STANDISH ROAD NCD STUDY COMMITTEE
MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2015, 3:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL – JULIANI ROOM

MINUTES

Study Committee present: Naomi Cameron, Catherine Johnson, Gerry Murphy, Michael Scholl

Also present: Jaclyn Harris, Pamela Martin, Thomas Ahern, Ann Doyle

1. Call to Order
Ms. Johnson called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

2. Consideration of Minutes
The minutes from the March 18, 2015 meeting were approved by unanimous vote of the Committee members present.
A citizen then made a request to amend the minutes prior to approval. The Committee moved this request to the Citizen's Speak portion of the Agenda (see below) and indicated that amendments to the March 18 minutes could be discussed at the next meeting.

3. New and Other Business

Update on Public Information Session continues, ideally held the week of April 27. Timing will depend on availability of invited participants, possibly including several Denton Road residents and the Town's Planning Director. It may include a formal (PowerPoint) presentation. Invitations will be posted on-line and will be hand-delivered with a packet that also includes the "Did You Know?" (re: Royal Barry Wills) that already has been posted and the NCD/historic district sales data with explanatory text.

There was a discussion of the sales data and text, with the conclusion noted that the median prices of houses sold in districts (NCD or historic) were approximately 4.0% higher relative to listing price than those town-wide. This pertained to both opt-in and opt-out properties. It was noted that because the Denton Road NCD was created in 2008, there is limited data. Therefore, the data from sales in the Cottage Street Historic District was included, which substantiated the findings from Denton Road but were from district with greater restrictions. Ms. Johnson mentioned that there was similar data available for the Avon Hill NCD that proved positive economic value. This data may be appended to the Study Report appendix.

House Histories: Incomplete drafts of the some of the inventory sheets for the houses within the district as shown on the proposed NCD map. There is a set format: photo, map, lot size, footprint, living area, height (number of stories), siding, year

built, source of information, style, architect and builder. It was noted that Dunlavy's subdivision was influenced by Royal Barry Wills even when the houses were not directly attributable to Wills on the building permit.

Guidelines: The next section of the Study Report that will be edited will be the Guidelines, but this will wait until Helen Robertson returns so she can give Input. Helen sits on the Design Review Board. A core goal will be to encourage designs where mass and scale are consistent with the neighborhood without begin as quantitative as the Zoning Bylaws are. The district's topography (contours) should be taken into account when heights are considered. The process is meant to engage neighbors, offer guidelines early in the design process. The Committee will look at other NCDs, such as Avon Hill, which stipulate that additions should reflect the character of the existing home.

4. Public Comments

Request to amend discussion section of 3/5/15 Minutes:

A resident wished to make sure the Minutes reflected the specific questions: How the study group was formed, with the composition of five people apparently all in favor on an NCD. Argued that in order to have balance, with con or neutral people, the current group should be disbanded or at least one member should cede to someone new; a suggestion of having an alternate or an expanded Committee.

There was a questions of whether there was less enthusiasm for a Standish Road NCD that for a Denton Road NCD.

There was a question whether the name, Standish Road NCD, really represented what is under discussion here, since the whole street is not included in the preliminary NCD map; and, whether there is some neutral name that would better represent the restricted area vs. what is understood to be the natural neighborhood.

There was a concern that "gerrymandering" was in play in carving a District from the entire Neighborhood.

There was a question about the signature-gathering process and whether people knew what they were signing – joining a Study Committee. There was concern about the dates regarding the Petition signatures. The district under consideration is no longer [83] houses: has this information been conveyed to the smaller group who have signed?

Members of the Committee answered and clarified some of the questions: The NCD requires contiguous properties, but does not require that the whole "neighborhood" has to be included in the "district". Wellesley's NCD Bylaw has an "opt out" option complicates the definition of "Protection", because a neighbor or builder could still be building something large next door. However, the amount of non-incremental

growth would be reduced. Also, the NCD could start with one subset of the neighborhood and expand it, if there is interest, in the future. Also, the district map can change as homeowners opt in or out, up until the Town Meeting warrant is framed. Prior to that, the report is submitted to the Historical Commission and a joint public hearing with the Historical Commission and the Planning Board. The Committee only produces a report. It is Town Meeting, after the process runs its course, which votes on the establishment of the NCD.

The residents shared their personal objections to the NCD:

1. Belief that numbers can be manipulated (re: property value), so that negatives of having restrictions aren't showing up. Buyers may be confused by the distinction between neighborhood and district.
2. Preferences for Town-wide" Zoning with changes to address the problem of out-of-scale houses that are being built. There was concern that some who signed were unaware of that this is attached to the property and about the divisiveness between neighbors.
3. Process concerns about the creation, composition and communication of the Study Committee; also, whether deed restrictions or changes to Large House Review would be better.
4. Concern about property values, with the suggestion that there is a stigma to being in a restricted neighborhood, even if the formal "district" does not include all the associated houses.
5. Concern that by making the boundaries of the NCD shrink and grow as interest evolves, is there an inevitability that some district will happen.

Response re: inevitability – the members of the Study Committee are committed to drawing conclusions about the suitability of the NCD based on facts that are gathered during the Study Committee Process. There are many steps where the Committee's work will be subject to approval from others. As Ms. Johnson sits on the Planning Board, she stated that she will recuse herself from the vote her Board takes with the Historical Commission following that public hearing.

Response re: Zoning. Zoning is harder to implement than an NCD as it requires a 2/3 votes at Town Meeting. Zoning also involves quantitative measures, such as set backs and height restrictions. This are dimensional and don't necessarily reflect neighborhood character. The NCD is a recognized planning tool to create neighborhood-specific guidelines. When special permits or variances are quested from the ZBA, the decisions are not always protective of the neighborhood.

Final suggestion from the residents: the energy used to discuss the NCD (including objections) could be channeled to working together on town-wide solutions.

5. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:10.

(*Chair's note*: revisions are underscored.)