



Town of Natick, Massachusetts
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James Freas, AICP
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 18, 2020

TO: Select Board & Planning Board

FROM: James Freas, Director of Community & Economic Development

RE: Select Board & Planning Board Joint Sponsored Fall Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Meeting Date: August 19, 2020

CC: Melissa Malone, Town Administrator

In preparation for Spring Town Meeting, the Planning Board and Select Board jointly sponsored an article addressing parking requirements in the Downtown Mixed Use District of the Natick Zoning Bylaw. As both Boards have been preparing for the Fall Town Meeting Warrant, there has been an interest in jointly sponsoring that article again, as well as other related articles in the interest of both Boards engaging cooperatively in planning and zoning issues. Recognizing that the warrant closes on the 20th and both Boards have not yet had the opportunity to discuss and vote the articles they would jointly sponsor, and both are meeting simultaneously, the following is meant to offer a pathway forward.

The articles proposed for joint sponsorship by the two boards all address amendments to the text of the Downtown Mixed Use District as it appears in sections III-E and V-D or extensions of the Downtown Mixed Use District on the zoning map. Staff have proposed that the text amendments be merged into one comprehensive Downtown Mixed Use zoning amendment and similarly, that the two proposed map changes be considered as one article. Each of these articles would consist of multiple motions and therefore still be subject to independent votes of Town Meeting, but Town Meeting would consider all of them together. For the purposes of consideration, they are all provided as separate articles, attached, and described below.

For each article, each Board would vote on whether to:

1. Co-sponsor the article with the respective other Board, and/or
2. Whether that article should be merged into one comprehensive Downtown Mixed-Use text amendment or map change as appropriate.

If all articles were to be merged, there would be two resulting articles, one for the text and the other for the map changes. Again, these would have multiple motions incorporated into the articles.

Proposed Text Changes to the Downtown Mixed Use District

Downtown Parking (co-sponsored Planning Board & Select Board for SATM)

The Planning Board and Select Board jointly proposed lowering the parking requirements in downtown Natick in response to the challenges posed by high parking requirements for development in areas characterized by constrained parcels and historic buildings. The proposed parking requirements for residential would be generally the same as those for the rest of the Town. At the same time, the amendment removes the parking requirements for ground floor commercial uses making it easier for new businesses to enter downtown.

Downtown 1st Floor Commercial (Planning Board sponsored for SATM)

Natick 2030 recommended establishing an area in the core of downtown Natick where the zoning bylaw would not permit residential uses. While this proposal failed to garner sufficient support, an alternative proposal emerged that would require ground floor commercial uses on certain downtown streets. This approach can help to preserve and reinforce walkability in the downtown core.

Downtown Outdoor Dining

A citizen proposal submitted for Spring Town Meeting included the idea of allowing outdoor dining as a by-right use downtown. Especially given the experiences of this past summer, there is a strong interest in this idea in the Downtown. The motion would need to include a set of standard conditions relative to maintaining clear pedestrian pathways and other requirements. Outdoor dining is currently allowed by special permit.

Downtown Front Setbacks

The current requirements for the downtown district establish a minimum 15-foot front setback or the front setback can be set at the smallest setback on a neighboring property by special permit. Given that the general desire in Downtown Natick is for minimal setbacks so as to bring storefronts directly up to the sidewalk and promote walkability and, that the lots downtown vary significantly in where the lot lines and buildings sit in relation to the streets and sidewalks, the front setback standard should offer greater flexibility for an applicant and the Planning Board to arrive at the best solution. Staff would propose that the front setback sit within a range from 0 to 15 feet.

Downtown Parking Fee-In-Lieu Payments

The parking fee-in-lieu program in the Downtown Mixed Use district directs funds collected from waived parking spaces for residential uses to a designated downtown parking fund but the fees from commercial parking spaces default to the general fund. These provisions should be amended such that all fee-in-lieu funds collected for parking waivers in the downtown be directed to a Pedestrian Safety and Parking fund.

Downtown Map Changes

St Patrick's School Site Rezoning (Select Board sponsored for SATM)

The Select Board sponsored a warrant article at Spring Town Meeting to rezone the St. Patrick's school site into the Downtown Mixed-Use District. This action would support redevelopment of this site with a mixed use building with ground floor retail and upper story residential with 25% of the units as deed restricted affordable. The proposed development project is consistent with many of the recommendations of *Natick 2030*.

Pond Street Parking Lot Rezoning

The Planning Board has discussed in the past the possibility of rezoning the Pond Street parking lot and the two parcels between it and downtown into the Downtown Mixed-Use District. The logic is simply that, as the parking lot serves the Downtown, it should be in the same zoning district. These three parcels are currently in the Residential General district. Other than the parking lot, one property is medical office and the other multi-family residential. Both are non-conforming uses in the Residential General district.

2020 Fall Annual Town Meeting

ARTICLE XX

**AMEND ZONING BYLAWS:
Parking in Downtown Mixed Use (DM) District**

(Select Board and Planning Board)

To see if the Town will vote to amend Natick Zoning By-Laws with regard to off-street parking requirements in Natick Center by:

A. Replace, eliminate or modify the following sections (including, without limitations, subsections and/or footnotes) that relate to off-street parking standards for DM districts:

- Section V-D.3 - Parking Facilities Required by Parking Demand
- Section V-D.5 -Exceptions in Downtown Mixed Use District
- Sections V-D.6 - Location of Required Parking Spaces to V-D.19 - Administration & Parking

Or otherwise act thereon.

2020 Fall Annual Town Meeting

**ARTICLE XX
AMEND ZONING BY-LAWS:
Downtown Mixed-Use District: Ground Floor Residential Uses**

(Planning Board)

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Town of Natick Zoning Bylaws regarding ground floor uses in the Downtown Mixed Use (DM) District by:

- A. Amending Section III-E (Downtown Mixed Use District (DM)), including but not limited to:
 - 2. Use Regulations for DM Districts;

or otherwise act thereon.

2020 Fall Annual Town Meeting

ARTICLE XX

**AMEND ZONING BYLAWS:
Uses in Downtown Mixed Use (DM) District**

(Planning Board)

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Town of Natick Zoning Bylaws by modifying Section III-E.2 (Use Regulations Schedule for DM Districts) and Section 200 (Definitions) and other sections of the Bylaw, as required, regarding restaurants and eating establishments

Or otherwise act thereon.

2020 Fall Annual Town Meeting

ARTICLE XX

**AMEND ZONING BYLAWS:
Setbacks in Downtown Mixed Use (DM) District**

(Planning Board)

To see if the Town will vote to amend Natick Zoning By-Laws with regard to the front setback requirements in Natick Center by modifying section III-E.3 (Dimensional and Density Requirements)

Or otherwise act thereon.

2020 Fall Annual Town Meeting

ARTICLE XX

**AMEND ZONING BYLAWS:
Incremental Parking Schedule**

(Planning Board)

To see if the Town will vote to amend the Town of Natick Zoning Bylaws by modifying Section V-D (Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements) and other sections of the Bylaw, as required, regarding the designation of funds received through the provisions of Section V-D.3 (Parking Facilities Required by Category of Parking Demand) and Section V-D.5 (Exceptions in Downtown Mixed Use District)

Or otherwise act thereon.

2020 Fall Annual Town Meeting

ARTICLE XX
AMEND ZONING BY-LAWS:
Amendment to Zoning Map – Downtown Mixed Use (DM) District

(Select Board)

To see if the Town will vote to change the following parcel from the Residential General (RG) Zoning District to the Downtown Mixed Use (DM) Zoning District:

Assessors Map 44 Lot 180, known as 45 East Central Street, as shown on the plan on file with the Community Development Office and the Town Clerk's Office

or otherwise act thereon.

2020 Fall Annual Town Meeting

ARTICLE XX
AMEND ZONING BY-LAWS:
Amendment to Zoning Map – Downtown Mixed Use (DM) District

(Planning Board)

To see if the Town will vote to change the following parcels from the Residential General (RG) Zoning District to the Downtown Mixed Use (DM) Zoning District:

Assessors Map 43 Lot 263, known as 16 West Central Street;
Assessors Map 43 Lot 262, known as 14 West Central Street; and
Assessors Map 43 Lot 257, known as 25 Pond Street
as shown on the plan on file with the Community Development Office and the Town Clerk's Office
or otherwise act thereon.