**Planning Commission Notes – January 3, 2023 – Submitted by Judd Vickers** *The meeting of the Planning Commission was conducted in person and via WebEx. Back up materials can be found at:*

[*https://www.choosecambridge.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/\_01032023-1174*](http://www.choosecambridge.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_01032023-1174)

Mary Losty re-elected as Chair and Bill Craig re-elected as Vice-Chair Old Business:

PZ 2023-003/004 – Mill Street School – continued discussion & preliminary plans – deferred

PZ 2022-007 – Dollar General at the corner of MD16 and Stone Boundary Road – Site plan was approved in December 2021 and included a vegetative buffer adjacent to the residential neighborhood. There had been prior discussion to include fencing, but it was not part of the final approval. Concerned neighbors would like to see a fence and the Planning Commission indicated they are not able to entertain additional restrictions from their approved December 2021 site plan. Developer was opposed to installing a fence, citing costs, and is willing to continue forward with the vegetative buffer and perhaps install additional plantings. Planning Commission voted to affirm previous approval from December 2021, with the addition that the Developer has additional to have a thicker vegetative buffer, with more screening. Neighbors indicated a fence would increase security of the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Discussion:

Murals – Continued discussion from December meeting. An additional suggestion brought forward by a citizen is to require a building inspection prior to the installation of a mural. The reason being that once a mural is completed, any necessary repairs might be less likely to occur for concern of disturbing the mural. Revisions from previous draft by the Zoning Officer include maintenance requirements and additional provisions to insure it fits in harmony with the surrounding neighborhood and complements the structure. Discussion related to permitting murals only in commercially zoned areas, not in residential areas.

*From December 2022 : Potential Mural Guidelines discussed. Guidelines would stipulate the process to obtain approval for a mural, which are considered protected under the 1st Amendment/Freedom of Speech. However, content that might be indecent or obscene could be prohibited. Process would likely include initial review by the Zoning Officer, with review by HPC if in the Historic District. Murals would typically be reserved for commercial areas and buildings. Discussion related to requiring the murals to be properly maintained over the long term and what tools the City might have to enforce removal of a poorly maintained or deteriorated mural.*

Comprehensive Plan – Cambridge will likely move forward over the next year to procure an updated Comprehensive Plan, which is typically followed by a comprehensive review of zoning.

The Planning Commission wants to actively participate in the process to identify a contractor that will provide the updated Comprehensive Plan and ensure that any follow-up efforts related to zoning are included as part of any bid/contract award.

Staff Update on Development – 1) Dollar General on MD16 is moving forward; 2) Mod-Wash on US50 still needs final site plan review; 3) MD Ave & US 50, a final site plan needs to be submitted for restaurants; 4) CULTA facility final site plan approved, building permit issued; 5) MD Ave R Brooks & Son addition has been approved.

Text Amendment Discussion on Formula Business Restrictions – Would potentially focus national chain type stores and restaurants along US50 corridor, and restrict them from areas such as downtown and around Sailwinds so that smaller, locally owned and operated businesses would not be crowded out by larger, better funded national chains. Mixed opinions from the Planning Commission members on this matter and some general concern of limiting opportunities for development. General consensus from the Planning Commission would be to focus on some more minimal restrictions that would perhaps require any national chains to comply with design and perhaps limit square footage. It might become part of the more general discussion during the Comprehensive Plan.

Leonard’s Lane Rezoning – Potential rezoning of City owned property that is contemplated to become a park. Property was originally zoned commercial, than became industrial in the 2014 rezoning. Planning Commission recommended moving forward with rezoning based on change in character.

Affordable Housing and the Missing Middle - Discussion related to potentially allowing greater infill and/or other accessory type dwelling structures on single family lots. Planning Commission commented that this issue warrants great discussion during the comprehensive planning process and also highlighted the need for improved and greater code enforcement.