



# City of Lowell - Planning Board

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## Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 6, 2023 6:30 p.m.

City Council Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall

City of Lowell, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA

Remote Participation Optional via Zoom

**Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit [www.ltc.org](http://www.ltc.org)**

### Members Present

Thomas Linnehan, Chairman

Gerard Frechette, Vice Chairman

Robert Malavich, Member

Caleb Cheng, Member

Sinead Gallivan, Associate Member

### Members Absent

Richard Lockhart, Member

### Others Present

Francesca Cigliano, Senior Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

## I. Minutes for Approval

### January 5, 2023 Meeting Minutes

G. Frechette motioned and T. Linnehan seconded the motion to approve the 1/5/2023 minutes. The motion passed unanimously, with C. Cheng abstaining (4-0-1).

## II. Continued Business

## III. New Business

### Zoning Amendment – Downtown Mixed-Use (DMU) Zoning District

The Lowell Planning Board will hold a public hearing to hear all interested persons relative to an ordinance to amend “The Code of Ordinances City of Lowell Massachusetts,” with respect to Chapter 290, thereof entitled “Lowell Zoning Code”. The proposed amendment would change the required off-street parking requirement in the Downtown Mixed-Use (DMU) zoning district to zero (0) spaces per unit pursuant Section 6.1.4. The proposed amendment would eliminate language which states that

parking requirements may be met by leasing spaces in publicly owned garages in the DMU pursuant Section 6.1.6(5). The proposed amendment would also eliminate the Special Permit required for three (3) to ten (10) residential units in the DMU zoning district pursuant to Article 12.1.

On Behalf:

Francesca Cigliano, Senior Planner, City of Lowell

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

T. Linnehan said that it is noteworthy that businesses don't have a parking requirement. Businesses probably see more traffic than residential uses.

G. Frechette commented that housing is needed and a critical mass is needed. Economic development benefits. Believer in density by design. Will design review still be needed? F. Cigliano commented that many of these parcels are in the Downtown Lowell Historic District and 3+ units will still require site plan review.

C. Cheng said he lived in the district and parked in the garage. He hopes that this is the direction that the expectations of downtown living. Fewer cars. More non-automobile modes of travel. Don't need as much demand for parking. See a trend here and hope it remains. Still will be important for developers to have transportation demand management (TDM) plans. There is some uncertainty I see but from the trend it is worth the risk and those risks can be mitigated by other approaches to promoting transportation demand management plans. In support of the change.

S. Gallivan said she is very supportive of this and the potential impact. Encourages a more vibrant downtown. There is evidence that our parking structures are underutilized. City should continue to invest in people who don't rely on cars in the Lowell Forward plan. City should continue to make investments there. S. Gallivan asked about projects currently under construction? S. Gallivan also suggested looking into comparable cities that have relaxed parking requirements in MA.

S. Gallivan mentioned looking at Historic guidelines. Downtown design guidelines in downtown Providence. FC said she could circulate the downtown Lowell historic district boundary and language.

R. Malavich said the upper stories should have been developed for a long time. Upper floors used to have offices. The proposal is a good idea. Make good use of the space. Increases assessment of building. Happy to hear that we still have site plan review so we can get some kind of influence and discussions with the applicant. R. Malavich said he was involved in the National Park establishment, DPD had the building book - showed what new construction should look like in terms of design. Not sure if there is a copy anywhere.

Motion:

R. Malavich motioned to issue a positive recommendation with the following comments:

1. The proposed change supports creation of additional housing downtown;
2. The proposed change would help revitalize buildings in the DMU zoning district; and
3. The proposed changes would act as a possible economic driver in downtown.

The motion was seconded by G. Frechette and passed unanimously, (5-0).

### **III. Other Business**

#### Historic Board Nomination

The current term of Richard Lockhart, Historic Board member representing the Lowell Planning Board, is due to expire on February 28, 2023. The Planning Board should begin the process of considering names for nomination. The City Manager shall appoint one member, confirmed by the Lowell City Council, to represent the Planning Board from a candidate nominated by the Planning Board.

T. Linnehan motioned and C. Cheng seconded the motion to nominate R. Lockhart as the Planning Board representative to the Historic Board. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

### **IV. Notices**

#### **V. Further Comments from Planning Board Members**

G. Frechette noted that he had multiple updates from several committees. Rourke Bridge committee met. Project is still on schedule. The design has four observation decks. Two bike and pedestrian lanes. Lighting under the bridge. First master plan public workshop, over 200 people attended. Housing subcommittee being coordinated through NMCOG. Working to assist Lowell in HPP, also going to be used as part of the master plan process. Hopes everyday Lowellians will participate in the process.

T. Linnehan recommended that the Board members take a look at land use board handbook F. Cigliano distributed. Helpful.

### **VI. Adjournment**

G. Frechette motioned to adjourn, C. Cheng seconded, passed unanimously, (5-0). The time was 7:25PM.