

Joint Public Hearing Minutes
City Council Ordinance Committee / Planning Board
Zone Change – Amend the Shopping Center Zone
Zone Change – Create Shopping Center Zone for Large Scale Districts
(meeting is being recorded)

On Tuesday, April 14, 2015, the Holyoke Planning Board held a Joint Public Hearing with the Ordinance Committee of the City Council to run concurrently to "amend Shopping Center (SC) Zoning Ordinance" and "create a Shopping Center Zone for large scale districts". The meeting was held in the City Council Chambers, 536 Dwight Street, Holyoke, Massachusetts at 6:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Planning Board

Mimi Panitch	Chairman
Christian LaChapelle.....	Vice-Chairman
Mark Joy.....	Secretary
John Kelley.....	Member
Eileen Regan	Member
Harry Montalvo	Associate

Planning Department

Marcos Marrero.....	Director
Jeffrey Burkott	Principal Planner
Claire Ricker	Senior Planner
Sharon Konstantinidis.....	Head Clerk

Ordinance Committee

Rebecca Lisi	At Large Councilor
Gordon Alexander.....	Ward 7 Councilor
Linda Vacon.....	Ward 5 Councilor
David Bartley	At Large Councilor
Jennifer Chateaufneuf	At Large Councilor

City Council

Joseph McGiverin.....	At Large Councilor
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Others Present

Kara Cunha.....	2 nd Assistant City Solicitor
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MIMI PANITCH, at 8:31 p.m., (Following the Zone Change Public Hearing of 200 Whiting Farms Road) called for a motion to open the Public Hearing for the above mentioned Zone Change Amendments. A motion was made by MARK JOY and seconded by JOHN KELLEY. The motion carried 5-0.

COUNCILOR LISI stated that the original "Shopping Center" orders filed had gone stale and therefore were refilled. She stated that the only Shopping Center Zone is the Holyoke Crossing (which Councilor Vacon interjected was a spot zone) and the other shopping plazas/strip malls are a variety of zones. The current uses allowed in a Shopping Center Zone are out of date with the rise of the internet and restrict other types of business. The intent was to create uniformity among the shopping plazas/strip malls. Perhaps expand the SC Zone, eliminate it all together, or create a way to allow additional uses and control development.

COUNCILOR VACON expressed her objection to revising the zone, as was done in the past, for the interest of one property owner. COUNCILOR LISI responded that the proposed was not a Zone Change but a change in the text to allow other uses and form a contiguous shopping area for development from the Holyoke Mall to Pier One and the Holyoke Hotel.

MIMI PANITCH stated that this might be a way to eliminate the previous spot Zone.

COUNCILOR ALEXANDER stated that there are three ideal commercial zones for shopping centers: 1) the Highway Business (BH) Zone; 2) the BG Zone which is BH without car sales; and 3) the SC Zone which is BG without some uses. If the City needs three levels of commercial shopping zones then this is the time to amend the Ordinance, and relook at the various parcels to determine which parcel best fits the Zone. There are 5 shopping centers in the City of which none are in the Shopping Center zone including the Holyoke Mall. Amending the commercial shopping zones would provide improvements to the parcels and achieve what a shopping plaza should look like. The goal should be to divide up the uses in the commercial zones.

COUNCILOR VACON commented that most business owners would not consider a change to a more restrictive use than they currently have. COUNCILOR LISI agreed and stated that that was the reason the 2 Orders were filed together; to be able to review all aspects of the shopping center zoning and not restrict uses currently allowed to property owners.

ANDREW CRYSTAL clarified that when O'Connell's constructed the retail plaza over 20 years, it was the Planning Department that had created the SC Zone and not at the request of the developer. Changes in the retail industry and the trends across the country are similar to what has happened at Holyoke Crossings; the closing of anchor book stores and a reduction of square footage needed for staple stores. Mixed uses are locating into shopping and retail centers. MR CRYSTAL added that there were many non-retail uses that have the same attributes as a shopping center; one being close proximity to the highway. For example, a dialysis center with low traffic generation is currently not allowed; the SC Zone is the only Zone that limits the use to retail. He stated that Holyoke Crossing, a 160,000 square foot development, is surrounded by three different commercial zones. He agreed with the comments made that a more consistency approach would be advantageous. COUNCILOR ALEXANDER responded that the Order filed was not specific to allowing one additional use on the O'Connell's parcel, but as a response to the question of how can mixed uses be allowed in the commercial zones.

MARCOS MARRERO stated that there were other developers that have inquired about changing retail as the Ordinance is not consistent in what appears to be in the commercial corridor.

The Ordinance Committee and the Planning Board discussed the various uses in the commercial zones.

COUNCILOR LISI noted that considering that there was nothing concrete to review, suggested continuing the Public Hearing.

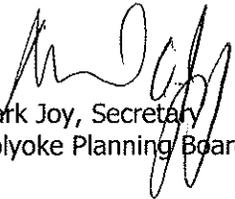
MARK JOY requested that Planning Staff provide a use comparison of the BG, BH, SC, and IG Zones. MARCOS MARRERO replied that a use comparison chart will be provided, however, if a shopping district is created it may look much different.

COUNCILOR VACON requested that a theoretical proposal also be available by the next Hearing and at some point the abutting businesses be made aware of the proposed changes.

COUNCILOR MCGIVERIN clarified that the SC Zone was created to control retail growth in certain areas and O'Connell's was the only participant. He added that Staff also include a dimensional control comparisons.

MIMI PANITCH at 9:00 p.m. called for motion to continue the Public Hearing until May 12, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. A motion was made by MARK JOY and seconded by JOHN KELLEY. The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Joy, Secretary
Holyoke Planning Board