



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
PLANNING BOARD OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER**

Wednesday, August 23, 2023

Remote only,

with remote participation options available via WebEx online at
<https://cow.webex.com/meet/planningboardwebex> and
call-in number 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1601714991).

Board Members Present: Albert LaValley, Chair (*Participated Remotely*)
Edward Moynihan, Vice Chair (*Participated Remotely*)
Conor McCormack (*Participated Remotely*)
Adrian Angus (*Participated Remotely*)
Brandon King (*Participated Remotely*)
Adrian Angus (*Participated Remotely*)

Board Members Absent:

Staff Present: Michelle Smith, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS) (*Participated Remotely*)
Pamela Harding, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS) (*Participated Remotely*)
Stephen Rolle, Department of Transportation and Mobility (*Participated Remotely*)

Utile (Now/Next Consultant) Tim Love and Zoe Mueller (*Participated Remotely*)

Call to Order

Board Chair Albert LaValley called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

Michele Smith did a roll call vote to confirm all Board members were present. Ms. Smith also gave a brief description of the steps the City and Utile (consultant) had taken over the year they have been drafting the Now Next Plan and stated the intent of the meeting is to give the Planning Board an update on the status of the draft plan.

Zoe Mueller and Time Love introduced themselves to the Board. Ms. Muller stated they will give an overview of public engagement, the draft plan and some of the proposed implementation.

Ms. Mueller described the project timeline and described the different phases of the planning process, including public surveys, engagement and drafting recommendations. She stated lots of similar meetings have been conducted to update stakeholders. Ms. Mueller stated the Mobility Action Plan is also in progress and has a lot of ties to this project.

Ms. Mueller described the history and results of the public outreach sessions both in-person and virtual meetings and surveys completed. She stated an exhibit at the Worcester Public Library that was up for one month had doubled the level of public engagement.

Ms. Mueller described the vision statement and guiding principles that were derived from public comments. She stated they asked residents to describe what they love about Worcester Now and what they want to see for Worcester Next and that's how they derived the guiding principles and vision statement.

Ms. Mueller also stated they have to meet certain requirements to be considered a master plan such as including Housing, Transportation and Mobility, Recreation Open Space and Environment, Economic Opportunity Culture and Creativity and Services and Facilities as topics within the plan. She stated big headlines that came out from public comment was a framework for growth, equitable investment in neighborhoods, and a more connected city for all.

Ms. Mueller described growth frameworks; **Transformative Growth Areas** which hold high potential for walkability and transportation with higher density housing; **Priority Growth Areas** with mixed use an infill development can occur; **Managed Growth Areas**, areas within ¼ mile walk of existing and potential future transit corridors that can support moderate housing density; and **Five Broad Land Uses** including Mixed Use, Commercial, Life Science, Artisan, and Industrial.

Ms. Mueller described that while these five growth frameworks and described top priority goals; Departmental Implementation Capacity Advocacy; Pre-Overhaul Zoning Changes including a decrease in parking requirements, legalize Additional Dwelling Units (ADU), and reforming requirements to protect existing tree canopy; Zoning Ordinance Overhaul; Housing Production Plan; and the Mobility Action Plan which is already underway.

Ms. Mueller described the recommendation to reduce parking requirements to one space per unit and legalizing ADUs city-wide as top priorities. She stated they do not recommend an owner occupied requirement for ADUs since it can create difficulties for financing and production of needed housing. Mr. Love expanded on the need for flexibility with ADUs to make them a viable option for homeowners and the financial burden it can cause to a homeowner. Ms. Mueller described recommended parking requirements for ADUs and suggested dimensional requirements.

Mr. LaValley asked about the setback recommended (15FT) for ADUs from the main structure and if that distance would be viable for some denser lots. Mr. Love stated they had discussed this and are open to reducing the requirement. Ms. Mueller stated that an attached ADU can be an alternative if that distance is not available. Mr. LaValley stated he prefers allowing a shorter setback and is not in favor of forcing attached ADUs.

Pamela Harding asked about the reasoning behind limiting the square footage of ADUs. Mr. Love stated this was recommended to limit the size of a secondary building as not to overwhelm the main structure, but they are open to changing the size requirements. Ms. Mueller stated that this is the by-right suggestion, but residents would still be able to utilize special permit or variance route in certain situations.

Ms. Mueller discussed the approach to monitoring reporting and future prioritization. She stated the plan is intended to operate as a living document and should move forward as progress is made and staff should be reporting to the Planning Board on implementation and progress annually to support ongoing awareness and accountability.

Mr. Moynihan questioned some of the by right uses, cited the Amazon development and Saint-Gobain redevelopment as examples and asked how to drive the vision and see it through to prevent unwanted placement of incompatible land uses.

Mr. Love state the redesign of the zoning code can address many of the issues raised. He stated a form-based code may be slightly more constraining but can help to scale the project and are place properly on the site. Mr. Love stated he thinks a good code can result in good projects that are sited properly. He stated by-right paths may be designated by property size and require a lengthy process for larger projects. Mr. Moynihan stated they want to treat applicants fairly and believes a zoning overhaul will help current issues. Mr. Rolle stated he thinks the use categories are too broad and defining the use codes will aid in better align the proposed uses that are allowed by right. Ms. Mueller agreed and stated this can fast-track process that allowed and will lead to better outcomes that align with goals of this project. Ms. Smith stated a zoning overhaul is an important goal and will be a multiyear process and staff will be needed to implement the project management and costs must be allocated to begin the project.

Ms. Mueller described some of the disconnect between some of the Planning processes in regard to transportation and housing that had occurred in the past and how this plan seeks to connect those themes. Mr. Rolle introduced the Mobility Action Plan that had begun in the previous spring. He stated they were able to use a lot of the public feedback received from the Now Next Plan outreach. He stated they have conducted public outreach and are in the process of drafting the plan and are continuing to conduct outreach.

Ms. Mueller stated they have a number of additional update meetings to bring other groups up to speed on the plan status and laid out the final steps including final adoption. Mr. Moynihan thanked the team for their efforts. Ms. Smith thanked the Board for their time.

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:42 p.m.