



Committee on Economic Development, Housing and Land Use

*Councilor Paul D. Spector, Chair
Councilor Owen Freeman-Daniels
Councilor Pamela C. Schwartz
Councilor Eugene A. Tacy*

*Kevin Lake, Conservation Commission liaison
Ann DeWitt Brooks, Planning Board liaison*

Tuesday, July 2, 2013 Minutes

5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

**City Council Chambers, 212 Main Street
Wallace J. Puchalski Municipal Building
Northampton, MA**

1. Members present/absent: **Councilor Spector, Councilor Freeman-Daniels, Councilor Tacy, and Kevin Lake. Councilor Schwartz and Ann DeWitt Brooks were absent. Councilor Marianne LaBarge and Wayne Feiden, Planning Director, were also present.**
2. Meeting Called to Order **Councilor Spector called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.**
3. Announcement of Audio/Video Recording of Meeting **The meeting was audio-recorded. North Street Association, Ruth McGrath, videotaped the meeting.**
4. Public Comment **None**
5. Update from Mayor David J. Narkewicz on Redevelopment of Roundhouse Parking Lot property **None**
6. Ordinance: Amend §350c-Attachment Use and Dimensional Regulation Central Business District (**Referred by City Council June 20, 2013 to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and Land Use, Planning Board, and Committee on Rules, Ordinances, and Orders**)

Wayne Feiden explained the Ordinance, with a development opportunity for downtown businesses not facing the street. The goal is to prevent dead spots downtown. A model would be a first floor studio. It is a balancing act to keep the downtown area successful. There were no objections at the public forum.

Councilor Freeman-Daniels questioned use of a first floor for “offices” while a back bedroom would make it residential. Mr. Feiden noted that a bank building formerly owned by the “turtle people” was used as a residence. Councilor Freeman-Daniels suggested additional language to include “separate from residential”. Councilor Spector noted this Ordinance is to address what already exists.

Councilor Freeman-Daniels moved to send to City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Tacy seconded. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

7. Ordinance: Amend §350-350a et seq. Increase Height Limits in General Business District (**Referred by City Council June 20, 2013 to Committee on Economic Development, Housing and Land Use, Planning Board, and Committee on Rules, Ordinances, and Orders**)

Wayne Feiden noted the General Business District includes Damon Road, Pleasant Street, Atwood Drive & center of Florence. Councilor Tacy noted his support of this Ordinance.

Councilor Freeman-Daniels moved to send to City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Tacy seconded. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

8. Discussion of Vibrant Sidewalks

Councilor Freeman-Daniels noted he was happy this Resolution was referred to this Committee, and this could kick off the discussion toward a forum with the entire community.

Councilor Spector spoke to Council President Dwight to make sure the forum does happen. Councilor Spector noted he also spoke to Terry Masterson to ask him to gather data on housing, surveys, so that we all have the same information before a forum in September. There is no time frame and no rush to move this, and all co-sponsors want this process.

Councilor Tacy noted that Brattleboro has a social norms policy. Councilor Tacy questioned the need for this Resolution.

Councilor LaBarge, as a co-sponsor, stated that the wording in the Gazette was incorrect, and much time was spent on the Resolution.

Kevin Lake, noting he had prior experience with homeless program in Boston, stated that there are several models to look at. This process should be inclusive.

Councilor Spector noted the Resolution was overly provocative, and the discussion should get moving. Business owners downtown initiated this after the benches issue.

Councilor Freeman-Daniels notes that the language in the Resolution focused on the public interest in public space, but there is a broader issue of those who see, talk, converse, art, space in front of businesses. Some people come to visit, some are walking, occupying space. We all want good business to sustain vibrancy; business owners won't stay because we changed some words in a Resolution.

Councilor Spector noted he was not sure any language needs to be changed in the Resolution, and will save more comments to the public forum. Councilor Freeman-Daniels noted a better focus would be the type of metrics of the business element of downtown.

Terry Masterson noted he is building an inventory of business in downtown, including square footage, mix of tenants/businesses, food, dry goods, products, services, office, retail, total tax base, city's revenue, meals tax, parking, buildings sold and purchased, plus developing sales such as Union Station, Diner, lumber yard, gym (Arts Council), hotel occupancy plus new hotel. Other economic indicators such as social services, homeless shelters, were to be considered. The former Economic Director left much data. Terry Masterson noted he could probably compile this information by August. Councilor Spector noted this Committee may need an August meeting.

9. NEW BUSINESS –*Reserved for topics that the Chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.* None

At 6:35 p.m., Councilor Spector moved to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor Freeman-Daniels. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously (4-0).

*Respectfully submitted,
Mary L. Midura
Executive Secretary*

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen

UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PLANNING BOARD

ORDINANCE

An Ordinance of the City of Northampton, Massachusetts, providing that the Code of Ordinances, City of Northampton, Massachusetts, be amended by revising section **§350c-attachment** of said code; providing that *Allow residential uses on the first floor of the Central Business District in areas not abutting a road*

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Northampton, in City Council assembled, as follows: That section **§350c-attachment** of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Northampton, Massachusetts, be amended so that such section shall read as follows:

§350c-attachment Use and Dimensional Regulations CB

{Amend the table entry for "Any residential use." No other changes to table.}

Any residential use above the first floor, any residential use located to the rear of otherwise permitted non-residential uses that are at least 20 feet deep, and any residential use on a property which does not abut on a public way maintained by the City, home office/occupation

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen

UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PLANNING BOARD

ORDINANCE

An Ordinance of the City of Northampton, Massachusetts, providing that the Code of Ordinances, City of Northampton, Massachusetts, be amended by revising section **§350-350a et seq.** of said code; providing that *Increase height limits in General Business District*

Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Northampton, in City Council assembled, as follows: That section **§350-350a et seq.** of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Northampton, Massachusetts, be amended so that such section shall read as follows:

§350a through end of 350 appendixes Table of Use Regulation, Table of Dimensional and Density Regulations, Use and Dimensional Regulations

{Change maximum height in General Business District from 50' to 60'}

{REASONS for GB changes:

1. Many modern office or office/commercial building require more height per floor than older buildings in order to accommodate air handling and mechanicals.
2. Support Sustainable Northampton goals for encouraging development in urban core areas.
3. Complement recent efforts to increase heights in Central Business, Office Industrial, and General Industrial (to 70', 45', and 45' respectively).
4. Allow a height limit that is visually compatible with the district. }

City of Northampton
MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council, June 6, 2013

**Upon the recommendation of Councilor Maureen T. Carney, Councilor William H. Dwight,
Councilor Jesse M. Adams, and Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge**

Resolution to Support Vibrant Sidewalks

Whereas Urban Planning Professors Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfucht identify five essential purposes of sidewalks in their compelling article "Vibrant Sidewalks in the United States"¹; and

Whereas these essential purposes can be described as follows:

Movement— Sidewalks are how pedestrians move from one place to another.

Encounter— Sidewalks are the places where you meet people: people you know, people you don't know, and people you might not want to know. And sometimes, this purpose of the sidewalk trumps the "movement" purpose, as in when a street fair temporarily closes a pathway to normal traffic. Sidewalks are where, "Spontaneous and planned festivities break the rhythm of everyday life and give collective expression to people's joy, sorrow or aspirations."

Confrontation— Not every activity that takes place on a sidewalk is comfortable. Rallies and protests, sit-ins, or even talking loudly might be disruptive or violate social norms. Still, these activities should be accommodated on "democratic" sidewalks.

Survival— for some people the sidewalk is "home," and the only place where they can carry out the ordinary activities of daily life (eating, sleeping) that the rest of us more commonly do indoors. Sidewalks are also, often controversially, the places where some people like panhandlers, street vendors or day laborers go to earn a living.

Beauty— sidewalks can be a place of lush beauty, with trees, plants, street furniture, art, and other items that give the sidewalk—and the community it serves—its own identity; and

¹ *Vibrant Sidewalks in the United States: Re-integrating Walking and a Quintessential Social Realm*. Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfucht. Access. Number 36 Spring 2010 <http://www.uctc.net/access/36/access-36vibrantsidewalks.pdf>

Whereas a 2011 Nelson/Nygaard Design Charette² focused on downtown Northampton called for sidewalks markedly widened and Main Street narrowed to shorten crosswalks, increase safety, increase public space for foot traffic and in front of local businesses, and provide an opportunity for more benches; and

Whereas in 2005 a study entitled Northampton Streetscape Improvement Plan --Main Street and Pleasant Street³ was prepared by Denig Design Associates Inc., and called for, in addition to improving and widening sidewalks, increased seating along Main Street and Pleasant Street;

Whereas people are more likely to walk in areas that host a diversity of uses; and

Whereas street furniture allows for a city to be more of a community, an area to gather, share and experience life together; and

Whereas benches provide pedestrians with an opportunity to sit and rest, wait for a bus where there isn't adequate bus shelter space, meet a friend, or read the paper;

Now therefore be it resolved that the Northampton City Council envisions sidewalks as spaces that can accommodate both enjoyable and disruptive activities, encourages a strategic review of both the Nelson/Nygaard study and the Northampton Streetscape Improvement Plan, and calls for sidewalk improvements and expanded street furniture along the entire length of Main Street.

² [http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/Documents/Reports/NoHo Charrette Book DRAFT FINAL.pdf](http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/Documents/Reports/NoHo_Charette_Book_DRAFT_FINAL.pdf)

³ <http://city.northampton.ma.us:8080/weblink8/0/doc/448846/Electronic.aspx>