

## **Mixed Used Overlay District (MUOD) Working Group Meeting #2**

**April 6, 2022 – 6:00p.m.**

**Meeting Opened:** 6:00p.m.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 8:05p.m.

### **Attendees:**

Jennifer Gingras, Cheryl Lutcza, Kris, Nate Burgess, Peter Flinker, Ted Brovitz, Deb Fountain, Margaret Scarsdale, Renee D’Argento, Stephen Themelis, Joyce Morrow, Evelyn Bagley, Susan Smith, David Ganong, Joan Ladik, John Ladik, Chuck Walkovich, Bentley Herget, Tiff and Cliff.

Jenny Gingras, Town Planner opened the meeting and said that the consultants would be presenting a draft of the Mixed-Used Overlay District.

Ted Brovitz, Brovitz Community Planning and Design, addressed the audience and said that a summary of the public charrette would be presented by Peter Flinker and Nate Burgess of Dodson and Flinker, Inc.

Peter Flinker provided a screen share presentation on the Public Design Charrette Results that detailed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats exercise (SWOT).

Nate Burgess provided a screen share presentation on the “Open Space, Recreation and Trails Exercise” from the Public Design Charrette Results.

Peter Flinker asked if there were any questions or comments. None.

Ted Brovitz provided a screen share presentation on the Preliminary Draft of the Mixed-Use Overlay District, explaining that this is a very long Mixed-Use Overlay District, which he emphasized is a first-round draft.

Joyce Morrow thanked the team and said they caught all the comments and thoughts. She had a question on Section 8500, Section 8501, why was Route 119 not included. Second question was under public parking fund, who pays for that. Ted said there is no parking fund today, however the Town could have a developer pay for that in the future. She said that one existing building, Lorden hardware and C&S Pizza (referred to as Figure 20), currently has something that could potentially be that. The back side of their building abuts residential areas, until people start developing properties is there any way we can interject our proposed amendments into existing properties or is this specifically geared to new development. Mr. Brovitz said hopefully the overlay district would provide incentive. Discussion ensued on a transitional buffer. Ms. Morrow said that we need to work with the current owners, and that we need their help in trying to beautifying the Town. She also asked how can Planning Board use this MUOD

to create some sort of ambience on structures that currently exist. Mr. Brovitz said it is up to the current owners to take advantage, or not, of the MUOD. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Themelis said he is trying to understand the Design Guidelines and will it overlap other areas or just be an umbrella over the MUOD. Mr. Brovitz gave some examples and said we are trying to create good quality development on smaller parcels. There is a lot going into this to guide the Planning Board when they are reviewing projects to help a developer to shape a good project. Mr. Themelis asked if Design Guidelines are enforceable by the Planning Board. Mr. Brovitz said when a Special Permit is involved, they can become standards, but there should be some flexibility allowed. Discussion ensued.

Renee D'Argento said we are trying to develop a cohesive theme, especially along Railroad Square, how can you incentivize individual business owners to participate in that theme and how do we accomplish that? Mr. Brovitz said it would happen incrementally, all we can do is provide some basic standards that reflect the character we are after and bolster that with the Design Guidelines and Standards. Some people will go forward, and some people will not. Discussion ensued. Mr. Brovitz said there will be public realm standards in the Design Guidelines, such as terraces, bike parking facilities, outdoor public dining, etc. Mr. Brovitz said that it would be great if the Town could get a large grant to do this. He did say that the Town has a narrow right of way and that Pepperell is a Complete Streets Community. Discussion ensued regarding streetscaping. Mr. Brovitz said the Town may have a good chance for a grant for Railroad Square. Discussion ensued. Ms. Gingras said that we did apply for a grant for that area, and we are waiting to hear on that grant.

Ms. D'Argento inquired about the height of buildings and 40-feet sounds reasonable, however 60-feet sounds unreasonable for Pepperell. Mr. Brovitz said that is a point of discussion for the Working Group. Ms. Gingras asked how many stories that would be. Mr. Brovitz said five to six stories, most likely five. Discussion ensued on heights of different story structures. Ms. D'Argento said she wouldn't want to see more than three stories. Discussion ensued on this topic. Nate Burgess suggested special exceptions on height could be made available for the mill site. Discussion ensued on varying sites in different parts of the MUOD regarding height variations. Mr. Brovitz said they could provide some examples. Discussion ensued on tree heights, having separate setbacks and heights for Railroad Square and the mill site.

Tiffany James asked about how the sidewalks work behind the cars parked in the diagram (referenced on Section 7, Structured Parking, on Page 23 of the draft MUOD). Mr. Brovitz gave an explanation of the diagram. Discussion ensued on this as well as concerns over lighting and signs. Ms. Gingras said that there is a Lighting Bylaw coming to Town Meeting in May 2022 and provided some insight into that. She said that the current Sign bylaw is pretty restrictive to what is allowed by right and anything outside of that requires a Special Permit from the Planning Board.

Deb Fountain said that the Master Plan had 10 major goals and the first couple focused on sustainability and she doesn't see a whole lot of that included in the draft MUOD, such as hardscaping, which is something we are trying to get away from. She asked if comments could be submitted after this meeting? Mr. Brovitz said absolutely, this is really just a first go around. Discussion ensued regarding ratio of hardscapes, open space and impervious surfaces in relation to sustainability. Mr. Ganong said that if you want a useable sidewalk in front of a restaurant it is going to be a hardscape; we could include swales and stormwater control so that it doesn't flow out into the road. Discussion ensued regarding rain gardens or continuous tree planning (green belt). Mr. Brovitz said this should get integrated into overall parking standards.

Tiffany asked about lighting for parking spaces. Mr. Brovitz said parking lots should have larger lights, but along the sidewalk, smaller pedestrian scale lights would work. Mr. Burgess asked if there is a dark sky component? Mr. Ganong said that the Lighting Bylaw will be before Town Meeting in May. Tiffany spoke on the current division of lighting on the Paugus Mall Building. Discussion ensued regarding that being an older building. Ms. Gingras said that would be an example of a project that works really well under the MUOD Bylaw. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Themelis asked what the next step will be. Mr. Brovitz said there will be another meeting next month. In the meantime, he will be working with Jenny on transferring some of the issues brought up tonight into the Design Guidelines.

Ms. D'Argento said she is having a hard time imagining how they assess the amounts of commercial units by acre. Mr. Brovitz said you are only looking at the density, which creates a footprint that can fit on a defined lot. Making sure you can fit all the pieces you need, such as ratio of commercial to residential units, parking, open space, height limits, i.e., how you balance all those onto a lot. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Brovitz said that the next MUOD Working Group Meeting (hybrid option) is May 25, 2022, at 6:00p.m.

Ms. Gingras said if there were any comments or revisions anyone has, to please send them along to her and she will forward them to Mr. Brovitz. Mr. Brovitz said that based on that, he will create a second draft.

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Lutcza, Planning Assistant

