

ZAP approves Village Center Overlay District Proposal

BY AMY SANGIOLO ON OCTOBER 23, 2023

On October 23, the Zoning and Planning Committee voted to approve the proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to create a Village Center Overlay District. The item has been in discussion since early 2021, after the Committee's review and discussion of proposed amendments to expand multi-family uses in residential zones was tabled at the end of 2020.

Since the public hearing held on September 26, the Zoning and Planning Committee held two discussions, on October 10 and 23, to debrief from the public hearing and discuss proposed text amendments and map changes.

At the October 10 meeting, the following amendments were proposed and approved (see [Fig City News Meeting Report](#)):

- 12-14 Park St and 182-184, 180, and 172 Washington St from VC2 to MRT in Newton Corner
- All VC3 in Nonantum to VC2

At the October 23 meeting, a number of amendments [proposed by Councilors](#) were discussed, and the following were approved:

- Add 1.0 parking minimum per residential unit in MRT zone only for new construction
- Remove all VC2 proposed lots east of Adams Street from VCOD
- Reduce from VC3 to VC2 for 304-306 and 308-322 Walnut Street
- Reduce from VC3 to VC2 for the gas station and beauty salon on Washington Street
- Add MRT zoning for 1535 Beacon
- Reduce from VC3 to VC2 68-70 Wyman St (NHA)
- Remove the Newton Centre MBTA Train Station from VCOD

The other amendments that were proposed and rejected centered around parking and map changes.

During a discussion on an amendment made by Councilor Wright (that did not pass) to remove seven villages from the VCOD, President Albright said she has been thinking about implementing a phased-in process to allow the MBTA zoning to be implemented first while some of villages can be added later and others even after that.

Councilor Wright reminded the Committee that a phased-in approach is not an new idea, referring to a request made to the Mayor for a “pause” on the proposed Village Center Zoning efforts until after the submission of the Newton’s plan for complying with the MBTA Communities Act later this year. They argued for the need for more discussion with residents about the future of the city before rezoning the village centers and adding further additional development because some large housing development projects are in the pipeline (Riverside, Northland, Dunstan East, and Crafts Street) that would add thousands of housing units, and there will likely be a large number of units approved and built through the MBTA Communities Act. (See *Fig City News* [article](#).)

Several committee members expressed interest in learning more about President Albright’s suggested phased-in approach.

The Committee voted 5-1-1 (Wright opposed, Baker abstained, Krintzman absent).

The VCOD proposed text amendments and map changes will be going to the Full Council in November.

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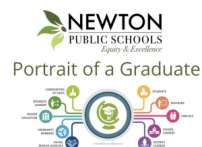
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