

Planning Commission Notes – 11/6/2024 – Submitted by Judd Vickers

Old Business:

PZT 24-0001 24-O-01 - Group Home related:

The Planning Commission forwarded a text amendment to City Council with a recommendation it be acted upon only after the new City Council takes office in January. The text amendment, drafted by Planning Staff, was first considered at the October 1st meeting and was the subject of considerable public input and concerns from Planning Commission members. Staff advocates the text amendment is necessary to enforce these uses and has invested much research and time on the matter. Many of these types of uses, which include recovery residences, assisted living facilities, nursing care facilities, large group homes, small group homes and halfway houses would be permitted throughout the City. It is unknown how many are currently operating in the City and while some are certainly well managed, quite a few are not and have been very disruptive to neighbors. To an extent, many or most of these uses are protected uses under Fair Housing, the Americans with Disabilities Act and State code. That said, they must follow the same rules that would apply to any other single-family home. Of concern is that a small group or recovery home can be allowed to have 9 residents, while the average household size in Cambridge, according to the US Census, is 2.37 persons, which seems a bit uneven. Citizens will have an opportunity for engagement and public comment when this is presented to the City Council in the new year. This is an important issue that citizens should pay attention to once it reaches the City Council.

New Business:

PZT 24-0002 24-O-02 – Solar Energy related:

The Planning Commission forwarded a text amendment to the City Council that would modify the Unified Development Code to provide that medium and large-scale solar systems shall not be located on wooded lots. However, small scale community solar systems could be located on a mostly wooded lot if complying with Forest Conservation ordinances, with a maximum of 10 acres. The City is starting to approach the 350 acre cap for solar systems within the City limits. There is currently a proposal for a community solar system on a residentially zoned parcel on Leonard's Lane, which was previously proposed for a housing development.

Discussion:

Considerable discussion related to in person attendance, site visits, procedures, orientation of the room, as well as public comment. The Planning Commission drafted procedures earlier this year and will review those again, make necessary changes and adopt. The Planning Commission is committed to receiving public comment and wants to be flexible. Moving forward the Planning Commission will provide an opportunity at the end of each meeting for public comment.

The meeting can be viewed on Town Hall Streams.