

Watertown City Council

Administration Building
149 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
Phone: 617-972-6470

ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

John M. Airasian,
Councilor At Large

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Emily Izzo,
District D Councilor

Report of the Committee on Economic Development & Planning Meeting Date: March 28, 2023

The Committee convened on Tuesday March 28, 2023 at 6:00 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Council Chamber, with remote participation by Zoom. Present were Lisa Feltner, chair; and Vincent Piccirilli, secretary. John Gannon, vice chair, arrived at 6:20. Staff present were Steven Magoon, Assistant City Manager/Director of Community Development and Planning, and Gideon Schreiber, Assistant Director of Planning. Also present were residents Linda Scott, Joan Gumbleton, and Elodia Thomas.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss updates to the proposed DCDP regulations for enhanced notification to neighbors on projects. The meeting was called to order at 6:08.

Mr. Schreiber provided a memo regarding the status of the public notification regulations (see attachment). The basic problem is that the original plan, which was for the developer to get mailing lists of all addresses from the US Post Office, will not work, as the post office provides addresses by carrier route, and there is no way to map this to the 500 ft distance from the project property line.

Staff met with the GIS consultant, and the city's GIS system can produce a list of addresses from the Master Address Table, which is generated from the state's emergency management system. Unfortunately this system has some duplicate non-mailing addresses for multi-unit buildings, but it was agreed that it would be better to have some duplicate addresses than to miss some addresses. The plan will be for DCDP to generate the 500 ft notice list from GIS for the developers, who will print and mail the enhanced notices at their cost. The Committee agreed with this approach.

Other discussion points:

- DCDP will continue to print and mail the abutters & abutters-to-abutters statutory notices, as in the past.
- DCDP will continue discussions with the GIS consultant to explore options for flagging "mailable" addresses in the Master Address Table, to weed out duplicates.
- DCDP will develop a template for developers to print the enhanced notices, to differentiate them from the statutory notices, and to make them more "eye-catching" to avoid them from being ignored as junk mail.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

Report prepared by Vincent Piccirilli

Attachment: DCDP memo dated March 28, 2023



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To: Committee on Economic Development and Planning
From: Steve Magoon, Assistant City Manager & Director of Community Development & Planning; Gideon Schreiber, Assistant Director of Planning
Date: March 28, 2023
Re: **Public Noticing Update**

This memo provides an update to the Honorable City Council regarding the request to create regulations for additional notice requirements. The regulations are intended for projects with four or greater residential units, or for non-residential projects with 10,000 square feet of new development or greater with a requirement of a Special Permit with Site Plan Review before the Planning Board and Zoning Board. The following is a draft of the proposed regulations, to be finalized by the department in coordination with the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Neighborhood Notice – the intent is to use the master address table to create a general mailing list for all addresses using the city’s Master Address Table (MAT). This would be done by city staff rather than trying to get a list from the Post Office. A couple of issues have been identified including:

- a. The post office system and access would be limited and does not appear to be able to select a project site and create a specific buffer and would take control out of the hands of the City.
- b. The MAT includes all mailing addresses within the city, including ones that are not used. For instance, most two-family properties would have three addresses including Unit A, Unit B, and Units A-B.
- c. The official abutters list must use the owner of record in the Assessor records. There is not a way to reduce duplication by merging the two lists.
- d. There will be multiple mailings received by certain addresses and owner-occupied units which may generate confusion and frustration and increased calls to staff.
- e. The mailing list will be generated by staff, as is done for abutters notice.

In summary, the additional mailing to a 500’ neighborhood list in addition to the 300’ abutters list will generate a substantial increase in the number of paper mailings necessary with a lot of duplication. Below is one example using the City Hall as an example. In this example the abutters list at 300’ creates **127** labels (as required for abutters lists) and 500’ resident notification creates **1028** labels, as it includes every tenant in the apartment buildings as well as all commercial units. For the noticing, this would require mailing the notice to each list, with increased duplication with three or more copies

received by certain residents for every noticed meeting (community meeting, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals).

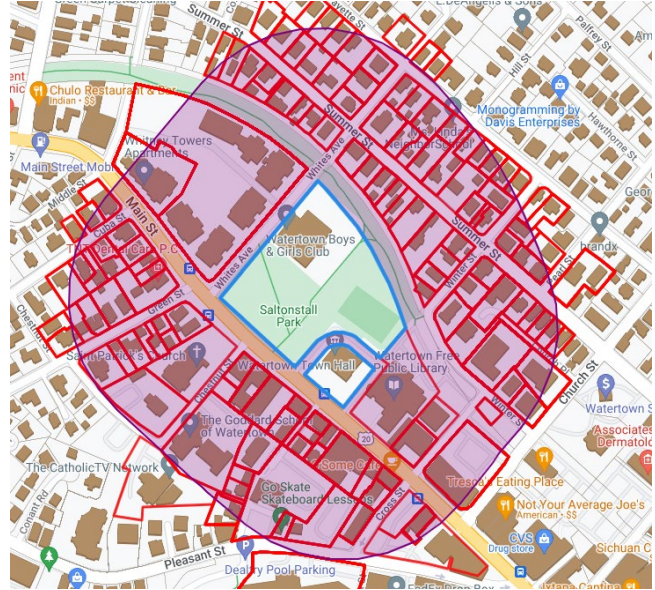
Example: 149 Main Street:

All abutters within 300'



300' = 127 addresses

Neighborhood Notice within 500'



500' = 1028 addresses

DRAFT REGULATIONS:

Department of Community Development and Planning

Noticing Requirements

The following requirements are intended to satisfy the minimum noticing requirements of MGL Chapter 40A, Section 9 and 11 as well as additional Watertown specific notice to ensure that those who reside near new larger scale projects are provided with written notice. This document also can serve as a guide to the approval process, with specific public notice called out within the overall process.

Projects Approvals - Special Permit with Site Plan Review or Site Plan Review

- Common – Special Permit or Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SP/SR) – Most larger scale projects fall under this categories.
- Uncommon - Site Plan Review Only Approvals (SR) – Certain projects are allowed **by right** but require Planning Board Review and approval through a formal hearing process. Protected uses like churches, daycares and schools are common examples.

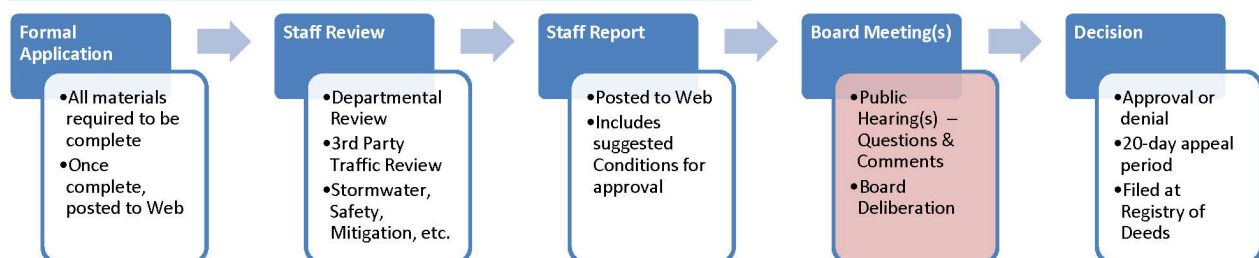
Watertown - Special Permit (SP) with Site Plan Review (SR) Process

Indicates formal opportunities for public input

Phase One (for projects requiring SR) – Initial Community and City Review



Phase Two – Special Permit Granting Authority (SPGA) Hearing Process



Phase Three – Implementation



The Permit Granting Authority (Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals depending on Zoning District) must approve an application prior to the issuance of permits (a typical application is a request for a Special Permit with Site Plan Review but there can also be applications for Site Plan Review Only).

Applicability:

Enhanced noticing shall be required for all projects that require Site Plan Review with **four** or greater residential units, or for non-residential projects with **10,000** square feet of new development or greater, as identified in the Watertown Zoning Ordinance Table of Uses.

Noticing Requirements:

Community Meeting:

The applicant shall hold at least one public information community meeting no less than **10 days** prior to submitting an application for a Permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The Director of the Department of Community Development and Planning (DCDP) may require a second meeting depending on the complexity of a project.

1. The applicant must coordinate the meeting date and location with DCDP and the City Councilor who represents the district where the project is proposed. Developer should look at the [city calendar](#) to determine a meeting time that doesn't conflict with other meetings
2. Provide materials and notice at least two weeks prior to the meeting:
 - a. The applicant must submit project materials and draft notice to DCDP **two weeks** in advance of the meeting. Staff posts the Community Meeting on the city website (Civic Clerk) with all project materials (Laser Fiche)
 - b. Notice is sent electronically through the city's email and text notification system.
 - c. DCDP provides the **abutters** list and **neighborhood** notice list to applicant
 - i. The applicant must distribute a notice to property owners within **300'** of the site
 - ii. The applicant must distribute a notice to all addresses within **500'** of the site
3. Applicant must submit to DCDP a written summary of the meeting, within **one week** after the meeting – with the report to include comments received and answers provided.

Hearings before the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals:

1. Abutters Notice (completed by DCDP Staff): As required by MGL 40A and includes meeting date, time, and contact
 - a. Advertised twice a week apart with the first advertisement at least two weeks before the hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in Watertown (Boston Globe), paid for in advance by the applicant
 - b. Mailed to abutters and abutters to abutters within 300 feet.
2. Enhanced Notice (applicant): The applicant shall mail the hearing notice to all addresses within 500' of the project site.