

# NEEDHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

November 25, 2024

The Needham Planning Board meeting, held virtually using Zoom, was called to order by Natasha Espada, Chairman, on Monday, November 25, 2024, at 3:45 p.m. with Messrs. Crocker, Block, McCullen and Alpert, Planner, Ms. Newman and Assistant Planner, Ms. Clee.

Ms. Espada noted this is an open meeting that is being held in a remote manner per state guidelines. She reviewed the rules of conduct for all meetings. This meeting does not include any public hearings and public comment will not be allowed. If any votes are taken at the meeting the vote will be conducted by roll call.

## **Vote on Large House Review (LHR) Committee appointments.**

Mr. Crocker stated he and Mr. McCullen conducted interviews over 3 days. They reviewed the candidates and came to a consensus. For the Members at Large, their recommendations are Ed Quinlan, Rob Dangle, Chris Cotter and Joe Matthews. They recommend Paul McGovern as the Builder, Oscar Mertz as the Architect and Bill Paulson as the Realtor. He noted there were a lot of qualified candidates and they believe this is the best slate of candidates. Mr. McCullen agreed with Mr. Crocker and the process. He suggested adding Jeanne McKnight as the Planning Board designee as he is not able to commit to the Committee.

Mr. Alpert stated he is only going by the applications presented. He has some concerns based on just looking at the applications. He has no issue between the 2 applicants eliminating Trip Pace as the Builder. He was looking at the application for Matt Hughes. Paul McGovern's application has no information. He noted Matt Hughes was involved in the first go round of the Large House Committee. He seems totally qualified. He would like more information on the decision made. Mr. Crocker noted all applicants were looked at. They reached out to Mr. McGovern. He has a good approach and has done a lot of additions in town. He is a mix of some houses and some additions. He has a good grasp of the construction we are looking at and how additions affect the tear down rate. That is why he was chosen.

Mr. Alpert noted choosing the At Large positions was a tough job. There were a lot of really good applicants. He stated Amanda Berman has quite a resume. This is the fourth time she has applied for something in town, at least the second time for the Planning Board, and been rejected. He is concerned she will not bother anymore. She works in the field and appears to be a really good person to have working on the Committee. Mr. McCullen stated he interviewed all the candidates with Mr. Crocker. He feels qualification are one thing but there is a political component to this entire process. Within the interview process he had the thought there was more than a bias. They need to be vigilant on how the committee is composed. He wanted to make sure it was not a lopsided committee. He was looking more at the political ramification. Mr. Alpert understands that. Mr. Crocker commented that he and Mr. McCullen spoke very carefully about that. They had differing opinions but came to a consensus.

Mr. Alpert stated Ms. Berman was his main concern. The other choices are clearly excellent choices. He looked at Chris Cotter who has only been a resident for 6 months. Mr. McCullen noted how long he has lived here did not factor in. He bought a small house because that was all he could afford. Mr. Crocker stated he threw out a list of criteria such as knowledge base, commitment to availability, problem solving skills, communication skills, what demographic they are representing, what geographic place of town they are representing, predisposition or bias, have they applied or served on a committee before and how long they have lived here. He felt they should have a good mix of lengths living in town. Mr. Alpert was glad Mr. McCullen found a way to get Ms. McKnight on this committee.

Mr. Crocker commented he will keep Mr. McCullen in the loop. Ms. Espada stated he could also be a resource. She noted there is only one woman on the committee and not a lot of race or ethnicity. Mr. Crocker stated they talked about what could be done for Ms. Berman. He felt she may be good for the Tree Committee. Mr. Block would like to look at the end

of the process first so the committee can stand up having legitimacy. Looking at the names he thinks there are a lot of housing advocates. He feels this is really a function of several things such as dimensional regulations – what is their understanding of the impacts of dimensional regulations, what dimensional regulations are significant and insignificant and how they established the difference. Also, recognizing the goal. Affordable housing is the wrong goal for this. He is glad Mr. Crocker and Mr. McCullen concurred that none of these candidates look at this as an affordable issue.

Mr. Crocker noted they looked at metrics, demographics and available housing stock in town. Ms. Espada stated the members are talking about the mission of the committee. The charge today is to appoint the group. She is comfortable with the recommendations.

Mr. Block had to leave the meeting.

Mr. Alpert is comfortable with the selections. He would have substituted Ms. Berman for Mr. Cotter. He stated Jeff Heller would also have added a lot. He will vote for the slate. He feels it is well represented overall. Mr. McCullen noted it was a tough decision. Ms. Espada would like to keep the names of the others. They were very strong candidates and may be helpful in other areas. There are a lot of things coming up.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Mr. Crocker, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: for this Board to appoint Chris Cotter, Rob Dangle, Joe Matthews and Ed Quinlan as the At Large members of the Large House Review Committee and that this Board appoint Bill Paulson as the Realtor designee and that this Board appoint Oscar Mertz as the Architect designee and that this Board appoint Paul McGovern as the builder designee.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Alpert, and seconded by Ms. Espada, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to thank Mr. McCullen for volunteering to be on the committee but seeing as he is resigning from the committee, he moves Jeanne McKnight be appointed to be the second member/Planning Board designee.

### **Report from Planning Director and Board members**

Ms. Newman noted there are no updates. The Select Board is meeting tonight.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Crocker, and seconded by Mr. McCullen, it was by a vote of the four members present unanimously:

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Donna J. Kalinowski, Notetaker

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Artie Crocker, Vice-Chairman and Clerk