

**MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
ZONING SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, December 3, 2014**

7:30 PM

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

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

ABSENT: Sharon Petrillo

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 7:40 PM by Ms. DeSouza-Ward.

BC District Zoning Amendments and Map Changes

Ms. Gaffey asked the Zoning Subcommittee members to turn their attention immediately to the parking revisions proposed. Ms. Gaffey indicated that parking would be revised to encourage more density and more vitality in the station areas. The result is adjusting Parking Code B for multifamily uses. Currently, multifamily uses require 2 spaces per dwelling units. The recommendation is that BA-1 and BA-2 would be reduced to 1 space per dwelling unit consistent with the Rail Corridor Overlay Zoning. Ms. Gaffey noted that mixed uses is the sum of all required parking. Ms. DeSouza-Ward was surprised that the BA-1 is currently 2 spaces per unit. Ms. Gaffey noted that there are many exceptions. Ms. Gaffey also noted that the adjustments to the parking table do not address strictly commercial projects. Ms. Bewtra explained that without completing a major study on parking around the station areas, it would be too difficult to change. Ms. Gaffey noted that the various commercial uses are treated very differently in the parking table found in Section 235-32. Mr. King agreed that it would have been a big effort. Ms. DeSouza-Ward noted that it is easier to address residential uses. She pointed out that the transit oriented location of the station area demands less parking, and there are large municipal lots around the stations.

Ms. Bewtra also noted that Parking Code B would be revised to remove the reference to "elderly housing." Ms. DeSouza-Ward agreed, and suggested speaking with the Building Commissioner about the reference. Mr. King couldn't think of an example that would utilize the reference to elderly housing. Ms. Gaffey noted that nursing homes and assisted living facilities are treated separately.

Ms. Gaffey addressed the revisions to Section 235-40. She noted that this section allows the special exemptions for parking such as being within 1,000 feet of a municipal lot and the elimination of all parking requirements for the two blocks of downtown Melrose. Ms. Bewtra recommended adding the language from the Rail Corridor Overlay District regarding shared parking into this section as the third paragraph. Some minor editorial revisions are suggested as well such as changing the title of the section if the third paragraph is inserted and clarifying that it is the Board of Appeals that grants a special permit for parking reductions allowed in the first paragraph. Ms. DeSouza-Ward thought the minor edits were appropriate. She expressed concern about the addition of a third paragraph giving the Planning Board, through site plan review, the ability to reduce parking. She thought it may need to be limited to certain zoning districts, or perhaps limited by site plan review was enough. She also wondered if there is a project that would not be captured by the text. Ms. Gaffey thought it was appropriate to limit it to site plan review and the projects that would be missed would be fairly small or outside of the Planning Board's jurisdiction. She suggested that it could be further limited to the BA-1 and BA-2 Districts rather than leaving it as citywide. Mr. King noted that it could be limited by proximity to transit stations. Ms. DeSouza-Ward suggested editing the language to make it clearer that only projects subject to site plan review would be considered for these reductions. She was undecided about further limitations, and

suggested bringing the point up with the full Planning Board. Ms. Morelli thought that it should be left as citywide. Ms. Gaffey noted that the Planning Board has some discretion to reduce parking under the Affordable Housing Incentive Special Permit. Mr. King didn't think that there would be much of an impact if it was left broad, and Ms. Morelli agreed but pointed out that she wouldn't object to limiting the shared parking language to the BA-1 and BA-2 Districts. Ms. Gaffey noted that there may be some concern from a larger audience about the language as currently proposed if it is perceived as too broad.

Ms. Gaffey explained that the major difference since the earlier discussions is that the OPCD staff and Ms. Bewtra determined that a new zoning district should be created rather than trying to shoe horn the station areas into the BA-1. A new zoning district would allow the use table to reflect the Subcommittee's recommendation for the treatment of certain uses that are not appropriate in the station areas but may be appropriate in the BA-1 Districts. The district would be the BA-2, and the BA-1 would still be revised per the subcommittee's earlier discussions.

Ms. Gaffey provided an overview of the BA-2 and the permitted uses. She noted that multifamily use would be allowed via a special permit from the Planning Board per Sections 235-65 and 66. New or used auto dealerships would not be permitted, although this use would still be allowed in the BA-1 via a special permit. This is one of the cases where it made sense to create a new district rather than use footnotes and the like to prohibit it from the station areas. Funeral establishments would not be permitted, which returns to the earlier view of the subcommittee. Ms. Gaffey noted that auto repair and accessory sales would be prohibited in the BA-2, as would commercial parking garages and heliports.

Medical offices would not be permitted as a ground floor use. Ms. Gaffey also suggested that the use could be prohibited as the subcommittee discussed earlier in 2014. Ms. DeSouza-Ward asked about elevators to get to the second floor (or the basement if that were the case). Ms. Morelli explained that if the building is inaccessible and a public use was added on a second floor, an elevator would have to be added. Ms. Morelli also explained that the need for an elevator is related to construction costs. A building could provide other reasonable accommodations such as a ground floor meeting room. Ms. DeSouza-Ward asked about the type of practice. The subcommittee had a discussion about the storefronts occupied by eye doctors in downtown Melrose. Ms. Bewtra suggested that rather than use ground floor as the limiting language, it could be non-street facing. Ms. Gaffey suggested that the Building Commissioner should weigh in on it and staff could work some more on the language.

Adding a new district has its advantages. The Use and Dimensional Tables would be revised, but it will be clearer than using footnotes. The Zoning Map would also be clearer. Ms. Gaffey noted that there aren't major amendments proposed.

Ms. Gaffey explained the changes to the dimensional requirements. The allowable maximum height would be revised from 80 feet to 50 feet in the BA-1 as previously discussed and the same would be applied to the BA-2. The requirement for additional lot area for mixed uses would also be eliminated in the BA-1 and not required in the BA-2.

Ms. Gaffey noted that Section 235-66, the section which allows the Planning Board to grant a special permit for multifamily uses in certain zoning districts, would also be revised to reflect a lesser maximum height of 62 feet.

Ms. Gaffey indicated that an outstanding question for the subcommittee is whether provisions for bicycle parking should be added into the Zoning Ordinance. Bicycle parking is required for projects within the Rail Corridor Overlay District and the Smart Growth District. Does the subcommittee want to require bicycle parking throughout the city, in the new BA-2 District, or not at all? Ms. Morelli stated that it is not appropriate to require it where it's not needed. She noted that developers are trending to providing

bicycle parking more often. It's typically discussed under Site Plan Review, and anything more may not be appropriate. Ms. DeSouza-Ward was not inclined to add it to the Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Gaffey also informed the subcommittee of an additional zoning change that will have to be addressed along with the proposal for the station area rezoning. The density for assisted living facilities in the Rail Corridor Overlay District is 45 units per acre. The developer of the assisted living facility at the Deering Lumber site has found that for the 90 unit project, there is not enough acreage. They mistakenly included portions of the public way in their lot area calculations which gave the impression that they had sufficient lot area for a 90 unit building. Ms. Gaffey noted that the proposed project would not be any different than originally discussed in concept in terms of the building footprint, height, setbacks and number of units, but the density needs to be increased to 55 dwelling units per acre. Ms. Morelli noted that the number of dwelling units per acre was somewhat arbitrary, but she expressed concern that others may seize on a similar opportunity to have density altered. Ms. DeSouza-Ward did not think that it would be appropriate to go higher than 55 dwelling units per acre in case the developer decides to change the project. Ms. Morelli indicated that the presentation and explanation would have to be sensitive to the situation. Ms. Gaffey agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Document: Melrose Transit-Oriented Rezoning Initiative, Prepared by Manisha Bewtra, MAPC,
Draft for Discussion, December 3, 2014