

**CITY OF WOBURN
WOBURN CITY COUNCIL
ORDINANCES, CHARTER & RULES COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WOBURN CITY HALL
MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025 – 6:02 p.m.**

Voting members present: Chair Joseph Demers, Councilor Robert Toro, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor Robert Ferullo and Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen

Non-voting members present: President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Charles Viola, and Councilor William Pappalardo. Absent: Councilor Joanne Campbell

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon, City Auditor Charles Doherty, and Human Resources Director Shawna Healey

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Reading and approval of previous meeting minutes: Motion made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of March 24, 2025; approved, 5-0.

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Order to amend Woburn Municipal Code 2-180 relative to non-union salaries: Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to receive and make part of the permanent record a set of documents from City Auditor Doherty enumerating salary cost forecasts for non-union employees covered by the proposed ordinance change; approved, 5-0. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to receive and make part of the permanent record an email from Carolyn Cribbie entitled “Central Square Overlay District Proposal;” approved, 5-0. Mayor Concannon said there is a companion order in the council’s Finance Committee. He said this order will codify the changes as a result of adjustments that are made to the ordinance regarding non-union department heads and other non-union municipal positions. He said these adjustments are consistent with raises negotiated in collective bargaining. He said the City Auditor and the Human Resources Director are here to answer any technical questions the committee members may have. He said six of the seven union contracts have been settled. He said there is one more to go. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said during the original deliberations for this ordinance there were concerns about money being paid out prior to the approval of the transfer. She said she met with City Auditor Doherty and Treasurer/Collector Timothy Donovan and moving forward any salary increases will not be paid until the transfer has been approved by the City Council. She said that is the only comment she has for now. She said she asked for an received a list from Substance Use and Mental Health Coordinator Mackenzie Dezieck of programs that are offered through Ms. Dezieck’s office. She said these are all amazing programs. She said she would like to offer these flyers as part of the permanent record. Motion made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor DiMambro the following documents: A flyer entitled “Summer Sport-Based Therapy Group;” a flyer entitled

“Peer Recovery Group for women struggling with alcoholism;” a flyer entitled “Stress Less A workshop for Tween & Teen Caregivers;” a flyer entitled “Overdose Prevention & Naloxone Training;” and a flyer entitled “Live Free Fun Run;” approved, 5-0. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she had questions about comp time that she addressed with HRD Healey. She said Ms. Stone accrued 65 hours of comp time in 2024 and thus far in 2025 has accrued 51.5 hours. She said that was one of the things that was a little concerning. She said if Ms. Stone is working more hours and not requesting comp time, it could prompt legal problems down the road. She said she wants the committee to be mindful of that. Mayor Concannon said his office does keep close tabs on Ms. Stone’s comp time. Motion made by Councilor DiMambro and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen that the order, as amended, ought to pass; approved, 5-0. Chair Demers said it is important to note that the order does not include the Economic Development Manager position.

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Guastavino Realty, LLC for a proposed zoning amendment to add a new section of the WZO to include the Central Square Overlay District (CSOD) and proposed amendment to Woburn Zoning Map by making thirteen (13) parcels of land as shown on a plan entitled “Overlay District Zoning Exhibit Plan” dated November 25, 2024, subject to Central Square Overlay District (CSOD): Representing the applicant were Attorney Joseph R. Tarby III, Murtha Cullina, 500 Unicorn Park, Woburn, MA; and John Tocci, Guastavino Realty LLC, 660 Main St., Woburn, MA. Attorney Tarby said there have been three public hearings to date. She said the applicant has received a lot of feedback, suggestions and requests from the City Council and the public about a number of things. He said some of the concerns include the density of the dwelling units, traffic, the height of the condo buildings, dearth of parking, the process is moving too quickly, the assertion there are no additional permits required, and that flooding on Hart Street will be worse. He said all of those issues have been taken into account and Mr. Tocci will respond to them this evening. Mr. Tocci said he represents Tocci Building Corp. and Guastavino Realty. He said he would like to offer a slide presentation. He said this project has been in development for some time. He said it involves a lot of issues and a lot of history. He said there have been community forums and informational meetings. He referred to slide #2 entitled Project Scope: “Assertion: ‘Tocci is working to buy the Wyman castle to develop that property, and the overlay has something to do with the Wyman property.’” Mr. Tocci said he has no desire to buy the Wyman School property, and he is fully supportive of saving the Wyman. He said the Wyman School property and the proposed Tocci property have no connection to one another. He said the CSOD does not include the Wyman School property. Mr. Tocci referred the committee to slide #3 entitled Community Input: “Assertion: ‘The project has had very little community input and this process is going too quickly.’” Mr. Tocci said the developer has solicited continuous community input since April 18, 2018, with more than 60 meetings. He said prior to filing for the CSOD, the project has been in active planning with city officials for more than three years. He said on July 30, 2024, a newly formed community group requested a community meeting at Tocci’s offices. He said more than 500 residents were invited and approximately 75 attended, along with members of the City Council, the City Engineer and Planning Dept. staff. He said he is willing to slow the process down to gain more community insight. He said a second community meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 21. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #4, also entitled Community Input. He said the slide refers to the aforementioned community meeting on June 30, 2024, at which three or four planning professionals spoke. He said the neighborhood group is called the Woburn Community

Engagement Association. He said it was a great meeting and the neighborhood group was not in favor of everything he wanted to do. He said they were quite articulate and knowledgeable. He said the community was very informed. He said 75 people showed up for a meeting that lasted three hours on a summer night. He said he walked through the plan. He said a plan for Central Square was discussed. He said it was kind of a first look for everybody. It said it was a great engagement and conversation. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #5, entitled Main St.: "Assertion: Tocci own all the properties along Main Street and continues to allow them to fall into disrepair." Mr. Tocci said he does not own all the properties along Main Street. He said there are nine properties along Main Street from the fire station to the proposed edge of the project to the north. He said he bought two properties in 2000 and 2018. He said both properties were upgraded and leased to tenants. He said two of the properties purchased in 2019 and 2024 are beyond repair and have always been intended to be torn down. He said one of the properties was purchased in 2015 in poor condition and is used for storage. He said there are two properties under agreement. He said the purchase agreements were made last month. He said once concerns were expressed, he began to make cosmetic improvements where possible and has begun exterior cleanup operations. He said upon approval of the CSOD, he will apply for demolition permits in compliance with the Woburn Municipal Code. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #6, also entitled Main St. He said The Guastavino Building, which other developers have approached him to buy, is the true testament of the quality one should expect. He said the expectations were for him to tear down the Guastavino Building, but he restored it from a vine-covered, dilapidated structure to what it is today. He said the building echoes the sentiment of the 'Save the Wyman' group to save a historic structure and turn it into a working museum. He said this afternoon he had a meeting with architects to improve the exhibition space. He said he traveled to Columbia University to study the archives of Guastavino and obtain original documents. He said next to H.H. Richardson, Mr. Guastavino is the foremost architectural personality in the city. He said tenants were removed from the foyers to restore tiles and masonry arches which were covered by cheap ceiling tiles. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #8, entitled Density & Height: "Assertion: The proposed project is too large; too dense." Mr. Tocci said in July the original project was proposed to be 175-185 units. He said as mitigation requests grew to several millions of dollars the density had to increase to 225 units to cover the expense. He said he listened to people. He said there was an idea to turn the idea of closing the 1-way section of Lowell Street into a park that would have cost \$3.2 million. He said he agreed the project was too big, and it was a mistake. He said he heard that in late February when the Planning Board said it. He said he heard about flooding issues along Hart Street at the July 30, 2024, meeting, and said this was a problem they could participate in solving, but all of that money has to come from someplace to finance that. He said the development team is working on a revised plan to reduce density to 20-24 townhouse units along Main Street and an apartment unit count along Main Street that is less than the total number of units at Place Lane, which he said has 147 units. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #9 entitled "Assertion: The proposed building heights are too tall." Mr. Tocci said the original proposal included 32 rental units in four 8-unit groups along Main Street. He said the revised proposal will be reduced to 20-24 units, in smaller 6-unit groups of for sale homes, in response to resident preference. He said it is difficult to produce the kind of quality he wants to produce. He said he hates vinyl siding. He said he likes what the Lennons have done with their homes. He said the homes in the overlay district will include townhomes consistent with the heights along Main Street, which will be no higher than five feet of the current maximum height allowed within the R-2 zoning district. He said the buildings out back were proposed to be five stories and a

maximum of 65 feet in height. He said the plans are being revised to four stories and 50 feet to be consistent with the Planning Board's recommendations and the 40-year-old development at Place Lane. He said the main building was originally five stories over a garage. He said he took the garage out and reduced the building from five stories to four. He said the height of the building is more than 20 feet lower than it was originally proposed. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #10, also entitled Density & Height. Mr. Tocci said the original design in November 2024 called for 40 percent building coverage and the current design is 35 percent; usable open space has increased from 25 percent to 30 percent; the number of units has decreased from 225 to 165; the number of townhouses has decreased from 32 to 24, with a maximum number of apartments at 145. He said parking ratio has increased from 1.5 spots per unit to 1.7 spots per unit. He said the maximum building height on Main Street has increased from 39 feet to 40 feet at the request of Building Commissioner Thomas Quinn. He said the maximum building height has decreased from 65 feet with five floors to 50 feet with four floors. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #11, entitled Parking: "Assertion: 'The project does not have enough parking.'" Mr. Tocci said the original proposal called for 1.5 parking spaces per unit. He said with the reduced unit count, the parking will be increased to 1.7 spaces per unit. He said this will allow for more than one space per bedroom, approximately 10 visitor spaces, plus parking for the existing building, which can also be used for visitor parking on evenings and weekends. He said all spaces will be on site. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #12, entitled Design Process: "Assertion: 'The project will require parking on the adjacent Boys & Girls Club property.'" Mr. Tocci said no parking will be needed on the Boys & Girls Club property. He said previously members of the development team and Boys & Girls Club officials had conversations to explore the use of a half-acre of land for additional parking on club property. He said this parking would have been on land currently unused by the club and would have provided the club with an annual stream of ground lease payments. He said moving forward there will be no need for additional parking. "Assertion: 'If the CSOD overlay is approved, no additional permits are required.'" Mr. Tocci said this is not a true statement. He said the City Council has been fastidious about writing a deep definition of the overlay district, which he thinks is a very valuable tool for a builder. He said he hates the term developer. He said he is a builder. He said if the CSOD is approved, the project would require a special permit from the City Council, an order of conditions from the Conservation Commission and building permits from the Building Commissioner. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #13, entitled Design Process: "The overlay district gives no control over the design, and the finished product will be completely different than the proposal." Mr. Tocci said to ensure the project is built in accordance with the revised development plan, he is proposing to include a provision in the CSOD that would require the submission, review and approval of a Preliminary Concept Plan. The PCP would be approved simultaneously with the rezoning of the property into the CSOD, thus ensuring compliance post-CSOD approval. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #14, entitled Traffic: "Assertion: Traffic will be considerably worse as a result of the development." Mr. Tocci said the data on the anticipated traffic impact at the prior full unit count of 225 was presented to the City Council, with a net increase in traffic of less than 4 percent at peak hours. He said the substantial unit count reductions will result in a proportional reduction in traffic at about 25-30 percent. He said revised traffic data will be provided to the council. He said the impact on traffic will be equal to or less than the traffic generated from Place Lane, which he said is de minimis. He said the daytime population in Woburn is two times what it is at night because of the commercial population. He said when he acquired 660 Main Street he thought about a no left turn onto Eaton Avenue because there is no left lane. So, he said, he developed a left hand lane. He said during the peak

hour traffic is commercial traffic going to work on Main Street. He said it is not a panacea. He said people need to look at the data and understand that. He said the revised data will result in a decrease in traffic of between 3-3.5 percent. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #15 entitled Neighborhood Improvement. "Assertion: 'The proposed project does not enhance the neighborhood.'" Mr. Tocci said there is a clear difference between the quality of architecture with the properties included in the overlay and the rest of Main Street, meaning the Lennon houses. He said the project would raise the quality of design and raise Central Square to the standards set by Main Street's level of architectural quality, creating a gateway to downtown Woburn. He said the development team originally proposed several improvements to the area, including the expansion of Wyman Park, the reconfiguration of the Main/Eaton streets intersection, and creating pedestrian connections to the Middlesex Canal path. He said these were outlined in the July 2024 meeting. He said these would be paid for by a combination of grants and a mitigation fund created by the developer. He said at the revised unit count of 145, the mitigation is reduced to \$200,000. He said they are still finding ways to do things that they feel are important, like for the safety of kids. He said he welcomes kids cutting through their property to get to the Hurld-Wyman School and the Boys & Girls Club. He said he welcomes people who walk their dogs. He referred to before and after renderings on slides #16 and #17. He referred to slide #18, entitled Drainage: "Assertion: 'The development will make the flooding on Hart Street worse.'" Mr. Tocci said this is not correct. He said at the July 2024 meeting the Planning Director provided the history of Hart Street flooding. He said after hearing from residents he commissioned an assessment of the Cummings Brook basin. He said they were amazed with the condition. He said the city dropped the ball, or more accurately the city didn't pick up the ball and do it properly. He said he has proposed the formation of a task force. He said he would be happy to sit on a task force and see things don't get dropped again. He referred to slide #19, entitled Zoning: "Assertion: 'The property is zoned R-3. Under that zoning, 30 units could be developed on the property.'" He said that is incorrect. He said the front portion of the property is zoned R-2 and the rear portion is zoned S-1. He said approximately 70-80 multi-family units could be developed on the property. "Assertion: '40B is not an option for this property.'" Mr. Tocci said that is correct. He said currently Woburn is above the 10 percent threshold for affordable housing stock. He said if the city drops below that threshold or the state increased the threshold, the city could be eligible for development in accordance with Ch. 40B. He said he does not want a 40B project. He said he doesn't want to talk about 40B. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #20, entitled School Impact: "Assertion: 'The school system can't support the project.'" Mr. Tocci said the project is anticipated to generate 13 school-aged children at an average cost of \$19,992 per pupil. He said the project will generate \$560,000 in new taxes; more than enough to offset the cost of school-aged children. He said he realizes this does not address the space situation at the Hurld-Wyman School. He said data shows that affordable units account for the majority of school-aged children. He said the project will be comprised of 15 percent affordable "for rent" units and 10 percent "for sale" units. He said this will ensure the overall development stays above the 10 percent affordable threshold to maintain Woburn's subsidized housing inventory status, while minimizing impact on the schools. Mr. Tocci referred to slide #21, which provided a summary of his presentation. Councilor Toro thanked Mr. Tocci for his presentation. He said he has been a councilor for just under two years. He said it is pretty apparent this overlay district isn't something the community wants. He said he is not a supporter of split zoning. He said the size of the overlay that lies within the S-1 zoning district is four acres, upon which Mr. Tocci has the ability to build plus or minus 65 units. He said there are 9-11

properties in the R-2 district, which Mr. Tocci said could yield 70-80 units without a variance or special permit. He said he does not understand why Mr. Tocci is not considering a project that complies with the zoning code. He said he appreciates Mr. Tocci has reduced the project, but the community has spoken. He said his recommendation would be the proposed zoning amendment ought not to pass. He said he will make that motion tonight or a motion to deny the petition on Tuesday. He said he thinks Mr. Tocci will hear similar sentiments from other councilors and neighbors tonight. He said he thinks the council will have to deal with what is in front of it now. He said what Mr. Tocci has in front of the council is unacceptable to the community. He said that has been made clear. He said he spends half his day responding to email about the CSOD. He said he thinks it's time to put this to rest. He said he appreciates the effort. Councilor Mercer-Bruen thanked Mr. Tocci for his presentation. She said she appreciates the changes Mr. Tocci made but she has made it pretty clear she wants to see single and two-family homes that are allowed by right. She said it appears Mr. Tocci has given a 40B filing a lot of thought. She said she will be making a motion the petition ought not to pass. She said the community has spoken loud and clear. Councilor DiMambro said he agrees with his colleagues. He said councilors listen to the people. He said he has received well over 120 emails, and of those, only one was in quasi-support. He said the numbers don't lie. He said he thinks Mr. Tocci can build 70-80 units by right. He said the neighbors have spoken loud and clear. He said they do not want something as large and as dense as Mr. Tocci is proposing. He said he thinks Mr. Tocci has a talented group that could do something phenomenal. He said that's what needs to be focused on. He said he knows everything Mr. Tocci does costs money. He said he will not be supporting the CSOD when it comes for a vote. He said he does not want to waste any more of Mr. Tocci's time. Motion made by Councilor DiMambro and seconded by Councilor Toro to suspend the City Council's rules to allow any non-voting member of the council to address the petition; all in favor, 5-0. Councilor Pappalardo said every councilor has been getting a lot of emails. He said members of the City Council are elected by the people for the people, and he thinks the people have spoken. He said he knows Mr. Tocci has made concessions. He said if public sentiment was split 50/50, it would be a different situation, but given the input from the community he cannot support this petition. Councilor Viola asked which properties along Main Street are owned by Mr. Tocci, and which ones are under repair. Mr. Tocci said he owns 658 Main St. and 662 Main St. He said he owns 10 Lowell St. but that house is being torn down. Councilor Viola said he sees the writing on the wall. He said he appreciates Mr. Tocci trying to make the properties he owns look better, but he cannot support the creation of the zoning district. President Dillon said the proposed overlay district is in Ward 3. He said he wants to thank the City Council for all the work it has done. He said he appreciates that. He said the approval of the overlay district is when the council has leverage. He said if the council waits until the special permit phase, it won't have leverage. He said it would have been great if the applicant and the council had come together and the neighborhood would have gotten mitigation for Hart Street. He said he has tried to find solutions for Hart Street and the Middlesex Canal. He said he has been down there many times but he couldn't get it done. He said he has heard loud and clear from his constituents they do not want this overlay district. He said he understands government at a higher level may have different ideas about housing, but the council has to listen to its constituents. He quoted George Washington thusly: "Speak seldom, but to important subjects, except such as particularly relate to your constituents, and, in the former case, make yourself perfectly master of the subject." He said constituents have consistently filled this chamber in opposition to this petition. He said he cannot support the CSOD. Chair Demers said he has received requests from his colleagues

requesting audience participation. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Toro to suspend the City Council's rules to allow members of the public to address the petition; all in favor, 5-0. Carol Nagle, 723 Main St., said she wholeheartedly agrees with the notion an overlay district is like a box of chocolates in Forrest Gump; you never know what you're going to get. She said there was supposed to be a life sciences building in the neighborhood since 1994 but nothing has been built. She said overlay districts scare her. She said she is not sure what is going to happen in the Showcase Cinemas parking lot. She said it is a mess down there. She said the bottom line is Mr. Tocci can build plenty of beautiful homes without an overlay district. He said Mr. Tocci has threatened a 40B project. He said Mr. Tocci will have to follow the rules. She said she appreciates the time the council took. She said what could happen in the overlay district at the Showcase could happen in Central Square. Planning Director John Cashell said he would like to bring up a historically significant scenario from 1985. He said the city of Woburn was wrapping up negotiations with a property owner named Shannon who owned property off Pearl Street. He said the city at the time was led by Mayor Rabbitt. He said the city failed to work with the developer. He said all Mr. Sherman wanted was 30 townhouses. He said that area is now Kimball Court, which he said is probably the #1 problem the city faces. He said he had a conversation with Mayor Rabbitt at the time. He said the mayor ignored the will of the people. He said 30 townhouses became 500 units, plus the abutting spinoff in Burlington. He said it was mentioned the governor and the legislature are changing the housing parameters. He said Woburn has changed so dramatically because of smart growth zoning. He said things are happening so fast. He said the governor and the legislature can make changes that will make Woburn defenseless, but what are you going to do, take on the state? He said water and sewer, fire, police and schools are all going to be affected by urbanized development. He said developers may be able to go up as high as 65 feet and develop as many units as they want. He said Woburn is no longer in control of its own destiny. He said there is talk about increasing the 40B threshold to 12 percent, perhaps even 15 percent. President Dillon asked if he could ask Director Cashell a couple of questions. Chair Demers said he would like to hear from all the residents who want to speak first. Catherine Shaughnessy, 31 Scott Street, said she does not like overlay districts either. She said she would like to see the committee vote this petition ought not to pass. She said nothing was presented tonight that is going to change her mind. She said she hopes the council does not give the petition leave to withdraw. She said please send the petition out ought not to pass and do it tonight. She said as far as the state telling the city what to do, she likes the idea of joining other cities and towns to protest. Motion made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor Mercer-Bruen to return to the regular order of business; all in favor, 5-0. President Dillon asked Director Cashell if there was an overlay district when Kimball Court was built. Director Cashell said there were no overlay districts at the time. President Dillon said he wants to make sure the council is comparing apples to apples. He said he feels very strongly that the council ought to listen to its constituents. He said he understands what Director Cashell is saying but what's in front of us tonight but what's in front of us tonight. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Toro that the proposed zoning amendment "ought not to pass;" Roll call: Councilor Toro – Yea; Councilor Mercer-Bruen – Yea; Councilor Ferullo – Yea; Councilor DiMambro – Yea; Chair Demers – Yea; motion passes, 5-0.

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Motion made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to adjourn; all in favor, 5-0, Chair Demers adjourned the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

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A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees

