

**City of Beverly
City Council Regular Meeting
Public Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 4, 2021, 7pm**

This meeting was conducted under the ‘Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, §20’, signed on March 12, 2020. This remote meeting was held over Google Meet and live streamed by BevCam. Public access information for the hearings was provided on the meeting agenda.

Paul Guanci, City Council President, called the meeting to order at 7:02pm over Google Meet. City Clerk, Lisa Kent, took the attendance by roll call.

Members Present: Stacy Ames, Dominic Copeland, Kathleen Feldman, Timothy Flaherty (joined meeting at 7:05pm), Julie Flowers, Scott Houseman, Estelle Rand, Todd Rotondo, Paul Guanci

Members Absent: None

Houseman led the councilors in the pledge of allegiance.

Guanci made a statement about the meeting being recorded by the City of Beverly and streamed by BevCam on channel 99 and BevCam’s YouTube channel. He confirmed that all members present could hear him and noted the remote meeting format and process due to Covid-19.

Guanci read Rule 22 of the Beverly City Council. He introduced a vote to allow items to be taken out of committee and voted on the floor. Kent took a roll call vote and the motion carried (9-0). Guanci read the guidelines for public hearings.

Old Business

Order #279-A Comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Beverly

Darlene Wynne, Planning Director, presented on the master plan process and highlighted some of the themes and principles of the master plan.

Cahill highlighted the community engagement during the process, the need for housing and economic investment, and the idea of redeveloping existing parcels in order to protect existing green space.

Rand asked about the map, noting that places in green for priority preservation areas are not shoreline and asked why those areas are not included for preservation.

Wynne noted that the map is not the be all and end all. There are other restrictions where coastline will be reserved. She stated she does not anticipate or predict any redevelopment on any of the beaches, and there are recommendations in the plan to increase shoreline public access.

Rand noted Ward 2 has a lot of overlay districts in it already, and she asked about the opportunity zones for growth in the master plan and how those may play out and how they relate to the overlay districts. Rand noted she was happy to see that targeted growth areas are spread across the City.

Cahill noted the two largest target growth areas are Cherry Hill Industrial Park and the Dunham and Otis Roads area along Brimbal Ave, including Sohier and Tozer. Those are the two commercial industrial sectors along the highway. The others are mixed-use areas around transit,

some around the Depot, Enon Street in North Beverly, and there are some neighborhood development opportunities around the other train stations.

Wynne noted the difference between the federal term for “opportunity zone” as part of an existing program having to do with census blocks and the master plan’s target growth areas.

Copeland asked about the values of the program versus the implementation, and as it goes along if there is going to be a way to check back in. For example, with affordable housing, it might be affordable for a year, but then things change. He asked if we are going to be able to look back into these things.

Wynne stated there are a variety of different strategies in this plan; some of them can be implemented from an administration or staff-level, and many of them are things that will require City Council review and approval- zoning changes, funding allocations, and things like that. This plan is really a road map to start from, and there will be opportunities for city councilors and community members to check in as we develop those strategies. This has to be a fluid document.

Feldman thanked Ms. Wynne and Mayor Cahill for the work put into this. She talked about the interesting opportunity she had to participate in the master plan process as a resident before she started on the Council. She wanted to reinforce the idea that the Council will continue to have a part of this process and a say in it on behalf of constituents.

Flowers echoed the thanks for the work that has gone into this and the public process. She noted the focus on transit-oriented development and being a multimodal community and asked how we as a City imagined what the impact on our plan may be due to current MBTA cutback and if we envision the way that as a City we may offer supplemental public transit, probably not to Boston, but around our community.

Cahill said there’s a little bit to the question. He noted the time he served on MBTA’s Rail Vision Advisory Committee and the group unanimously recommended a full electrification and station rebuild of the whole system, which would be a 20-25 year project. He stated that it’s a real critical piece of the region remaining economically vibrant and relevant, and there’s the need to address transportation holistically. When looking at a transit system, it’s really important that people are able to walk to more, not all, of their needs and commuting for their education, healthcare, and work.

Flowers asked if we as a City imagine thinking creatively about what kind of supplemental public transportation we want to offer. If things are slowed down with the MBTA, how could we supplement some of that? She mentioned bike share programs and that Salem has their own ride share program now.

Cahill stated there was talk about a bike share pre-Covid. The North Shore region went in on an RFP for a bike share; we got the bids back and then Covid hit. Nobody wanted to do a bike share unless they could do a scooter share, and nobody was willing to respond on bikes unless they were electric-boosted bikes. We got a grant to do a study of the mobility hub at Beverly Depot where we would put resources together from there- walking routes, our bus route coming through town, bike share, scooter share, Zipcar availability- a range of things right near the Depot. It’s going to come back around; a lot of things are on pause. Some things might come after some of the transit improvements as opposed to before. For example, there is going to come a day when it will work financially to run a shuttle bus from North Shore Community College in

Danvers through downtown Danvers right into downtown Beverly. These are things we have to figure out, how to finance them, subsidize them, and make them work. The question is how much can we do in advance of commuter rail transit improvements and how much will follow on.

Houseman echoed thanks for all the work that has gone into this nearly two year long process. He has not finished going through the plan and won't be ready to take a vote one way or another tonight and hopes the Council can continue the discussion at their next meeting. He observed that the plan makes reference to the fact that growth in the City is necessary because it provides revenue that the City needs to pay for high quality schools and services. He said at times he would say the City is addicted to new growth structurally, fiscally, in order to be able to provide those kinds of services that people expect from us and he feels somewhat conflicted about it. He understands the pressing need for that revenue, but given his experience with development in the City, there can be a lot of sensitivity around development issues. There is a tension around development and the opportunity for it and the resistance that sometimes comes from change. He said one of the things he is really focusing on in a deep dive into the master plan is trying to weigh the tension between those two things. He asked what is envisioned regarding priority growth areas along the Cabot Street corridor and what that means in terms of retaining the character that is important to most Beverly residents about the way Cabot Street is presently.

Cahill stated the design guidelines are going to undergo significant updating.

Wynne noted priority growth areas don't always mean changes in density that are significant. There are ways to grow and redevelop that may maintain a similar scale, structure, look and feel. One of the strategies for the downtown zoning in particular is to distinguish better between Cabot Street and Rantoul Street- what the parameters should be of what those streets look like when future development is proposed. Maybe Cabot Street should not have the same height limits that Rantoul Street does. She recommended looking at the way the CC zoning district is worded and simplifying that in a way that can better get what we want, because the best zoning tells somebody exactly what we want to see. The design and the look and feel for buildings is very important in that nature. There are opportunities for commercial and mixed use growth along both Rantoul Street and Cabot Street corridors, but they might look very different, and it's important to calibrate that correctly for us.

Cahill noted that when looking at Cabot Street, the height zoning there currently is 55 feet, but you wouldn't think so based on what you see. There are a couple of parcels to look at together. One is the Dollar Store building, and the Archdiocese is looking at what to do next with St. Mary's School and Convent. There's work to be done together on how we proceed there.

Houseman noted that the development behind the old Casa de Moda building is very sort of design-specific that helps retain the character of Cabot Street and this new growth. No matter how well written the zoning ordinance or master plan is, there will be a lot of room for interpretation as you go along. It's important to make sure that we are all comfortable not only with the general scope of the master plan but also some of the more detailed aspects of what's there.

Flaherty thanked the mayor and Darlene Wynne for the work put into this. He said he wished the Council was more involved as a city body in the process of making the master plan. He noted the difference between the Walgreens, which would fit in any state and doesn't fit the character of

the community, and CVS who worked with the City when it was built and looks like it fits in Beverly. He said that we need to strengthen the design review guidelines so in twenty years you can look back and say the City fits the character of the community. We're not going to be here forever; the document is going to be a blueprint.

Rotondo thanked Mrs. Wynne and the mayor for visiting Apple Village soon after he was elected. He thanked them for their work on the master plan and for including some of the neighborhoods that will be affected by the mobility part of this document.

Ames thanked them for the long hours put towards this project. She asked about the long term fiscal picture that this plan will bring, speaking to Councilor Houseman's comment in terms of revenue generations and how this plan, in terms of the development and public services that will be required, will impact the City budget next year, in 10 years, and so on.

Cahill stated that the areas that have been zoned historically as commercial/industrial are largely kept in that way. They hope to bring forward a plan on the Bass River and are looking to provide some redevelopment opportunities. One of the priorities is to try to facilitate investment in different sectors of the economy so to not be overly dependent on one sector; there is a pretty good cross section already. In one of the studies that was done during the process, they found that more people commute into Beverly on a daily basis than commute out, which spoke in a positive way to the City's economic health and vibrancy. Looking ahead, the balance in what is put together on the economic development front lends itself to that health continuing.

Wynne noted in terms of looking at development, they wanted to discourage development on open and untouched areas both for preservation and because those areas aren't already served by city infrastructure services like water, sewer and electricity. There are studies that show that transit-oriented development has a significantly lower cost to a city, so it's a fiscally sound investment in terms of that aspect. Beverly is a Housing Choice community, which is a program through the Governor's Office, and one of the grants Beverly had the opportunity to receive was to create a fiscal impact model tool. They recently got the final product, which is a proprietary database that was built. That will be a tool to be able to basically input development projects into and figure out on a case by case basis what the impact to City services is. It's something that will be implemented along with the master plan.

Ames stated that blue jobs, blue companies are really important to the City's future. She expressed her concern with the plight of those neighborhoods between Cabot and Rantoul and the ability to maintain the character in those neighborhoods, and even over by Gloucester Crossing, without too much gentrification and the ability to keep many of those neighborhoods at a price point that is more working class and where you can have a hopefully more diverse group of people living there. She pointed out that Salem just started a program to give some tax relief to seniors who have been in their homes for ten years, and stated she would love to create something like that here. Homeowners are saying that taxes are pricing them out of the City. She asked what would be the public process for zoning changes, for really making sure they are zoning changes that will be productive for the people who live in those neighborhoods now and for the City as a whole, because that is something that councilors and the people living the neighborhoods would really like to have a solid say in.

Cahill said they can discuss the opportunities for seniors. About zoning changes, any zoning change has got to be voted by the Council or it doesn't become effective. There's a joint public

hearing, Planning Board will consider and make a recommendation, but even before that they would anticipate a community conversation. He stated they would look for conversations and input ahead of time so the products coming to the Council are even further vetted.

Rand noted that her goal is to use this document as a guide to talking to constituents and to prepare constituents to be ready to participate in the public processes.

Feldman asked how this can be shared effectively.

Wynne noted it is on the website as of today.

Guanci thanked those that worked on the project.

Cahill thanked Aaron who was the Planning Director before Mrs. Wynne, and they were very lucky that she was here to continue the work.

Houseman said he did not want to take a vote this evening.

Copeland echoed some of the sentiments of Councilor Houseman and said he would like to have another meeting to come back with questions.

Guanci said his intention was to hold it until the next meeting on January 19th.

Rotondo moved to hold. Houseman seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0).

Acceptance of Minutes of Previous Meetings: December 17, 2020

Houseman moved to approve. Flowers seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0).

Communications from His Honor the Mayor

Order # 284-Grant- \$1,400 from Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) for Parks and Recreation staff certification training in 2021

Catherine Barrett, Director of Grants, spoke on the grant stating that it was delayed from last year because the training was cancelled due to Covid.

Houseman moved to approve. Flowers seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0).

Order #285-Appointment- Ms. Chelsea Zakas as Planning Department representative on the Design Review Board

Referred to Committee on Legal Affairs.

Order #286-Reappointments- Mary Behrle, 21 Cobblers Lane; Kevin O'Reilly, 6 Mason Street; Margaret Altman, 114 Water Street; Myron Shirer-Suter, 12 Munroe Street; Marshall Handly, 6 Clark Avenue; and Ivy Mahan, 38 Crescent Avenue as Trustees of the Beverly Public Library

Referred to Committee on Public Services.

Order #287-Reappointments- Victoria Burke Caldwell, 7 Bancroft Avenue and James Lavasseur, 27 Pershing Avenue to the Zoning Board of Appeals

Referred to Committee on Legal Affairs.

Order #288-Reappointments- Susan Gabriel, 26 Dartmouth Street; Richard Dinkin, 93 Bridge Street; and Michael P. Cahill, Mayor as Trustees on the Beverly Affordable Housing Trust

Referred to Committee on Finance and Property.

Order #289-Reappointment- William Lowd, 18 Pierson Street, to the Beverly Golf and Tennis Commission

Referred to Committee on Public Services.

***LATE FILE* Order #294**-Lease- 10-year lease with Highland Electric Transportation for \$26,000 per year for electric school bus

Houseman moved to accept the late file. Rotondo seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0).

Cahill said this is a longer lease than usual. The school department had been leasing-to-own diesel buses, and he is working on making the transition away from gas and diesel transportation fleets. There is a big delta right now between a diesel, which can cost \$85,000, and an EV, which is around \$330,000. Part of that is because the scale of production isn't there yet and the cost of the batteries. The City wouldn't be doing it this year if it wasn't for a partner at Highland Electric having sought and secured grants to help meet the gap. He noted their model of charging, storing, and selling clean electricity to the grid when the buses are parked and not in use. The idea is not to try to transition the whole fleet this way, but the hope is to begin the process to learn about the performance of the EVs and be at the forefront regionally and statewide.

Rotondo asked about the lease term and what the traditional term on a diesel bus is.

Cahill stated the diesel leases have been five years and at the end of five years the City owns the bus. That is not the case with these leases; the City won't own at the end of the lease, but on the flip side they have far lower maintenance costs and will save money significantly over time on fueling.

Rotondo asked who is responsible for the maintenance.

Barrett stated the only things that would really need to be replaced or fixed are the windshield wipers and tires, so the maintenance costs are extremely low. Highland Electric is responsible for the charging, the software updates, and the maintenance over the term of the lease.

Houseman asked for a chart or checklist to provide what the administration is going to use to monitor relative to diesel to track the experience with this vehicle.

Cahill said they could get that information to the council.

Feldman asked about the difference in cost of this compared to an annual diesel lease payment.

Cahill said it is calculated to be the same.

Houseman asked for a term sheet comparing the two contracts between the diesel and EV bus.

Ames asked for a solid number on a diesel bus to put it in perspective.

Rotondo asked if it is traditional with leasing buses for it to be typically on the school-side or city-side budget.

Cahill stated lease to own diesels have been in the school budget; he committed to them the EV ones would be carried on the city side.

Referred to Committee on Finance and Property.

Communications, from other City Officers and Boards

Order #291-Budget Analyst-FY21 Tax Rate Approval

Flowers moved to receive and place on file. Rotondo seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0).

Order #292-Council President-Dominic Copeland to Committee on Legal Affairs and Scott Houseman as Chair of Committee on Legal Affairs

Feldman moved to approve. Rand seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0).

Order #293-Councilor Copeland-Sinkholes in Beverly Farms

Guanci referred to Committee on Public Services and asked the City Clerk to make sure Commissioner Collins gets a copy and is invited to the meeting on January 19th.

Communications, Applications and Petitions

Order #290-Petition-National Grid Plan # 29496588 Install 55 Feet of 1-3 inch PVC conduit between intersection of Hale Street and East Corning Street

Houseman moved to set the public hearing for January 19 at 7:15pm. Flowers seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0).

Reports of Committees

Committee on Legal Affairs

Order #280- Appointment-Constable-Mr. Christian Rivera, 9 Williams Street, Roxbury

Houseman motioned to approve. Feldman seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0).

Rotondo motioned to adjourn. Rand seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (9-0). The meeting adjourned at 9:10pm.