

Last night's planning board meeting

Gerry Weiss <gerryweiss@comcast.net>

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To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>; Brestrup, Christine <brestrupc@amherstma.gov>; Malloy, Nathaniel <malloyn@amherstma.gov>; Jemsek, Jack <jjemsek@aim.com>

Cc: Town Council Members <towncouncil@amherstma.gov>

Hi all, I'm following up the meeting with written comments.

I am so appreciative of the Planning Department's proposals. They represent such a great opportunity to turn our downtown around and provide much greater affordable housing. I thought it was an excellent discussion as well. Hats off to all!

To summarize my comments:

1. I agree that the proposals for mixed use buildings (MUB) should be downtown wide, not just for mixed used buildings. I'm assuming these ideas arose for MUB because they are the wave of the future and the cause for concerns.

2. The IZ proposals are near and dear to my heart!:

a. Please make sure there are enough incentives to preclude any charges of a "taking"

b. Please make any new law is as misinterpretation proof as possible. If I understood Nate's comment that we've ended up without any affordable units downtown because of a misinterpretation, I agree and am glad you are trying to fix that.

c. Be sure to keep in mind the tax incentive measure passed by TM for developers to use when providing affordable units. The intent of that measure was to make sure developers did not lose income.

d. I believe the new law should require mixes of affordability, not just at the 80% level, but lower levels as well and as discussed, be voucher friendly.

e. Re: administration of affordable units: As mentioned, the AHA is capable of doing this. Also, consider that in some communities, the PD provides that support for developers. I'm pretty sure that is the case in Cambridge.

f. Payment in lieu should be kept on the table for further discussion. It is used in other communities. I agree that the figure needs to be bumped up to at least 4x if used. A concern I have is about affordable units in what are essentially student dorms. Face it, that's where the money is and wishes that the new big apartment buildings will be available to young families is unrealistic at the prices they are charging. But just who will be living in an affordable unit in a MUB that is for all intents and purposes, a student dorm? PIL offers one solution; perhaps not the best one.

3. General comment. Damage has been done to our affordable housing stock via the misinterpretation; and damage has been done to our downtown via the rules that allowed for 1 East Pleasant Street. The proposals offered last night present a tremendous opportunity to stop further damages to affordability and our downtown. To phrase that in positive language, the proposals offer a tremendous opportunity to create a more attractive and viable downtown while ensuring that we are truly a "low

income people welcome" town. A permitting moratorium until those proposals become laws is a sensible, safer course forward. To permit more buildings while you work on these proposals will not further the goals of creating a beautiful downtown and providing for a more affordable and diverse community.

Thank you for your time and attention to these matters,

Gerry Weiss
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(No subject)

Prudence Benjamin <prayers4peace4all@gmail.com>

Thu 4/1/2021 2:58 PM

To: Planning Department Email <planning@amherstma.gov>

Amherst needs to plan for a good downtown and the luxury apartments meant for students is not very good. It extorts students and promotes housing only rich people can rent. It is all well and good to cater to developers, but meantime you are turning this town into a place where only rich people can afford to live. It needs to be liveable for all kinds of people at all income ranges. You need to build middle and low income housing that will always be middle and low income housing, not just for twenty years when the tax credit to the builder runs out. You need to plan housing for downtown that only fits into the town and keeps it liveable as a good walking town. Amherst is a regular town with real people and students are not really your first concern. Let the University take care of the student housing. That make sense to me. They can control students better than our town can.