



Memorandum

To: ZAP Chair Deborah J. Crossley

From: Councilor Pam Wright

CC: City Council; Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development;
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director

Re: Concerns limiting visuals by presenters in upcoming ZAP meetings

Date: January 8, 2023

Dear Chair Crossley,

It has come to my attention that the clerk's office informed presenters late Friday afternoon of an 11th hour shift in the presentation format, stating that no slides will be permitted at Monday night's ZAP meeting. This is extremely troubling.

There is absolutely no reason why there should be any limitations on visual aids or screen sharing. As the old adage states, "A picture is worth a thousand words." With the complex topic of zoning, visuals facilitate a more accurate understanding of the issues and the content being presented. I find it highly ironic that presenters are being told that they cannot use visuals when the Planning Department and its consultant Utile give visual presentations every time they present.

It was implied that because of the number of groups, there is insufficient time to share slides. How is showing slides adding time? Five minutes is five minutes. If a group cannot handle sharing slides in an efficient manner, this will reduce its presentation time and does not change the amount of time allotted for each group to present its material.

Many of our constituents find the last-minute change-of presentation format unfair. Some residents are calling this a form of censorship. I am hearing from many constituents that debate and discussion is being shut down.

Groups have spent time and money preparing these visuals. Showing what can be built per the proposed zoning is very important. In my opinion, the Planning Department's drawings are generic and do not accurately depict the proposed zoning for our villages. They present inexact lower buildings, four rows of trees, open space, separated bike lanes, etc. that do not reflect the proposed zoning or the physical space limitations of our villages. I and many others have asked repeatedly for visuals for specific villages. This request has been ignored. These residents developed visuals using their villages and the proposed zoning. Public comment was solicited, and I believe we need to honor this request.

Lastly, at the end of each of the recent draft Map Info + input sessions, Director Heath closed by saying residents would have another opportunity in January to present their support or concerns to ZAP. You as Chair made similar statements during many of our council meetings. This opportunity was rescinded days after the draft Map Info + input sessions, but not broadly broadcasted to the Newton community. I expect residents will be attending Monday night with the expectation of speaking to the ZAP Committee. If time permits, they should be allowed to voice their opinions.

Thank you,

Pam Wright