

Approved February 9, 2022

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Video Conference
Wednesday, February 2, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Advisory Committee Public Hearing
Wednesday, February 2, 2022, 7 p.m.
Zoom Video Conference**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Tom Cunningham, Jake Erhard, Jenn Fallon, Neal Goins, John Lanza, Jeff Levitan, Corinne Monahan, Doug Smith, Susan Clapham, Al Ferrer, Wendy Paul, Pete Pedersen, Madison Riley, Patti Quigley.

Neal Goins called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and introduced members of Advisory in attendance.

Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

Minutes Approval/Liaison Reports/Administrative Items

Liaison Reports

Schools/Susan Clapham and Jenn Fallon: at the recent School Committee meeting there was an update on COVID; the state mask mandate expires at the end of February and there was some discussion about what do after February vacation about masks; public hearing for budget draft was held; in a budget update there is a retroactive payment due to an educational cooperative; there was a discussion about what to do with funds for year end and the debate and discussion will continue next week. Schools needed to cut some capital.

Recreation/Wendy Paul: public hearings continue regarding the pond and the use of tennis courts/pickle ball courts and the last public hearing is March 8.

HR Wendy Paul: HR has an article requesting the modification of HR policies and they are close to having final drafts.

DPW/Pete Pedersen: BPW meeting next Tuesday; DPW is ready to come back to Advisory; DPW received a reduced budget request from the BPW; DPW will be requesting more money for snow removal and storm response. DPW is meeting with neighbors regarding the pending resurfacing of Walnut Street.

NRC/Al Ferrer: NRC will provide a written response to questions raised by Advisory.

Citizen Petition/Doug Smith: there will be no motion on Article 45; the other Citizen Petition (Article 44) will present to Advisory on February 9.

WHA/Doug Smith: Wellesley Housing Authority will provide a short presentation on Article 30 next week and provide a short overview of the WHA.

PBC/Jeff Levitan: the recent meeting included close out of the library project; a book was dedicated to Steve Gagosian for all his work; Hardy site discussion – exterior skin and circulation pattern on the Hardy site were discussed; contractors for projects were interviewed. PBC is looking at costs and costs are beginning to climb particularly for some materials. Electrification questions were raised and PBC is bringing back engineers from both projects. A comment was made that this leaves town hall open to issues because it is not a sealed envelope.

Select Board/Patti Quigley: an email with the budget and capital as it stands right now was sent to Advisory members prior to the meeting. There is more work to be done and these are not final numbers.

- A question was asked that last year due to COVID concerns there was significant pressure on capital. It was the impression that deferred projects would be proposed for this year. Has this been discussed for post COVID and trying to get projects done this year? Has there been any upward pressure to average the two years to get to the 6.2% - 6.8% range?

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- This has been discussed. A lot of thought and work went into this and the Select Board is trying to stay within policies.
- \$690,000 is over the 6.8% - Schools also needed to cut some capital

Minutes

Jenn Fallon made and Corinne Monahan seconded a motion to approve the January 26, 2022 minutes.

Roll Call Vote

Jennifer Fallon – yes
John Lanza – yes
Corinne Monahan - yes
Patti Quigley - yes
Tom Cunningham – yes
Jake Erhard – yes
Jeff Levitan - yes
Doug Smith – yes
Susan Clapham - yes
Al Ferrer - yes
Wendy Paul – yes
Pete Pedersen - yes
Madison Riley – yes
Shawn Baker – yes

January 26, 2022 minutes were approved by 14 - 0.

Administrative/Coming Attractions

- Spreadsheet for due dates to be sent out
- Article 8 information sent out – draft off how things were written up last year
- Saturday, February 12 meeting: Discussion/vote ATM Warrant Articles
- Saturday, February 16 meeting: – Select Board 2022 ATM Warrant Articles/Discuss & Vote ATM Warrant Articles

Advisory Committee Meeting was suspended and will resume at the close of the Public Hearing.

7:00 p.m. Public Hearing on the 2022 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles

The purpose and process of the Public Hearing was described. The Public Hearing is for citizen input on the articles for Special Town Meeting. A description of the purpose and role of Advisory Committee was provided. Advisory does not set priorities and policies for the town. Advisory's role during its Public Hearing is to listen and to not engage in dialogue. However, Advisory members may ask questions for clarification. This is not the time to ask questions, but a citizen can ask Advisory to investigate a question. Advisory Committee officers and members were introduced.

Each of the Warrant Articles for Annual Town Meeting was read and open for public comment.

Article 8

Marlene Allen, 29 Rice Street: speaking as the COA Board Chair said that the kitchen at the four-and-a-half-year-old Tolles Parsons center cannot be licensed for use and was not on the punch list when the building was completed. The COA requested funds for a study to evaluate options and associated costs to make it useable and to improve the safety and security at main entrance. The Select Board denied the

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funding requests and requested more information on future programming and the use of the kitchen. The COA requested support for the COA in budget discussions.

Kathleen Vogel, 810 Willard Road: Board member of COA board and agreed with the previous speaker's comments. She also expressed thanks and appreciation for Advisory's discussion at last week's meeting. Confident will be able to work together for the town of Wellesley's seniors.

Article 36

Peter Johannsen, 37 Glen Road: VP of Wellesley Friendly Aid stated that Friendly Aid has submitted a memorandum to Advisory Committee and asked all of Advisory to consider the information in the memorandum.

Article 38

Mary Gard, 21 Laurel Ave.: member of Sustainable Wellesley, in response to some discussion by Advisory in previous meeting, provided a history of sustainable goals and the process in Wellesley. In this article Planning looked at new construction as a first step. New buildings already must perform energy modeling to comply with state building codes so this is not adding anything new to current requirements.

Robert Salzman, 14 Dover Road: Spoke of his own heat pump experience; it is quiet and it is effective. Expressed support for changing set back rules for heat pumps.

Phillipa Biggers, 14 Dover Road: Addressed comments from previous Advisory meeting discussions. A sustainable component to PSI is becoming standard in many communities. With respect to waiting for metrics, there is no downside to starting the conversation. Even if heat pumps are not perfect we need to support green industries. This is a mandated goal by the town. With respect to setbacks, most town's do not have setbacks for heat pumps.

Peter Watson, - Urged strong support for Article 38; this is response of Planning regarding the 2020 ATM directive.

Article 39

Leda Eizenberg, 10 Kirkland Circle: Expressed support for Article 39 and felt it is an essential step in honoring the town's Housing Production Plan. Further stating that the character of the town is defined more by attitude than in zoning requirements. The bylaw allowing ADUs benefit many and allow older residents to stay in town. ADUs bring an affordable option for disabled adults. It was felt that we should be looking for ways to make our communities more welcoming and inclusive.

Andrew Mikula, 42 Arnold Road: Spoke in support of Article 39. Housing prices in MA have risen and many seniors are not safe in nursing homes and this can be solved with more flexible and affordable living situations. Article 39 will accommodate smaller families. ADUs also have environmental benefits.

Ann Mara Lanza, 18 Oakland Street: Urged support for Article 39 and provided insight into how ADUs fit into Wellesley's housing strategy. The Housing Production Plan had broad community participation and was completed in 2018. Two of the goals support ADUs. ADUs creates housing opportunities for seniors, young families, and town workers.

Tere Ramos, 40 Calvin Road: Urged for full support of Article 39. In speaking of her personal experience, ADUs would allow her own daughter to stay in town and be a part of the community. ADUs will not change the culture of the town.

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Sally Watts, 43A Atwood St.: Spoke in support of Article 39. There is a need for accessible dwelling units. At Planning’s Public Hearings last year town people expressed full support for ADUs. This will help address housing shortages in town. The supply of smaller homes is disappearing.

Jenn Fallon made and Corinne Monahan seconded a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing.

Roll Call Vote

- Jennifer Fallon – yes
- John Lanza – yes
- Corinne Monahan - yes
- Patti Quigley – yes
- Tom Cunningham – yes
- Jake Erhard – yes
- Jeff Levitan - yes
- Doug Smith – yes
- Susan Clapham - yes
- Al Ferrer - yes
- Wendy Paul – yes
- Pete Pedersen - yes
- Madison Riley – yes
- Shawn Baker – yes

The Public Hearing was adjourned at 8:25 p.m., 14 to 0.

Advisory Committee Meeting resumed at the close of the Public Hearing.

Planning FY23 Budget and Warrant Articles

Don McCauley, Director, Planning; Catherine Johnson, Chair, Planning Board; Eric Arbeene, Senior Planner; Christopher Heep, Miyares and Harrington

Questions/Comments – Article 33 and Article 34

- Change in definition of childcare is because of a statutory change in language but there is no substantive change in the way childcare is regulated.
- Both Flood Plain and Child Care are updates to correspond to the current version of MGL; flood plain bylaw corresponds to state law.
- A comment was made about two additional questions where “sustainable” was missing from the language and there was a question about a numbering order.

The Planning Departments FY23 operating and capital budgets were presented and reviewed. Budget drivers were reviewed and the comparison to previous performance presented.

Questions/Comments

- There was a request to understand staffing at benchmark communities. How is Wellesley staffed compared to other communities?
 - This is difficult to compare as in other towns work is not always in the Planning Department and positions are carried in other departments. Weston and Wayland don’t do as many projects as Wellesley does. The numbers are skewed. We are trying to look at this. It is a difficult benchmarking exercise with different dimensions to the benchmarking such as how town’s allocate responsibilities and the scope of the work.

There are two factors that drive what Planning is doing – LHR, which is unique to Wellesley, and the nature of the development pressure.

- Are you charging enough for Planning’s work?
 - There are some fees that need to be revisited particularly for LHR and we can look to increase LHR fees. There are other fees charged that are counterproductive such as historic preservation demolition review; fees for standard applications; basic sign permits. We want to collect appropriate fees and we are trying to balance whether it’s a resident doing construction versus a spec builder.
- A comment was made that it was helpful to see the 10-year perspective. What are the workload drivers for all this over the 10 years and is it a gradual change or step change?
 - It is gradual over a 10-year period. It is basically a step increase but the scope of projects has gotten much larger.
- Does the large increase in LHR have implications for Planning’s ability to get to larger issues?
 - Yes that is the case. Work gets squeezed because of the volume of permitting work which has time action deadlines.
- LHR process appears to be a significant time commitment, is Planning able to generate efficiencies? What is resource allocation?
 - A simple LHR is a 50-hour commitment; a complicated LHR, such as on Pond Road could be 10 times that. There is no rule of thumb for doing this. It is a significant time commitment. There are ideas of how to simplify this. Follow up is also required to monitor the projects.
- Has benchmarking been done regarding fees?
 - We are looking at rules and regulations and benchmarking fees is in the work plan for next year.
- Who is Mark?
 - He is a management consultant who focuses on municipal organizations. He has worked with other departments in town. HR thinks very highly of him. We liked him as well and he was helpful.
- A question was asked that if LHR is unique to Wellesley and other towns have large houses, why is it so unique to Wellesley and why are we doing LHR.
 - We need to reexamine what we are doing and compare it to other towns but LHR is fundamentally due to Wellesley’s density and mansionization has had a greater impact. In Wellesley we were trying to put 14,000 square foot dwellings on an acre lot as compared to Weston with two acre lots. LHR was adopted because one size approach didn’t work for all properties. We need to determine if it is accomplishing what the town wants to accomplish and whether it is worth it. LHR was overwhelmingly approved by Town Meeting. Some communities have private sewer which impacts the number of bedrooms that can be built. Once a property is on a public sewer system it is easier to go bigger. Town Meeting decided in 2008 that it didn’t want to limit the size of houses but wanted to put a threshold on homes.
- A comment was made that a comparison to towns that are like Wellesley’s density would be helpful as it sounds like LHR taking up so much more time and it seems inefficient for the department to do its work. Having a comparison would be helpful particularly with Planning’s budget so much over guideline.
- A comment was made that on the personnel side it is a lot of additional staff in one year. Would it make more sense to fill vacancies in one year and then add the additional staff in another year particularly with the amount of time it takes to hire people?
 - We have thought about phasing staffing. But we would rather do this at one time to get staff in that is appropriate to do the work. For example, Arlington has a 10-person planning department as a comparable.

- This year Planning has budgeted \$50,000 for a study and last year budgeted \$25,000. Planning's budget is quite large and the money doesn't seem to be spent. How will Planning use the \$50,000 and how much of the \$25,000 did Planning use? And professional development and technology haven't been used.
 - We've used \$10,000 which is the fee for Mark Weigh. \$50,000 is for an area study either in Barton Road or in another part of town. This number has been static for 10 years and we need to get to a realistic current level.
 - Professional development is for the education of staff to be current on planning issues. What is not spent this year is because we don't have time to go to conferences. We also would like to purchase specialized planning software and technology for work use rather than using personal devices.
- If ADUs dwelling unit passes, will it trigger LHR?
 - It could and depends on the overall square footage of the existing house plus the square footage of the ADU as to whether it goes over the threshold.
- A comment was made that we should be looking at the fee structure today and based on the fee increase add people and add the software. We should charge for the work to the people who are using this rather than to the taxpayers. The first step is to look at the fee structure to hire more people.
 - The fees don't pay for Planning's work. The fees go into the General Fund.
- An opinion was expressed that the market should pay for services and not the taxpayers.
- A comment was made that a member is sympathetic to Planning's ask for additional resources as the town has reviewed and supported a broad increase in bylaws that must be followed. However, it was felt that a continual look at fees and benchmarking should happen. It was felt that this is the cost of performing this function.
- With this budget is Planning set up to accommodate all the proposed zoning bylaw changes or are we going to be at same point a year or two from now. Does this budget set Planning up proforma for everything proposing this year?
 - Yes, if we don't get the budget increase then Planning will be in a bad position. The ADU bylaw has a planning review process and that will put an extra burden on Planning. If ADUs are more widely popular then we will have to think again about staffing but if it is modest of a dozen or less per year then this can be absorbed by proposed staffing.
- A comment was made that Planning over the years has not been able to increase staff. Concern was expressed about the additional work for ADUs and sustainability. It is clear Planning will need this staff. It was suggested that Planning use Arlington and other towns as a comparison.
- A comment was made that anything on benchmarking would be helpful.
- How many vacant positions do you have now and even if all this budget money is approved, do you have a strategy to get fully staffed with people who will stay?
 - Currently Planning has 1.5 FTEs vacant and the critical part of the plan is to increase to 2 FTEs. The .5 FTE is eliminated because of the difficulty in hiring a part-time position. Planning is refocusing on hiring a full-time position to be an entry level planner. Planning hopes to bring someone on in the spring. Planning would like a full-time historical preservation planner. Planning is an in-demand function right now.
- Responses to questions to Articles questions were helpful.

Adjourn

John Lanza made and Doug Smith seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call Vote

Jennifer Fallon – yes

John Lanza – yes

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Corinne Monahan - yes
Patti Quigley – yes
Tom Cunningham – yes
Jake Erhard – yes
Jeff Levitan - yes
Doug Smith – yes
Susan Clapham - yes
Al Ferrer - yes
Wendy Paul – yes
Pete Pedersen - yes
Madison Riley – yes
Shawn Baker – yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m. 14 to 0.

Documents Reviewed (link to website documents)
<https://wellesleyma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/1365>

- Planning Board FY23 Budget Narrative
- Planning Dept. FY23 Operating Budget request
- 2022 Planning ATM Articles
- ADUs FAQ
- Annual Report Planning FY21
- Article 39 Zoning Map for Commercial Gun Shops
- Town Counsel letter regarding Child Care
- Town Counsel letter regarding Flood Plains
- Marc Wey letter
- Memorandum of Wellesley Friendly Aid Associate to the Wellesley Advisory Committee
- Planning Budget Comparisons