



To: Members of the Zoning & Planning Committee
From: Councilors Susan Albright and Vicki Danberg
Re: Docket Items Brought Over From Last Term
Date: January 8, 2023

Memorandum

I sent this email to Lisle early last week. These were docketed for the new docket for this coming Monday's meeting. In light of the planning nature of this meeting – Lisle suggested I bring this list to the meeting tonight. BTW – the button asking other councilors to co-docket was broken last week. If anyone wants to join on to any of these docket items, please let the clerk's office know.

Hello Lisle, et al.,

Vicki and I have reviewed the items that were not taken up last term which are still important and relevant. I've put 5 of them into the docket tracker and Vicki has another 3-4 to go. In light of the first agenda item on zaps agenda for Monday - we felt like you ought to see these well in advance of that meeting. We can send along the actual docket language.

these items deal with

1. a new retaining wall ordinance
2. BERDO
3. electrification ordinance
4. update from planning on VCOD activity
5. update on the climate action plan
6. amendments to the setbacks in MR districts to help restrict the size of newly constructed homes
7. Various aspects of inclusionary zoning - including the look-back provision that I believe is already on the planning depts to do list
8. Extending the reduction of parking minimums into other villages
9. review of manufacturing districts (to be filed by ward 1 councilors)
10. Assistance to businesses displaced by development - how to help them?
11. Updates from Municipal Affordable Housing Trust

And here are the actual docket items

1. Retaining wall

COUNCILORS ALBRIGHT, LIPOF, WRIGHT, AND LEARY requesting a discussion with the Planning Department to address concerns relative to the trend of significantly raising grade elevations on lots, using retaining walls, terracing, and other means to add soil to conceal a raised basement, which can lead to new buildings that are significantly taller than nearby existing houses in the area and cause denuding of wooded areas and increase stormwater runoff. This discussion may result in an ordinance change to Chapter 30 section 5.4.2 which would require a special permit or other means of city review of all retaining walls over 4 feet on a site.

2. BERDO

COUNCILORS ALBRIGHT, DANBERG, AND LEARY, on behalf of the Newton Citizens Commission on Energy (NCCE), requesting discussion and an ordinance that would require large property owners (campuses and large commercial buildings) to report energy use and associated greenhouse gas emissions annually to the city of Newton, to be used to encourage reductions in said energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in accordance and support of the goals set forth in the Newton Climate Action Plan.

3. Electrification

COUNCILORS ALBRIGHT, LEARY, DANBERG AND request review and adoption of the electrification ordinance to enable the City to participate in the State's Fossil Fuel-Free Demonstration Project, 225 CMR 24.00, to which Newton was conditionally accepted in December 2023. The purpose of the Fossil Fuel-Free Demonstration Project is to restrict and prohibit new building construction and Major Renovation Projects that are not fossil fuel-free in ten communities in Massachusetts.

4. Update on VCOD activity

COUNCILORS ALBRIGHT AND DANBERG requesting updates on any potential projects brought to the Planning Department under the new Village Center Overlay District. The updates should include indications of interest and actual permits filed; for which villages and under which zoning districts; number of stories and units.

5. Update on climate action plan

THE PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE AND THE ZONING AND PLANNING COMMITTEE requesting an update from the Sustainability Team and appropriate staff on the status of implementing Climate Action Plan measures, expanding municipal energy efficiency and renewable energy programs as follows:

Newton Power Choice participation rates, municipal power purchasing contracts for gas and electricity; Solar Power Purchase Agreement including operational and PV installations under construction, municipal energy consumption (DOER report) Green Communities grant funded efficiency projects to date, Energy Coach/ "4 our Future" program and zoning ordinances both to increase building energy efficiency/renewables in the private sector and foster sustainable development patterns.

6. Amendments to MR districts

COUNCILORS ALBRIGHT, DANBERG, KRINTZMAN, AND LEARY seeking a discussion with the Planning Department to consider ordinance amendments that would revise the metrics in the multi-residence (MR1, MR2 and MR3) zones, to regulate the size of new buildings better, enable a wider range of housing options close to public transit, and better incentivize preservation and renovation of existing housing stock.

7. Inclusionary zoning

DANBERG AND... requesting a discussion with the Planning and Development Department and the Newton Housing Partnership about the City's Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and possible amendments to the ordinance to include 4-6 units, including raising the requirements for the number of affordable units in large developments.

DANBERG AND... requesting discussion and possible amendment to require that developers and property managers provide training for their employees regarding bias toward residents of the IZ units and how to mitigate this bias.

8. Expand reduction of parking minimums

To extend reduction of parking minimums to non-vcod villages – not yet docketed

9. Review manufacturing districts

To be added by Ward 1 councilors and others

10. Assistance to small businesses facing relocation

COUNCILORS ALBRIGHT, KELLEY, AND DANBERG request the Planning Department with the assistance of the Economic Development Commission, research and develop mechanisms including ordinance changes or other means to assist local businesses impacted by development similar to the Somerville work. "The Somerville Small Business Displacement Committee members will work with City staff to research and develop policy and programming recommendations aimed at reducing the rate of displacement of Somerville's small businesses over a year-long period. " The goal of this docket item will be to help small commercial/retail/independent and locally-owned businesses remain in Newton as development occurs.

11. Affordable Housing Trust

COUNCILORS DANBERG AND ALBRIGHT requesting periodic progress reports on establishing the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust