

Dear Friends,

I hope that the new year is off to a good start for you and your family! The City Council has a busy term ahead of it, including proposed changes to the Zoning Code; significant development projects, including a revised Riverside proposal; and needed improvements to our school buildings. Here are my thoughts and I welcome your feedback:

1. Zoning Code. For several years, we have been discussing significant changes to our Zoning Code. I agree that we need certain changes to our Zoning Code but we need to be cautious about efforts to rewrite our Zoning Code in its entirety. My priorities for revising the Zoning Code include (a) making sure that all special permit projects are required to include measures to address climate change; (b) carefully reviewing our current rules to make sure that they are clear and readily understandable and not unnecessarily burdensome; and (c) revising or eliminating requirements that are routinely modified or waived in our special permitting process. We also need to examine how we can more quickly reach the state threshold of ten percent affordable housing under chapter 40B (Newton has not yet met that goal which means that, under state law, a developer can bypass many of our zoning requirements for projects that meet the 40B standards). This effort will have two favorable consequences in that it will create more affordable housing and eliminate the threat of 40B which can be used to gain leverage in the special permitting process. Our Zoning Code work must be done carefully and thoughtfully, with particular attention paid to the language we use and consideration of all consequences, both intended and unintended.

2. Development projects. We cannot remain stagnant - responsible development is good for our city. That is why I voted for the Northland project, which was approved last term by the City Council after considerable deliberation and revisions to the project at the Council's request and will continue to support it when we vote on the referendum on March 3. Going forward, I will continue to support and promote responsible development, while not letting developers present us with fancy pictures and broad statements about their projects and simply accept them at face value. We must carefully and critically question each project, insisting on proper verification and future enforcement, to make sure that it meets the best interests of the city and I intend to continue to do just that as special permit projects, particularly large projects, come before us. A thoughtful, deliberate review process produces better projects!

3. School buildings. Throughout my tenure in public office for sixteen years, first on the School Committee and now on the City Council, I have supported our school building

projects. While great teaching is at the heart of our students' educational experience, our teachers and students need and deserve up to date buildings so that the best teaching and learning can take place. We have ongoing work for our early childhood program center and Horace Mann and needed work at other school buildings, including Lincoln-Eliot, Franklin, Countryside, and Ward, ahead of us. I will be working hard to ensure that this work moves forward as expeditiously as possible and will support the funding to get this work done.

I welcome your thoughts, questions, comments and criticisms!

Thanks,

Marc