

Brookline Community Aging Network

Livable Community Advocacy Committee

May 11, 2020

Notes

Attendance: Roger Blood, Susan Cohen, Marion Freedman-Gurspan, Susan Granoff, Yolanda Rodriguez, Ruthann Sneider, Melissa Trevvett, Matt Weiss, Nancy White, Henry Winkelman & Frank Caro.

The meeting was conducted remotely using Zoom software. The meeting was the committee's first virtual meeting. The committee's activities have been suspended because of the Covid-19 shutdown.

Welltower proposals. The main topic for the meeting was the Welltower proposals for the former Newbury College site on Fisher Hill. Welltower is a large real estate investment trust company. Welltower purchased the Newbury College site, outbidding the Town of Brookline. Welltower proposes to build a senior living community with 180 units on a portion of the site. To proceed, Welltower needs approval from Town Meeting for a zoning change. The site is currently zoned for large single-family homes. Town Meeting will be considering a series of articles concerned with the Welltower proposal. One set of articles concern approval for the senior living community. Another article concerns the manner in which Welltower will meet its affordable housing obligation. A third set of proposals concern the possibility that the Town would purchase a portion of the site.

Roger Blood led the committee through a detailed Power Point presentation on the Welltower Proposals. A chart of the Newbury/Welltower decision process is included as an appendix. The presentation had been prepared for a meeting of the Advisory Committee's Planning and Regulation subcommittee. The presentation is available on the internet. Roger Blood was highly qualified to lead the discussion because he participated in the process through which the Welltower proposals were developed and negotiated with the Town. As Chair of the Housing Advisory Committee, Roger was involved in negotiations concerned with Welltower's obligation to make 15% of the new units affordable.

Roger provided information on two affordable housing options. One would build an 18 unit, mixed-income development on Holland Road, across from the Welltower development. All of the units would be affordable, but there would be a mixture of income eligibility categories. The other option would provide the Housing Authority a cash payment of \$6.5 million that the Housing Authority would use to replace and expand the existing Col. Floyd senior/disabled development on Marion Street. Currently Col. Floyd consists of 60 town houses spread among several buildings. The buildings are not handicapped accessible. Further, they are in poor condition. The Housing Authority proposes to build a new elevator building with at least 100 units. At a minimum, the Housing Authority initiative would result in a gain of at least 40 senior/disabled units. The Housing Authority would leverage the Welltower cash payment to obtain funds from other sources to finance the project.

The committee agreed to support the overall Welltower proposal. The development will bring in substantial property tax revenue for the Town. (If the property were to be used for educational purposes, the Town would receive no property tax revenue.) Residents of the senior living community would make few demands on Town services. The development would also provide an attractive residential option for seniors that is currently not available in Brookline. Currently, Brookline seniors who want a package of housing and services similar to the Welltower model have to move out of town to obtain it.

The Committee agreed to support the Col. Floyd affordable housing option. For the committee, Col Floyd is attractive because it would add much needed affordable senior housing units. (The Holland Road option would not be age restricted.) Because the existing Col. Floyd units are in disrepair and have fatal design flaw, replacement of the existing units with new fully accessible units would be a major gain for the Town. The Col. Floyd option is also attractive because the property's location is excellent. It is in a quiet neighborhood on the edge of Coolidge Corner.

The Committee did not take a position on whether the Town should purchase the west portion of the Newbury College site.

Election forum. BrooklineCAN and the Senior Center election forum has been rescheduled for Thursday, May 21 at 2 PM. The forum will be conducted virtually via Zoom. Michael Allen will be the moderator. Matt Weiss will be the timekeeper. The forum will be devoted entirely to Select Board candidates. The first three questions will be on senior issues. Questions should be directed to Michael Allen either by phone or email. Michael has received some questions but is soliciting more questions.

Notes by Frank Caro

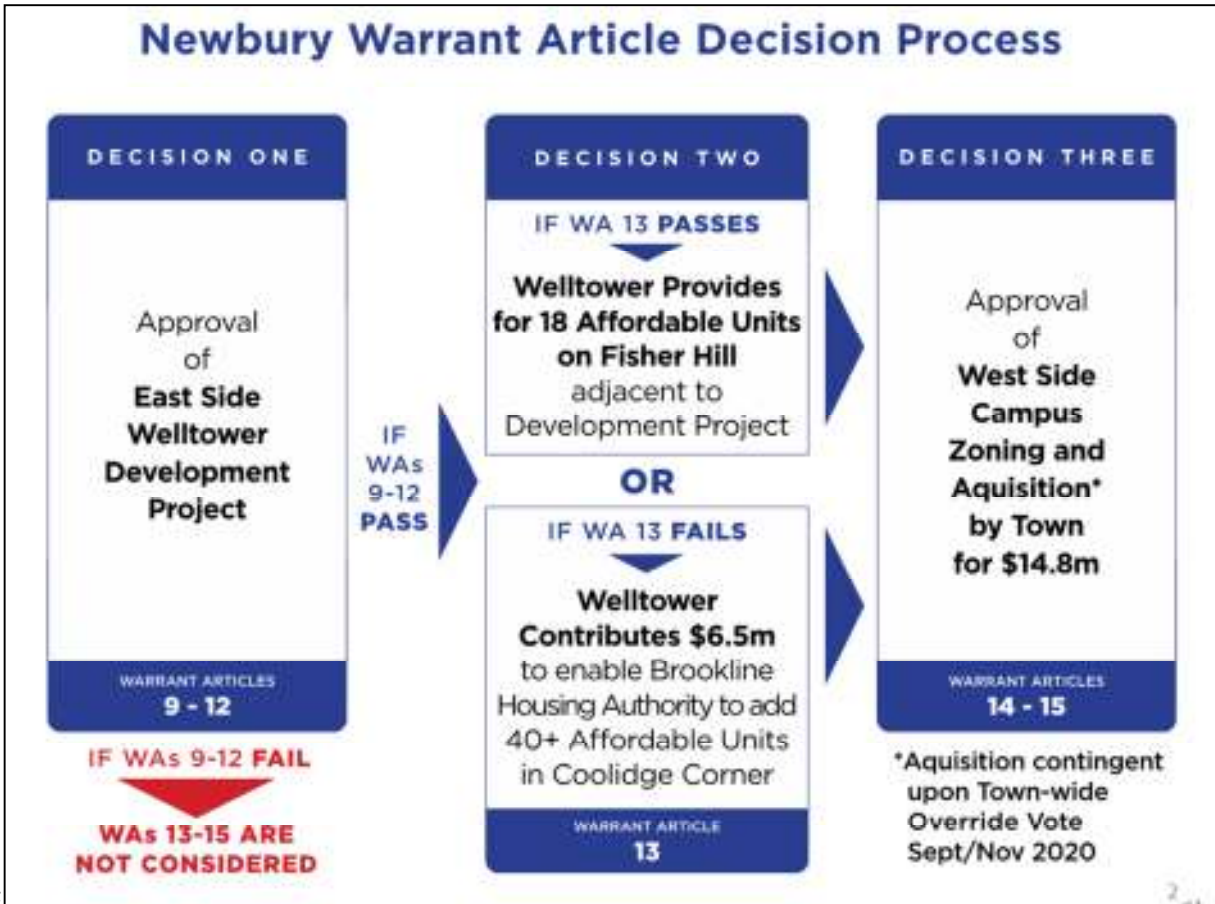


Figure 2: Warrant Article Groupings

