

## ***From Plan to Action in Weymouth Landing***

March 23, 2010

Braintree Town Hall

Meeting Notes



Nearly 70 people turned out on March 23 to weigh in on plans for revitalizing Weymouth Landing with new storefronts, expanded sidewalks, better waterfront access, and new village-style buildings. The event featured a presentation by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council about the results of a nine-month planning study, and an update from town officials about how they are already putting the plan into action.

Mayor Joseph Sullivan of Braintree, host of the meeting, welcomed the crowd of residents, business leaders, and property owners, stating that “The MAPC did a tremendous job laying out a vision” for the Landing, while also cautioning that the towns were still evaluating the recommendations.

MAPC’s Senior Regional Planner Tim Reardon made a presentation on the results of the 9-month planning study with an emphasis on key short-term recommendations:

- Development of a storefront improvement program
- Completion of striping and signage in the municipal parking lot
- Construction of canoe launch
- Establishment of a joint design review process
- Focused PWED investments in sidewalks and crosswalks in the “core” of the Landing
- Adoption of new zoning to promote mixed-use, village style development

MAPC’s presentation and supporting material are available on-line at [www.mapc.org/weymouthlanding](http://www.mapc.org/weymouthlanding).

### **Progress Underway**

Braintree Planner Christine Stickney and Weymouth Planner Jim Clarke provided an update on how they are already working to implement the plan and revitalize the Landing:

- Towns are reviewing proposals from four engineering firms to conduct design of PWED improvements. There will be a public meeting at the 25% design stage
- Braintree applied for and received \$10,000 from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative to develop a storefront improvement program. The grant supports a consultant to help establish the program, develop an application and design guidelines, etc. The town hopes to provide matching funds for improvements from development mitigation elsewhere in town. Weymouth is working on a similar storefront program focused on signs and awnings.
- Stickney is organizing a business assistance workshop on April 28, featuring advice and assistance from Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Small Business Administration, and others.
- Town planners drafted a memorandum of understanding to establish a joint design review process.
- Braintree has worked with WalkBoston to identify a walking tour of East Braintree. Walk Boston will be printing maps of the area with walking routes.
- The planners are developing zoning language and will be submitting this to Town Councils once it has been approved by the Mayors.

## **DISCUSSION NOTES (Organized by topic)**

### **Big Box Stores**

- Jeff Thayer, Commercial Street: Does the zoning prohibit big box stores from coming in? It should require small storefronts alongside large format buildings. Concerned that there will be a “hodge podge” of parking in the Landing if each development is required to supply its own parking. Towns should allow new stores to use the municipal parking lot and on-street spaces.
- Wade Killman, Front Street: would like to see zoning that specifically prohibits the creation of stand-alone, big box stores in the landing. Concerned that, despite support for the general plan, there could be loopholes in new zoning that would allow big box stores to be built. Concerned that after Nick Delagos tears down his existing buildings and the lot is vacant, “we’re all going to say ‘It would look better with a big box store...’ I’d like to see somebody say in writing what we’re going to do to prohibit that.” Response from Tim Reardon: It’s hard to regulate who can own a business, but MAPC’s recommended zoning includes many requirements that ensure village style development.
- Peter Forman, South Shore Chamber of Commerce: It may take some time for the business mix in the Landing to find its equilibrium, but the presence of new apartments and condominiums will be an important factor in attracting new retail. In particular, an influx of young professionals living in the Landing and commuting to Boston would help to support a strong retail sector.
- Weymouth Town Councilor TJ Lacey : Nick Delagos is planning to demolish his buildings; future of that site is unclear. Supports a New England Small Village concept for the Landing, with a strong “mom and pop” retail component. Could support restrictions in the zoning that prohibit a 15,000 square foot stand-alone building from taking up an entire site.

### **Pedestrian Priorities**

- Susan Lafoe, Brookside Road: Commercial / Brookside intersection is very dangerous; even MBTA buses run the red light. “I love the bump-out idea, I think it looks beautiful.” Think of Falmouth and Hyannis, where people park once and walk to shops and boutiques. Making Brookside a dead end would be great.
- Sandra Kunz, Braintree: Don’t spread the PWED money too thin.
- Brian Carlic: I’m hearing nothing but support tonight for reducing the number of travel lanes on Commercial Street. When will the municipal parking lot be completed? Mayor Sullivan: Both towns are focused on maximizing the PWED benefit by focusing it in a “defined” area. We are working to complete the municipal parking lot but are frustrated with the MBTA.
- Dorothy-Veronica White: Contrary to previous statements heard tonight, the stretch of Route 53 (Quincy Ave, Commercial Street, Washington Street) from the Monatiquot Bridge to Broad Street is not a state highway.
- Peter Scannel, Front Street: If Commercial Street is reduced to two lanes, are there any plans to do angled parking or to eliminate parking. Mayor Sullivan: No, there are no plans to eliminate parking.
- Christine Stickney: MAPC pedestrian recommendations will be shared with the PWED designer, but not all will necessarily be implemented.
- Mike Lang, Cotton Ave: I think removal of utility poles should be a high priority improvement. MAPC response: Consider requiring developers to pay for removal of utilities as a condition of a special permit.

### **Storefronts and property maintenance**

- Comment: I am concerned about inertia of property owners in the Landing. Can the towns fine property owners for allowing their property to deteriorate? Some property owners are resistant to making investments—how can the towns push them along?

- Peter Scannel, Front Street: If Storefront improvements at Marion’s shoes are a good example of what could happen in the Landing; more boutiques would attract shoppers.
- Harry Sarras, Ultimate Pizza: I would like to improve my properties. Could convert Landing Pub into a family-friendly restaurant and pub. However, expansion opportunities are constrained by Smelt Brook culvert underneath the property—there’s water in the basement.
- Charlie Tapper, Pro Sound Service, Brookside Road: Shouldn’t make Brookside a dead end (needed for deliveries), but one way might work. I’m interested in doing a storefront improvement at my property.
- Jeff Thayer: I would like to reiterate my interest in having municipal properties maintained; not just the parking lot, also the canoe launch. How can we attract private investment if public spaces look “blighted?”

### **Municipal Considerations**

- Question for Mayor Sullivan: it has been noted that there are differences of opinion between the towns and MAPC about these recommendations. Can you specify what those differences of opinion are, and what aspects of MAPC’s plan the towns will adopt? Response from Mayor Sullivan: “Braintree and Weymouth are trying to figure out exactly how we would implement some of these recommendations from MAPC. So to offer you an alternative proposal tonight would not be appropriate. We’re not there yet.” There are differences across the two towns, in terms of parking allowances, review process, etc. “In April when we make our final presentation you’ll have a better sense what the recommendations will be specifically in Braintree and Weymouth versus what MAPC has offered tonight.”
- Mayor Sullivan stated the towns will file zoning by the end of April. Jeff Thayer: can we review prior to the Town Council hearings? Mayor Sullivan: zoning will be posted on the website as soon as it is ready.

*Meeting notes prepared by MAPC and reviewed, edited, and approved by Jim Clarke and Christine Stickney.*