveloped. The proposed streetscape and roadway improvements will help mitigate that feeling. Ms. Bewtra pointed out that eating and drinking places require a special permit within the BC District. She also pointed out that there are a number of salons. Members of the Zoning Subcommittee thought that the number of salons could be market driven. Ms. Bewtra noted that earlier this year the Zoning Subcommittee had considered prohibiting banking and medical offices from the BC District. Ms. Bewtra also noted that retail businesses that sell convenience goods are permitted, but retail businesses that sell general goods require a special permit. The Zoning Subcommittee may want to consider changing the requirement for a special permit to permitted as of

right. Ms. Bewtra presented the two parcels which are proposed to be added to the BC District in the Highlands. The Zoning Subcommittee agreed that it made sense to add them.

Moving on to the Cedar Park BC District, Ms. Bewtra pointed out that there are more multifamily buildings in this area. She suggested that the Zoning Subcommittee keep in mind the role of the streetscape, parking, and uses. At the corner of West Emerson and Tremont Streets, Ms. Morelli pointed out an island of multifamily residential uses within the district, which is not allowed. Ms. Bewtra also noted that on Essex Street there are multifamily buildings (Pond View) and mixed use buildings (Waverly Apartments). Looking at the corner of West Emerson and Essex Streets, Ms. Gaffey suggested that the single story building should be taller as it is dwarfed by the two tall buildings on either side. Ms. Gaffey suggested that the building occupied by Alfredo's on the first floor with residential above is a mix that should be encouraged by the rezoning efforts.

Around the Wyoming station, the Zoning Subcommittee had considered adding the BC District in the area around the station. Ms. Gaffey noted that there is the potential for redevelopment of the Innovation Building, and if the zoning is changed to BC, the ability to create multifamily housing with a special permit would be lost as it's only allowed in the BA-1 District and the BB-1 District. The BA-1 District allows for a fair amount of density, and changing the zoning to BC may be a step backwards. Mr. King pointed out that there is already large multifamily buildings in the immediate area around the station. Ms. Gaffey agreed, but pointed out that maybe mixed use is better. Mr. King suggested both would be good. Ms. Gaffey expressed concern that if developers are given an option, they will choose multifamily for economic reasons. If we require a mixed use component, and the market won't allow it, redevelopment may not happen. Ms. Bewtra suggested that maybe multifamily uses should require a special permit. Ms. DeSouza-Ward thought that maybe the BC Districts at the stations should be rezoned as BA-1. Ms. Bewtra noted that all of the uses around the Wyoming station at Pleasant Street are permitted uses. Ms. Gaffey thought Ms. DeSouza-Ward's suggestion is well taken.

At this time, Sharon Petrillo arrived at the meeting.

Ms. Bewtra noted that there is a single-family home within the BA-1 District on Circuit Street near the Wyoming station. Ms. DeSouza-Ward mentioned that the Zoning Subcommittee had discussed the property in the past, and it's not clear why the property is in the BA-1 District.

Ms. Bewtra explained that if the Wyoming station area was rezoned as BC, there was consideration of expanding the BC District to the area bounded by Corey Street, Grove Street, and Berwick Street. Ms. Bewtra thought the area was underdeveloped. Ms. Gaffey agreed, and noted that it begs the question of whether the BA-1 District works. Ms. Petrillo wondered why the area is underdeveloped. Ms. Bewtra noted that it seems like downtown just ends although it is the same zoning district. Ms. Gaffey thought it goes to the built environment. Ms. Bewtra suggested that design standards may combat this situation.

The BC District at the Wakefield line could be rezoned as BB-1. However, Ms. Bewtra noted that the funeral home would go from requiring a special permit to not permitted. The flower shop would still be permitted but the property does not meet the dimensional standards required for BB-1. Ms. Bewtra noted that if the station areas are rezoned as BA-1, this location, and the location near Oak Grove Station, could remain as BC for future consideration. Other considerations include whether the area could support multifamily uses as noted by Ms. Petrillo and what the current zoning in Wakefield is as noted by Ms. Bewtra.

The BC District near the Oak Grove Station makes sense to be rezoned as BB-1, consistent with the zoning at Oak Grove Village. The current uses within the BC District may not be the highest and best use, but the expansive parking lot certainly is not. Ms. Bewtra suggested that the District be expanded to

include Metro Credit Unit and the multi-tenant building on the north side of the Main Street and Sylvan Street intersection. Ms. Morelli noted that a convenience type store would do well due to the use at Pine Banks Park. Ms. Gaffey pointed out that there are a couple of other businesses in the area including Melrose Glass, a dentist office, and a law office.

Ms. Bewtra noted that the goals for the next meeting would include discussing the map changes, and perhaps gaining consensus on those changes.

Ms. Morelli explained that she had researched elevator access for multistory buildings in the building code. For example, in a two-story building, if there is commercial on the first and second floor, an elevator is required; if there is commercial on the first floor and residential only on the second floor, an elevator may not be required. The costs of installing an elevator can be prohibitive, so the Zoning Subcommittee should be cognizant of that when requiring a minimum building height or stories. Ms. DeSouza-Ward noted that the Zoning Subcommittee may want to encourage at least 2 stories. Ms. Petrillo thought that mixed use would be encouraged. Ms. Gaffey agreed with Ms. Petrillo. For a two story all commercial building, Ms. Morelli thought that active businesses could be located on the ground floor and offices would be on the second floor. Ms. Gaffey mentioned that the building at the corner of Main and Grove Streets has had difficulty leasing the office space on the second floor.

Ms. Bewtra asked if there is consensus for rezoning the Oak Grove BC District to BB-1. Ms. Gaffey indicated that BB-1 allows multifamily uses with a special permit. The day care would continue to be not permitted, although Ms. Gaffey points out that that the day care is allowed under Chapter 40A, superseding local zoning. The bank would remain permitted through a special permit. Hunts Photo would go from requiring a special permit to being permitted as of right. Ms. Bewtra inquired for there is an argument for keeping the zoning as BC. She thought that the location is excellent for transit oriented development, and BB-1 fits that goal. Ms. Gaffey pointed out that mixed-use is not permitted in the BB-1, so that may need to be allowed as part of this rezoning effort or consider other options. Ms. Bewtra agreed that the discussion should be tabled for now.

Ms. Gaffey reiterated that Ms. DeSouza-Ward's suggestion of changing the station area BC Districts to BA-1 is good. Ms. Bewtra indicated that some minor housekeeping would be necessary, but BA-1 seems to be appropriate given the goals. For example, Ms. Bewtra noted that auto sales and auto repair are allowed by special permit within the BA-1. The Zoning Subcommittee will need to consider the current permitted uses, and whether making those uses nonconforming would be inappropriate. Ms. Petrillo noted that if the use lapsed, it would not be able to reestablish itself within the zoning district. Ms. Gaffey explained that those two uses in particular require a special permit now. Ms. DeSouza-Ward indicated that auto repair may not be undesirable. Many people drop off their cars for repair and walk home or to the train.

Ms. DeSouza-Ward indicated that the homework would be to look at the BC and BA-1 uses while thinking about the station areas. Ms. Gaffey also reminded the members to consider parking requirements as well; specifically, allowing more creativity in achieving parking ratios, such as using station lots which are owned by the City, shared parking, and what the mechanism is to allow that creativity.

Ms. Bewtra suggested that the preliminary recommendation is to rezone the Highlands and Cedar Park BC Districts to BA-1. The next meeting will include discussion on parking and what needs to be cleaned up in the Ordinance. Ms. DeSouza-Ward suggested that the Wakefield BC District would remain BC and the Oak Grove BC District would need some more consideration.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.