

**MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
ZONING SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 17, 2015

8:00 AM

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, and Erin Zwirko, Assistant Planning Director, were present.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 AM by Ms. DeSouza-Ward.

Commuter Rail Station Area Amendments and Other Related Amendments

Ms. Gaffey reminded the Zoning Subcommittee that the joint public hearing occurred on February 17, 2015, and there were a few items that required follow up. Ms. Gaffey explained that the Planning Board will need to prepare a report to the Board of Aldermen that addresses any comments made at the public hearing. Staff will prepare this report based on the conversation at the Zoning Subcommittee meeting and present it at the full Planning Board meeting on Monday, March 23.

Ms. Gaffey also noted that a guest is in attendance at the meeting. Mr. Hassett owns the property at 31-33 West Wyoming Avenue within the Wyoming Station Area.

Ms. Gaffey reminded the Subcommittee that the purpose of the zoning amendments is to create vitality and vibrancy within the commercial nodes at the station areas. She noted that there are three major topics that came up during the public hearing including parking, particularly the use of municipal spaces to meet the required parking ratio, bicycle parking, and requiring medical offices uses to be located on some other floor other than the ground floor.

Ms. Morelli expressed that parking is perennial problem in Melrose. She believed that people need to adjust their behavior as the parking space located in close proximity of their destination may not always be available. Ms. Gaffey noted that this winter has been particularly difficult for parking. She noted that the large snow banks and equipment still occupy parking spaces. She also noted that employees could park further from their place of business. Mr. King noted that it is difficult to change behavior.

Ms. Gaffey explained the concerns that were brought up during the joint public hearing were related to a special permit granted by the Board of Appeals, which allows the substitution of parking spaces within a nearby municipal lot to achieve the required parking ratio. Ms. Gaffey explained that there have been very few of these applications in recent years.

Ms. DeSouza-Ward asked if the commuter rail station lots were owned by the City. Ms. Gaffey explained that all were except the lot at Wyoming Station, which is owned by the hospital. Mr. Hassett explained that the lot at Wyoming Station was previously a satellite parking lot for the hospital when it was a teaching hospital. He also noted that the Melrose Place Condominiums was previously used as dormitories for nursing students. Ms. Gaffey noted that the Staff has some information on the parking permits available in the City. She noted that parking within the commuter rail lots after 12 noon is free.

Ms. Gaffey also noted that the cost for all of the types of permits is quite low. Mr. Hassett explained that he rents out garage space for \$175 per month.

Mr. Hassett went on to explain that he feels he has lost some development potential at his property due to the zoning amendments. Mr. Hassett explained that in the past he has been courted by Jiffy Lube and MAACO. By changing the zoning for the area, including prohibiting vehicle service uses, he has lost some options for future redevelopment. Ms. DeSouza-Ward indicated that the Planning Board does not feel that car sales and vehicle service uses are appropriate uses for the type of redevelopment that the Planning Board wants to encourage in the station areas.

Returning to the discussion regarding the special permit that allows substitution of parking in nearby municipal lots, Ms. Gaffey also noted that there is a total exemption of parking in the downtown area. She explained that this exemption was put in place during the 1970s as a way to encourage redevelopment within downtown Melrose, and based on her knowledge it was very effective. It continues to be effective today. Ms. Gaffey noted that the redevelopment of the Boardman Block was able to take advantage of this exemption. She suggested that the Staff research how many special permits have been granted by the Board of Appeals in the last decade to include in the report to the Board of Aldermen. The Subcommittee agreed that it would be useful information.

Ms. Gaffey noted that the Board of Aldermen expressed some concern at reducing the parking ratio for multifamily uses. Ms. Gaffey suggested that the report make clear that the reduction is only for multifamily housing in the BA-1 and BA-2 Districts, and not for commercial uses. Ms. Gaffey pointed out that a developer of multifamily uses would still need to request the special permit from the Board of Appeals if parking in municipal lots would be substituted for required parking, noting that it adds another layer of review.

Lastly on parking, Ms. Gaffey explained that there was concern regarding the shared parking provision. This language is identical to the language in the Smart Growth District and the Rail Corridor Overlay District. Ms. Zwirko also pointed out that the proposed language is limited to projects that trigger Site Plan Review within the BA-1 and BA-2. Ms. Gaffey noted that this provision adds flexibility and creativity and could encourage redevelopment in the station areas. She notes that the Highlands lot is often empty. Ms. DeSouza-Ward also noted that the allowance is discretionary and the level of analysis required by applicants is very high, including engaging a traffic engineer or executing a legal shared parking agreement.

Ms. Gaffey noted that one of the Aldermen asked about bike parking. Ms. Gaffey reminded the Subcommittee that they considered inserting a requirement into the amendments but didn't feel that it would be seamless. Ms. Zwirko noted that the Planning Board considers the adequacy of bicycle accommodations when reviewing Site Plan applications. Ms. Morelli stated that developers will include bicycle accommodations if the market demands them. She believes that there is demand, and noted that a number of recent projects included bicycle accommodations.

Finally, Ms. Gaffey explained that there was some commentary on prohibiting medical office uses as a ground floor use. The commentary indicated that law offices are not dissimilar to medical office uses. Ms. Gaffey reminded the Subcommittee that this use requires a special permit in the BA-2 District. Ms. Zwirko indicated that law offices are considered miscellaneous professional offices, which includes real estate offices, banks, insurance and other financial offices. Ms. DeSouza-Ward stated that there is a whole medical district (the BD District) where the medical office uses can be located by-right.

Upon discussion of the items raised at the public hearing, the Subcommittee agreed that the Planning Board report should recommend that no changes be made to the station area zoning as proposed.

Ms. Gaffey also noted that there are a few other housekeeping items that could be addressed in the zoning amendments and she recommends including them in the report. The first item is to change the language of

the footnote related to mixed uses attached to the Table of Use and Parking Regulations. The footnote limits the uses that could be part of a mixed use project. Ms. Gaffey noted that the Subcommittee should consider allowing all permissible standalone uses to be part of a mixed use project. The Subcommittee agreed. The other housekeeping item is to correct two incorrect references in the Rail Corridor Overlay District regulations. Ms. Gaffey noted that they are in the parking setback and affordable housing sections. The section references are incorrect. The Subcommittee agreed to address these items.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM.

Document: Draft Meeting Minutes, Joint Public Hearing, February 17, 2015
Quick Facts on Parking Permits