

Weymouth Landing Public Meeting – Nov 18, 2009

Discussion Notes

Recorded by James Freas, MAPC; edited and organized by Tim Reardon, MAPC

Auto and Pedestrian Traffic

- Traffic issues need improvement; in particular, pedestrian safety is a critical issue.
- It is not practical to reduce the volume of traffic passing through the area, due to Route 53 and the confluence of five roads in The Landing. One thing that could be done is to provide more on-street parking for people coming from the Braintree side, so they don't have to pass through the Landing to get to the parking lot.
- There is a tension between the desire to improve vehicular traffic and the goal of improving the pedestrian experience. This is a safety issue. Reducing traffic lanes from two lanes in each direction to one lane in each direction plus turn lanes has worked well in other places such as Cambridge and Somerville. It improves pedestrian safety. Should be coupled with rear access parking.
- The plan should consider making Brookside Road a dead-end. This would reduce turns from/to Brookside to/from Quincy Ave/Commercial Street. It might also create opportunities for more off-street seating areas and would improve safety on Brookside Road.
- The Landing needs audible pedestrian signals to make it safer for visually-impaired pedestrians. [Comment made to facilitator prior to meeting.]

Parking

- Where will residents of new mixed-use buildings park their cars? Does the model show enough parking spaces for the size of building you have depicted?
 - Response (Tim Reardon, MAPC): The proposed zoning requires that parking for new residential units be accommodated on-site. The model is illustrative of what might be built. Property owners will need to develop creative site designs.
- MBTA parking lots should be made publicly available on weekends to serve shoppers and other visitors (e.g., marina users who need overnight parking.)
- Structured parking may be feasible on a portion of the existing municipal lot; could increase the capacity by about 1/3rd; this should be considered.

Zoning

- Some people are concerned that four stories are too high for The Landing. Three stories should be sufficient.
 - Tim Reardon requested a show of hands with regard to the height limit; The majority of participants favored a 3-story height limit, but many others thought that four stories would be appropriate
- Heights should vary within the district between 2 and 4 stories; this creates a more village-like atmosphere than buildings all the same height.
- Peaked roofs and dormers contribute to a village feel. The zoning floor/height limit should be set at some half-floor increment to encourage peaked roofs and dormers (e.g., 3.5 stories.)
- Not in favor of residential overbuilding. Scituate Harbor has too many condos.
- There is a line of sight to the Monaquot River from various vantage points, including coming North on Washington Street past the post office. Lower buildings will help to preserve these sight lines.
- Much of The Landing is on filled wetlands; subsurface conditions may limit potential building height.

- The new townhouses on Brookside Road were good improvement. They have a village-like feel.
- The Braintree Electric site on Allen Street should be made into open space. Possibly an amphitheatre could be built there.
- If the Braintree Electric site is developed with tall buildings, they may cast shadows on homes across Allen Street. The buildings on that site should be demolished; the whole site should be open space.
- The central part of the Landing should remain strictly commercial. Residential uses should be allowed only in the areas near the river.

The Private Sector

- It is important to retain existing businesses in the central part of The Landing. There is concern about taking of property/buildings and redevelopment dislocating existing businesses like El Serape.
- Both public and private parties need to take responsibility for making improvements to The Landing. The towns are pursuing money for sidewalk improvements; businesses and property owners also have responsibility to improve their property's appearance.
- This planning process and the PWED can help the community visualize the future and make improvements; however, only private developers are really the ones capable of building something on private property. Weymouth and Braintree can only go so far to help create incentives.

Smelt Brook / Waterfront

- The canoe launch in Weymouth needs to be completed as soon as possible.
- The daylighting of Smelt Brook should include more landscaping than that shown in the model. For example, terraces and meanders will accommodate the elevation drop of the brook and will make it visually interesting. The plan should consider day-lighting Smelt Brook all the way to Quincy Ave.
- Smelt Brook is viable fish habitat; extensive daylighting is needed to support healthy fish population. The culvert area underneath The Brick Grille (just east of Quincy Avenue/ Commercial St.) is still tidally influenced and impacted by sedimentation where freshwater and brackish water meet. Daylighting of the stream all the way to Quincy Avenue would help to resolve this.
 - Response: Daylighting through that area was considered but MAPC identified two major concerns. It would likely require purchase or takings of private property on either side of the Brook; and the Brook could potentially be a nuisance for an outdoor café or restaurant if it became stagnant or otherwise smelly.
- The Federal Emergence Management Agency is currently revising the flood maps for Norfolk County. How will these revisions affect development potential?
 - Response: The Landing is not currently in a flood zone, possibly due in part to the fact that Smelt Brook is in a culvert. The flood map revisions are not likely to change this status.

Public Funding

- www.recovery.gov reports that Weymouth has received over \$3 million of stimulus funding. How was this money spent? Stimulus money should be directed to Weymouth Landing.
 - Response (Mayor Kay): Not familiar with that figure; Weymouth has not received \$3 million of discretionary Stimulus funds.
- What is the process and schedule for PWED improvements? How will people be able to participate in the design of those improvements? \$2.4 million can go pretty quickly.
 - Response (Mayor Sullivan): We would like to move forward quickly. Staff from the towns will be meeting to develop a plan; it is likely we will have another community meeting in February and would like to be under construction next summer.