

Town of Lexington
Lexington Center Committee

Draft minutes for the 9 am meeting of September 3, 2020.

Center Committee Members present: Michael Boudett, Frederic Johnson, Howard Levin, Pamela Lyons, Innessa Manning, Jerold Michelson (Chair), Pamela Shadley

Liaisons: Bob Creech, Planning Board, Frank Smith, Capital Expenditures Committee, Sandhya Iyer, Economic Development Director, Casey Hagerty, Economic Development Coordinator, Joe Pato (informally) Select Board, Dave Pinsonneault, Department of Public Works

Guests: Jim Convisor and Lynne Cohen of Convisor Property Group

The September 3, 2020 meeting of the Lexington Center Committee was held remotely pursuant to Governor Baker's executive order of March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of G.L. c. 30A, section 20.

Dave Pinsonneault gave the DPW update: Parking lot repaving (for the three center lots) is targeted for FY '22 for design funds and FY '23 for the improvements. There are engineering and drainage issues so parking lots cannot be repaved (on the fly) during the pandemic while demand is low. Cary Hall repaving is on hold until the Police Station design funds are sorted out. This should come up next year along with the other lots. There will be a more in depth Streetscape update at the October 8 meeting. Fred inquired at to Pamela Shadley's CVS lot plans (Pam designed and gave professional grade plans, pro bono, for the CVS lot to DPW some time ago.) Dave assured us that Pam's plans, along with others, would be

considered. As to Pam's inquiry regarding the dead and dying trees in the Center, Dave told us that there's been some replanting of trees and that the trees are being checked and pruned regularly.

Bob Creech discussed Article 6, restricting automatic teller machines in the Center, coming up at Special Town Meeting in the fall. (Need link from Casey here to materials.) Mike described Article 6 as codifying the outcome reached by the ZBA denying JPMorgan Chase an ATM in the space at the corner of Mass Ave and Waltham Street. The ZBA captured the intent but the Code needs some fine tuning. It's important to note that ATM's are still allowed as an accessory use, and are allowed inside stores. Howard noted that the intent is to make clear that ATMs are not be allowed as a sole use inside a storefront. This use would need a special permit. This applies only to Center storefronts.

The Lexington Center Committee voted seven to zero to support Article 12.

Jim Convisor and Lynne Cohen-Friedman of Convisor Property Group shared their thoughts as to the retail environment in Lexington Center. Convisor is a boutique commercial real estate firm primarily representing landlords in retail leasing within 128/95.

(Joe Pato joined the meeting at this point.) Convisor feels it is challenging to lease in Lexington Center. Revolve is gone and three more businesses will be gone soon. Before Covid food and fitness were the dominant categories in Lexington. Right now, there is no emerging retail use. Mike asked "what can we do to make leasing easier?" Jim indicated that speed was of the essence and Lexington needs to be proactive. The rent/taxes/mortgage ecosystem is broken. Howard gave a brief recap of the bank/retail restrictions in the Center and indicated the committee's interest in helping with special permits and variances. Unfortunately a big chunk of the market (food and fitness) is gone. Jim pointed out that Lexington is like a suburb of Burlington. Pamela Lyons noted that retail clothing is

tough because our demographic weighted toward government and academic “dresses badly” and is not a fashion seeking demographic.

Casey Hagerty alerted us to the opening of Cake Niche (in the old Dunkin location) and reminded us of the retail strategy report that came out in December. Jim noted the moving of digitally native brands, like Bonobos, are moving to brick and mortar stores. Covid will slow, but not stop this progression. Paul Mammola and another hair salon are moving some services outside. Mario’s has expanded outside.

Innessa told us about a program for LHS artists to beautify the street barriers without reducing safety.

The Parklett will be taken down the first week in November. The closing for the sale of the Historical Society land to the Town for the bikenode is September 10. An RFP will be issued. The inside of the Visitor Center will open next week. Planning staff is working on the signage for the 20 mph speed zone in the Center.