

Town of Lexington
Lexington Center Committee

Minutes for the meeting of December 14th, 2023 held at 8:30 am in Estabrook Hall, Cary Hall Building, Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington, Massachusetts in person and remotely.

Members present: Eric Ballard, Upasna Chhabra, Katherine Huang, Frederic Johnson, Jeffery Lyons, Pamela Lyons, Innessa Manning, Jerold Michelson (Chair), Pamela Shadley

Liaisons: Doug Lucente, Select Board, Charles Hornig, Planning Board, Sandra Shaw, Council on Aging, Sandhya Iyer, Economic Development Director, Lorraine Welch, Economic Development Coordinator, Captain Chris Barry, Lexington Police Department

Others: Heather Hartshorn, Chamber of Commerce, Sharon Spaulding, 1666 Mass Ave, Abby McCabe, Town Planner

We began with the DPW update: We were asked to let Dave Pinsonneault know if there are any Center maintenance and repair issues.

John Livsey noted that the Battle Green Streetscape is in its final cleanup mode, the night lighting is operational and will be connected with the Center master lighting soon (so the off/on will follow natural day and night.) Over at Emery Park, the brick and bus shelter foundation is in – it will take two days to install the shelter, weather permitting. Obviously the foundation going in for the bus shelter is unrelated to the two trees coming down. Belfrey related landscaping will go in next Spring. Capt. Barry told us that the LPD should be moving into the new police station next June. John then gave an overview of the 1666 and Love at First Bite bus stop options. It looks like there will be room for a bench or benches in the LAFB location and perhaps other options for street amenities. The estimated cost is \$10 to 20K which is within DPW's existing budget. This could go in during the 2024 construction season using the Battle Green Streetscape contractor. DPW has the brick already. January 22, 2024 is the tentative date before the Select Board.

The Center Committee voted Nine to Zero to recommend to the Select Board that the bus stop currently located in front of Conte Bikes be relocated to 1690-1696 Mass Avenue (based on John Livsey's presentation of having a bumpout design at this stop.)

Sandhya Iyer gave the economic development update: Nothing new on the vacancies at Sanyo, Bulpan and Signature Stationers spaces. These are the largest spaces in the Center. No update on Karma. Jeff noted that the Bulpan space has challenges – no windows, not accessible. It takes about 6 to 9 months to rent a space. Sandhya noted that the Town put a lot of effort into the Depot Square pop-ups in 2022. Further popups are not being considered. Basically, the Center customer base wants more restaurants. Jerry Michelson asked “What to do about long-term vacancies.” Innessa asked about incentives or fines. There was a discussion at the SB recently about tax breaks for properties under \$1 million. There are very few properties in town that could take advantage of this tax break. Doug Lucente noted that Lexington could ask the state for special legislation. The Center workshop results will be written up and go to the Select Board as a next step.

Charles Hornig and Abby McCabe discussed the direction the Planning Board is going with Town Meeting articles. A major overhaul of signage is contemplated due to recent legal decisions. We cannot regulate the content of signs. Move away from special permit to by right. Residential and business will be regulated the same way across town. Businesses can put sign up on any façade. All sign will be regulated by area. Projecting (blade) signs and awning signs will be by right. Jeff and (we hope) Dick Brown will stay on this issue through the Planning Board process in anticipation of supporting these articles at Town Meeting.

Abby told us that Planning will update the table of uses with regard to eating and drinking, combining restaurants and fast food into a single category. We want to permit small breweries and allow food uses into other districts, moving away from segregation of food uses. Sandhya noted that zoning is one piece but the Select Board regulates liquor licenses. There is no alcohol without food right now. Jerry suggested discussing how loosening up on alcohol regulations will affect the Center. Capt. Barry noted that ABC regulations would have to be followed and people will need proper training. There consensus was that it would be okay to

have alcohol without food service. Pamela Lyons will attend the Select Board meeting on the 18th and report back on the zoning articles.

Andy Friedlich told us about his citizen's petition for Town Meeting. We have new signs in the Center indicating that riding scooters and skateboards is prohibited. This is inconsistent with Chapter 100, Section D(1) of our Town code. Andy asked us if we would sign his petition which would amend the code to make it consistent with the new signs. There was general agreement with this.

The Center Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes from our November 9th, 2023 meeting.