

Planning Board Public Hearing Minutes
Zone Change – Parking as a Principal Use by Special Permit
(meeting is being recorded)

On Tuesday, May 26, 2015, the Holyoke Planning Board held a Public Hearing (continued from April 14, 2015) to discuss parking as a principal use by Special Permit. The meeting was held in the City Council Chambers, 536 Dwight Street, Holyoke, Massachusetts at 6:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Planning Board

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

Planning Department

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

Ordinance Committee

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| 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

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

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| Kara Cunha..... | 2 nd Assistant City Solicitor |
| Daphne Board | 162 Suffolk Street |
| Susan VanPelt | 246 Walnut Street |

MIMI PANITCH, at 6:00 p.m., called for a motion to open the Public Hearing for the above mentioned zone change amendment. A motion was made by JOHN KELLEY and seconded by MARK JOY. The motion carried 4-0.

The Board reviewed the draft Ordinance, dated 5/26/15, regarding Downtown Parking as a Principal Use by Special Permit submitted by Jeffrey Burkott.

MARCOS MARRERO stated that the draft Ordinance integrated suggestions from Planning Staff as well as the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission "Review of Flexible Downtown Parking Policies", Law Department, and comments from the Public Hearings. Caution was taken when establishing the criteria so that the Special Permit was not the vehicle by which parking would become the primary use.

MIMI PANITCH referenced a correspondence received from HAP Housing dated April 10, 2015 which stated that the inability to meet the current parking requirements acts as a deterrent for investment and redevelopment of downtown properties. She stated that although this Special Permit was not a functional vehicle to accomplish HAP's needs, the proposed document may provide the relief for those businesses needing some relief from parking requirements. She recognized that the City does not want to have parking lots metastasize where development could have occurred which is outlined with the Downtown Redevelopment Plan.

MARCOS MARRERO responded that Section 6.1.7.6, #10 will address the concern of parking lots metastasizing as a percentage of use to the adjacent property has to be determined.

JOHN KELLEY stated that there were many current projects where if the lack of parking had not been resolved, would not have come to fruition, leaving the City with more vacant and blighted buildings. The Special Permit process may allow buildings that do not meet the parking requirements to be renovated.

The Board discussed previous and potential developments that may/may not have benefited by the proposed Special Permit with caution given to minimizing the perception of "rubber stamping" a Special Permit.

MARK JOY suggested that not more than 50% of the adjacent property could be used for parking. MARCOS MARRERO suggested that the Board first review the frame work, and then fine tune the details during the joint Public Hearing with the Ordinance Committee.

The Board discussed the following amendments to the draft:

- Under 6.1.7.6 – An ADA route connection between the parking lot and the establishment should be required;
- Under Criteria #8 - Identify if a building is of historical significance prior to demolition, via a review and "Letter of Determination" by the Historical Commission; if demolition occurs prior to a written review of the Historical Commission, the property will not qualify for a Special Permit; and
- The Planning Board will be the permit granting authority.

JEFFREY BURKOTT stated that the Order referenced the "Downtown" of which the boundaries would need to be defined.

DAPHNE BOARD agreed with the Board to require a determination of historical significance by the Historic Commission. There may be instances when a building could be saved for historic purposes or sentimental reasons. She added that because the City has zoning restrictions in place, developers will be encouraged to find solutions and ultimately end up with a good plan in place.

An email correspondence dated May 26, 2015 was received from Susan VanPelt regarding a list of concerns for consideration.

JOHN KELLEY asked if the Parking as a Principal Use by Special Permit could extend beyond the downtown area. JEFFREY BURKOTT responded that the City Council Order specified the downtown; anything beyond those parameters would need a new Order be filed.

MIMI PANITCH at 7:10 p.m. called for a motion to continue the Public Hearing until June 9, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. with the Ordinance Committee. A motion was made by JOHN KELLEY and seconded by MARK JOY. The motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,


Mark Joy, Secretary
Holyoke Planning Board