REGULAR MEETING **BRIDGEWATER PLANNING BOARD** **January 10, 2024**

The regular meeting of the Planning Board convened at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Driscoll, Mr. Ajemian, Mr. MacDonald, Ms. Rojas, Mr. Geller

ASSOCIATES PRESENT: Mr. Haley, Ms. Spagone

CED committee: Ms. Robinson, Mr. Chase, Mr. McKinnon

STAFF PRESENT: Michael Dutton, Town Manager, Bob Rulli, CED Director, Sristhi Jain, Assistant Planner

Proposed Zoning Amendment Ordinance D-FY24-004: Central Business District and Form Based Code

Director Bob Rulli provided an overview of the form-based code and its relevance in bridging vision with reality, emphasizing its alignment with MBTA legislation. The proposal involves relocating the current train station to the center of the Spring Street lot, strategically positioning it near the least utilized areas. Additionally, the draft of the form-based code is currently being circulated among associated members for their input. Furthermore, the consultancy team responsible for drafting the form-based code was introduced during the meeting.

Ms. Robinson, as the chair of the CED committee, requested Director Rulli to elucidate the fundamental significance of form-based code and its relationship with MBTA legislation, as well as to outline the components of mixed-income housing. Member Chase, CED committee, primarily raised inquiries regarding the feasibility of relocating the train station.

Director Bob Rulli elaborated on the feasibility of relocating the train station and stressed the importance of the form-based code for the town, especially concerning mixed-income housing. Additionally, mentioned the incorporation of energy efficiency codes into new constructions. Furthermore, highlighted the members of the technical review committee responsible for assessing the form-based code. He noted that the code includes a checklist for the building envelope or façade, outlining what is deemed acceptable and what is not.

Member Ajemian inquired about the approval process for the form-based code, while Chairman Driscoll questioned the compliance of the Central Business District (CBD) overlay map with state regulations. Furthermore, Chairman Driscoll raised additional technical queries, including concerns about refining language in CBD-S and CBD-R, reducing the proposed height of buildings from six stories, and adjusting the percentage of affordable units over certain thresholds.

Director Bob Rulli proceeded to address follow-up questions from the board members. Member Macdonald questioned the penalty for non-compliance with the form-based code and waivers request queries. Member Chase, CED committee, clarified the compliance with mandate MBTA legislation adoption.

Director Bob Rulli underscored the potential ramifications for the town of Bridgewater if the proposal fails to garner approval. Member Spagone emphasized the significant opportunity this presents to shape downtown into a more vibrant place to live through the policy and form-based code.

The meeting opened to public comments:

Gary Marrese, North Street, commented over the fear of the six stories building height.

Carlton Hunt, Austin Street, made a comment regarding the energy efficiency and sustainability aspects of the new proposed building under the form-based code. He also advocated for the adoption of specialized energy codes and suggested that the draft of the checklist should be made available to the public. Additionally, he recommended that the historic commission be included in the form-based code process.

Mark P, Church Street, questioned the MBTA train station.

Ed Ivaldi questioned the authority of citizens in approving the project.

Bob Cormier of Grange Park acknowledged the concept of Bridgewater evolving into a high-end historic town.

Motion to close the public hearing made by Member Ajemian and seconded by Member Geller

Roll call: Member Rojas – Yes
Member Ajemian - yes
Member Geller – yes
Member Driscoll – Yes
Member MacDonald – No

Motion to continue January 17, 2024, made by Member MacDonald and seconded by Member Ajemian

Roll call: Member Rojas – Yes
Member Ajemian - yes
Member Geller – yes
Member Driscoll – Yes
Member MacDonald – Yes

<u>Adjournment</u>: **The Motion to adjourn was made by Member Ajemian, second by Member MacDonald, and it was unanimously voted.**