

**From:** lisa monahan lisa@lisamonahan.com   
**Subject:** PLEASE DIST. THIS VERSION OF MEMO: Engine 6 Memo to ZAP Re: Going Forward Plan Per December 14, 2020 Meeting



**Date:** December 18, 2020 at 10:33 PM

**To:** Councilor Crossley dcrossley@newtonma.gov, Councilor Danberg vdanberg@newtonma.gov, Councilor Albright salbright@newtonma.gov, Councilor Leary aleary@newtonma.gov, Councilor Wright pwright@newtonma.gov, Councilor Krintzman jkrintzman@newtonma.gov, Councilor Baker lbaker@newtonma.gov, Councilor Ryan hryan@newtonma.gov

**Cc:** Mayor Fuller rf Fuller@newtonma.gov, Barney Heath bheath@newtonma.gov, Jennifer Caira jcaira@newtonma.gov, Zachary Lemel zlemel@newtonma.gov, Nevena Povic-Wengler npilipovicwengler@newtonma.gov, Cat Kemmet ckemmett@newtonma.gov, David A. Olson dolson@newtonma.gov, Kathy Pillsbury kathy.pillsbury@gmail.com, Alice Ingerson usablehistory@gmail.com, Doris Sweet dasweet3@gmail.com, Kathleen Hobson khobson65@gmail.com, Jay Walter entasis@rcn.com, Fran Godine godine@comcast.net, Lynn Weissberg lweissberg@jsmtlegal.com, Nancy Zollers dr.nancy.zollers@gmail.com



**Date:** December 18, 2020

**Subject:** **Going Forward Plan, December 14, 2020**

**To:** **Zoning and Planning Committee:** Councilor Crossley (Chair), Councilor Danberg (Vice Chair), Susan Albright (Council President), Alison Leary, Pam Wright, Josh Krintzman, Lisle Baker, Holly Ryan

**Planning Board Members:** Peter Doeringer (Chair), Sonia Parisca (Vice Chair), Kelley Brown, Chris Steele, Jennifer Molinsky, Kevin McCormick, James Robertson

**From:** **Engine 6 Zoning Redesign Working Group:** Lisa Monahan, Kathy Pillsbury, Alice Ingerson, Doris Ann Sweet, Jay Walter, Kathleen Hobson,

**Engine 6 Leadership Team:** Fran Godine, Kathleen Hobson, Doris Ann Sweet, Lynn Weissberg, Nancy Zollers

**Copy:** **Mayor Fuller, Planning Dept. Zoning Redesign Team:** Barney Heath, Jennifer Caira, Zachary Lemel, Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, Cat Kemmett, and City Clerk, David Olson

**We applaud your recommendations at the December 14, ZAP meeting regarding next steps for the Zoning Redesign project:**

- **We wholeheartedly agree that more time is needed to undertake the Zoning Redesign effort to conduct proper analysis, review, outreach, and the consensus building required to put a complete redraft of zoning ordinance before the City Council for a vote in 2022 or 2023.** Through the processes undertaken so far, we have come to understand better the deep complexity of the work involved.
- **We agree that the next conversation we should be having in the Zoning Redesign Schedule is about the abundant opportunities associated with Newton's mixed-use**

**village centers, transit hubs, commercial corridors, and the adjacent residential areas, namely the N, R4 Districts.** These districts offer the best opportunities for new moderately priced housing, climate change improvements, support for local businesses, and increased racial and income diversity within Newton. We hope the Planning Dept. and ZAP will talk with the community about the fundamentals for these mixed-use areas in much the same way that the Planning Dept.'s recent community outreach covered the basics of Zoning Redesign, to help residents understand the tremendous potential within these areas throughout the city.

- **We like the idea of organizing the discussion around issues rather than by zoning-ordinance article.** This should allow for a broader exploration of the ideas, make it easier for everyone to follow along, participate and avoid losing sight of the community priorities and goals. There are many great topics related to Village Centers including:
  - Village Center revitalization through sustainable growth
  - Mixed-use housing development strategies for both subsidized and unsubsidized, but still relatively affordable homes
  - Walkable Villages concepts, such as the “fifteen-minute neighborhood”
- **We are very glad that you are planning more Community Engagement programs on a variety of topics.** The December Community Outreach events were terrific. We think that this sort of programming is critical to bringing about common understanding citywide. We look forward to more from the Planning Department and perhaps from other City departments that are brought in to cooperate and coordinate on this effort.
- **Your pledge to hire experts where in-house and/or volunteer, community expertise is not available to aid the project is welcome.** One of the wonderful things about Newton is that it is far from uniform, with 13 villages, a subway line, a commuter rail line, bus lines, mixed-use development districts and residential districts, some areas within walking distance of these amenities and some that are more auto-dependent. There will be times when outside expertise will save the City time and money in investigating solutions to topics that are being discussed in the project. Overall, this new approach will allow for a more organized and understandable way to navigate through a conversation about updating a 70-year old, complex, and important document.

Engine 6 will continue to advocate for Zoning Redesign to address Newton's two biggest challenges – the housing shortage and climate change. We see our goals are entirely compatible with the goals that ZAP unanimously voted on in late April 2020:

1. Housing:

A zoning code more responsive to a demand for housing that serves a range of incomes Promote sustainable community development patterns

2. Sustainability:

Environmental stewardship, fiscal strength, and meeting community needs

3. Context:

Preserve and protect what we like in our neighborhoods.  
Encourage new development to fit in the context of our neighborhoods and villages

We appreciate the commitments the Mayor, ZAP, and the Planning Department have made to critical issues in Zoning Redesign. The task of creating a new zoning code that addresses the tremendous challenges we currently face is not small. Engine 6's focus on this unique and critical opportunity is to shape a more equitable, a safer, and more welcoming future for Newton residents; current and future. We look forward to continuing to work with you toward these goals.