

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

February 10, 2003

A meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee was held on Monday, February 10, 2003 at 7:33 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber

Chairman Brian S. McCarthy presided.

Members of the Committee present: Alderman Scott A. Cote, Vice Chair
Alderman Kevin McAfee
Alderman Timothy B. Nickerson

Members Not in Attendance: Alderman Lori Cardin

Also in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large Frederick Britton

COMMUNICATIONS – None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - RESOLUTIONS – None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – ORDINANCES

O-02-131

Endorser: Alderman Kevin E. Gage

ADDING PUBLIC HEARING AND ABUTTER NOTICE REQUIREMENTS TO
REVIEWS BY THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MOTION BY ALDERMAN MCAFEE TO RECOMMEND INDEFINITE
POSTPONEMENT

ON THE QUESTION

Chair McCarthy

I would actually like to hold it based on the fact that the sponsor is not able to attend this evening.

Alderman McAfee

The merits won't change though.

Chair McCarthy

Agreed. Would you be willing to substitute the motion to hold so we can have discussion?

AMENDED MOTION BY ALDERMAN MCAFEE TO HOLD O-02-131 IN COMMITTEE_

ON THE QUESTION

Chair McCarthy

I guess I'm not keen on just the abutter notice requirement, and the reason is that is a tedious process for the application. The applicant has to pay for the postage. The applicant also has to go get the abutter list by looking through the tax maps or the GIS system. When we do notifications for site and subdivision plans that is done typically by the engineering firm that is well acquainted with how to do that. The home owner comes in to get a building permit to replace a window or build a deck whatever is not going to understand how to do that right off. We will have to work with them. What I actually do think is a good idea is adding the signage requirement the way we did for the other zoning actions. I think it is not very expensive, it is not particularly burdensome, and in my experience since we did that is that they are very readily noticed by the abutters to the property -- I agree with Mr. Houston -- more so than the actual formal notices that go in the mail. I don't know how the rest of the Board feels about it, but I think that the signs would be a good idea and the abutter notices would probably be more burdensome than we want to do.

Alderman Britton

Thank you. I am the Aldermanic representative to the Historic District Commission. I guess I have been there for about 14 months now. I would be interested in hearing Alderman McAfee's reason why you motioned initially to indefinitely postpone -- interested in your reasoning.

Alderman McAfee

It is something that we are not legally required to do. There are 5 people on the HDC?

Alderman Britton

We have expanded it to 7.

Alderman McAfee

Okay so 7 people on the HDC. They all visit the site -- all of them look at it, and it is not like the

historic district zone is very long. It is a mile long and a couple hundred yards wide. I think someone on the HDC can drop off a letter whether the Chairman, ask for comments – you can even make it part of the application process. The city can easily tell them who we need signatures for and the owner can go around and talk to his neighbors. That is what they should be doing anyway when you bring an application before any of the boards. There are always abutters talking to abutters. There is not reason for us to have to spend more money. I know it is \$3,600, but – and if you want to go ahead with it I think it ought to be absorbed in the budget.

Chair McCarthy

I would disagree with that because then you have one kind of application where we're absorbing the postage and reproduction costs and the \$10,000 - \$15,000 a year we spend on site and subdivision plan notification we treat differently.

Alderman McAfee

Let's not spend it.

Alderman Britton

I know in my time on the commission we have had a lot of renovations of decks, the upgrading of siding, the replacement of windows, signage – for example down in Railroad Square the new signage for the Dunkin Donuts where it is not internally lit – it is illegal to have it internally lit – where you have lights that are actually shining on the Dunkin Donuts sign and some signage across the street on the west side of Main Street. There are a couple of businesses there with new signs now that are in good taste. Basically that is the type of issue. I know in the past a portable classroom has come up and so has the gas station awning or whatever we will call it, and the Red Cross was recent. It seems to me like a public hearing and signs would be beneficial. We have talked about signs before the commission. Actually we asked Carter Falk to look into that for us because we wanted to put up signs similar to what the Planning Board puts up. I think that is a very good idea. The public hearing would give more notification than we have now. Now in the Telegraph every Monday they list the meetings. Well I think it is the 4th Monday of the month the Historic District Commission meets only if there is something on the agenda. I think that is the only place in the paper that it is mentioned. There it doesn't mention the issue before the commission whether it is signage or renovation of a home or deck or whatever it is. There does need to be – I think there needs to be improvement of that. Basically I think I would support the public hearing and the signs. That would be a big improvement I think to what we have now. As far as the budget is concerned I guess you can work out whether it will be a fee or part of the budget. For this year Roger mentioned \$1,500 - \$2,000 a year. There is less than ½ a year left. I don't know if we will meet every month so let's say it is \$1,000. If we had to they couldn't find it within the division maybe we could get it out of contingency and make the system work. It is a small amount of money.

Chair McCarthy

The question is not finding the money. The question is that while it is a pass through and the applicant pays the money it is not appropriated in their budget, and there isn't room to appropriate it in a normal year unless we have left room under the cap to make that appropriation.

Alderman Britton

I don't quite understand that because the – when the Community Development Division – it is my understanding when they put their budget together supporting the HDC and the Planning Board and Zoning Board is all an expense that is in there. It is in their budget is my understanding.

Alderman McCarthy

Based on a predicted number of meetings. If you have a – here is the situation you have – you have a year when a lot of plans come in, which we sometimes have, and that line item in the budget gets overspent even though the money is there because the applicant is paying it there is no place in the budget where it is appropriated and the Board can't actually add to that appropriation unless we had done something like we have done in recent years with having done an override when the budget was approved that is significantly larger than the subtotal of the items that are in the budget to begin with.

Alderman Britton

I am not quite sure if I am on board there, but I understand what you are saying. I do think we need to find the best way of funding it. I think both of those a very worthwhile efforts.

Chair McCarthy

I think if you take the abutter notification with the actual certified letters out that problem goes away and what you have is the problem of simply funding the newspaper ads. I don't know whether we currently – I assume the city pays for those because one ad covers the entire Planning Board agenda and we know how many ads we will need in the course of the year. I think we could do that to do the ads in the paper and the signage again there is a pass through fee, but it is a much smaller one.

Alderman Britton

Thank you.

Mike Lowe

I agree with you. I think the green signs are working. I can remember when I first came on the Planning Board and we didn't have the green signs and I got more calls from people what are

you doing, how are you doing this, what is going on? I don't get them anymore because the green sign is there and if somebody wants to they can just walk to the green sign, look at it, it tells them what we are going to do, and they do it. Once in a while I will get some people who will stop me and ask me what this particular green sign is especially when it is on top of a snow bank somewhere and nobody can figure out what it is for. I think you don't need the notification. I don't think you need the abutter notification because you will get it if it is a major change because of the way the Planning Board gets it if it is an actual change and the Zoning Board gets it if it is a major change. You will get the abutter notification anyway. If it is a minor change – somebody putting on a deck or something like that the sign will tell you. That is all you really need.

Alderman McAfee

Just for my piece of mind – if you are going to put the green sign out there before you go here is a list – there is no legal reason why we have to get a signature for notification – we can either do it that way or have it very easily part of the application process.

Chair McCarthy

That is what we would normally do is when you come in and apply take the sign with you.

Alderman McAfee

These are the abutters you need to get signatures from.

Chair McCarthy

Well, yeah – we can do those. Typically the applicant has been required to do the abutter list because that was a – until the GIS system was put in place that was a fairly tedious process to come up with them which required going through the tax maps and actually locating the adjacent parcels and looking up the owners.

Alderman McAfee

They did that always for any special exception. I always did.

Chair McCarthy

Is there any further discussion?

MOTION CARRIED

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NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES – None

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Chair McCarthy

There are two items held in committee one pending a public hearing and one pending receipt of a recommendation from the Planning Board.

HELD IN COMMITTEE

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R-02-147

Endorser: Alderman Brian S. McCarthy

REFUNDING THE IMPACT FEES PAID BY SSJ, LLC FOR HOUSING FOR
THE
ELDERLY AT THE COLONY CLUB OFF CONANT ROAD PURSUANT TO
NRO
SECTION 16-594

O-03-134

Endorser: Alderman-at-Large David W. Deane

AMENDING THE ZONING MAP BY CHANGING A TRACT NORTHEAST OF
AMHERST STREET FROM PARK INDUSTRIAL (PI) TO GENERAL BUSINESS
(GB)

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DISCUSSION

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN NICKERSON TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Alderman Scott A. Cote
Committee Clerk