



## Zoning & Planning Committee Agenda

### City of Newton In City Council

Monday, January 12, 2026

7:00 pm  
Room 211

The Zoning and Planning Committee will hold this meeting as a hybrid meeting on Monday, January 12, 2026 at 7:00 PM that the public may access in-person or virtually via Zoom. To attend this meeting via Zoom use this link: <https://newtonma-gov.zoom.us/j/83790462808> or call 1-646-558-8656 and use the following Meeting ID: 837 9046 2808.

#### Items Scheduled for Discussion:

**Chair's Note:** *As the Committee has new members, part of the discussion of this item will be some background on how the Committee does its work on zoning items, as they occur within a statutory framework.*

**#21-26 Discussion concerning ZAP Committee workplan for the new term**  
COUNCILORS BAKER AND WRIGHT requesting a discussion with Zoning and Planning Committee concerning the work plan of the ZAP Committee for the new 2026-2027 term. (180 Days 07/30/2026).

**#23-26 Request for ordinance amendments to change oversight of the Economic Development Commission and for discussion on transition of the City's economic development functions and staff to the Mayor's Office**  
HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting to amend City Ordinance Section 22-95 to remove staffing responsibility for the Economic Development Commission from the Planning Department and relocate the Commission ordinance from Chapter 22 to Chapter 7; and further requesting a discussion on the transition of the City's economic development function and staff from the Planning Department to the Mayor's Office

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The location of this meeting is accessible, and reasonable accommodation will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA Coordinator at least two business days in advance of the meeting: [ADACoordinator@newtonma.gov](mailto:ADACoordinator@newtonma.gov) or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711

**Respectfully Submitted,  
R. Lisle Baker, Chair**



Marc C. Laredo  
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts  
Office of the Mayor

**#23-26**

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January 2nd, 2026

Honorable City Council  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Honorable City Councilors:

**Economic Development in Newton: A Case for Elevation to the Mayor's Office**

Newton is rightfully described as a bedroom community, yet it is also home to more than 4,000 private, public, and nonprofit enterprises that bring approximately 54,000 employees into the city each day. This robust business presence is a vital part of Newton's identity and economic health.

Often referred to as the "Garden City," Newton offers a rare blend of suburban charm and urban accessibility, with walkable village centers, thriving cafés, extensive green space, excellent schools, and a strong sense of community. The city is also home to renowned educational institutions and world-class healthcare facilities.

Newton's commercial tax levy of nearly \$47 million annually is a critical revenue source that helps fund city programs and services while significantly reducing the tax burden on residential property owners. Supporting and strengthening our commercial base is therefore essential to Newton's long-term fiscal stability.

While there has always been productive collaboration between the Planning Department and Economic Development, we believe Newton's businesses and residents would be better served by elevating Economic Development to the Mayor's Office, increasing both its visibility and its capacity to act.

The Planning Department currently encompasses six divisions, each with substantial responsibilities and workloads. Within this lateral structure, Economic Development cannot consistently receive the level of focus, coordination, and executive support it requires. Moreover, while some aspects of Economic Development align naturally with planning, many do not.

Core elements of Economic Development include:

- Human capital
- Physical capital and infrastructure
- Technology and innovation
- Natural resources
- Entrepreneurship and investment

- Sound institutions and policies
- Quality of life for employees
- Strategic planning
- Business growth opportunities
- Marketing and communications

These responsibilities extend well beyond traditional planning functions and benefit from direct executive leadership.

Maintaining Economic Development within the Planning Department also represents a missed opportunity for Mayoral-level engagement in supporting existing businesses and attracting new ones. Relocating Economic Development to the Mayor's Office would streamline interactions with City Hall, improve coordination across departments, and provide businesses with a clear and accessible point of contact.

Under this model, when a new business seeks to locate in Newton, the Mayor's Office would guide them through City Hall processes, help clear obstacles, and act as an active partner in their success. When an existing business seeks to renovate, relocate, expand, or adapt its business model, Economic Development would be positioned to coordinate expeditiously across departments to support those efforts.

Importantly, most Newton businesses are small businesses. Many owners manage finances from their kitchen tables, navigating fluctuating revenues and real-world pressures. City Hall should not add to that burden. When municipal projects, such as roadwork, sidewalk replacement, or traffic pattern changes, are planned, proactive communication with affected businesses is essential. Housing Economic Development in the Mayor's Office ensures direct, two-way communication and early coordination to mitigate negative impacts.

The relationship between Arts and Culture and Economic Development illustrates how this work extends beyond planning functions:

- Arts and cultural programming drives foot traffic to village centers, benefiting nearby businesses. For example, the owner of Bluebird Bar in West Newton Square credits increased evening business to the revitalized programming at West Newton Cinema. Conversely, the owners of the former shop Artitudes reported a steep decline in foot traffic during the Cinema's pandemic closure, ultimately leading to their business closing.
- Citywide cultural events such as the Newton Bakery Crawl and Craft Crawl draw thousands of residents and visitors, directing participants to more than 40 small businesses and nonprofits while also benefiting nearby retail establishments.
- Small business events can increase visibility for arts and cultural institutions. Programs such as All Over Newton's pop-up lunches and the Thanksgiving Farmers' Market at the Allen Center boost revenues for participating businesses while raising awareness of cultural venues.
- In-store cultural events, from tastings and demonstrations to themed celebrations, encourage customers to linger, engage, and return, increasing both sales and community connection.

Arts and Culture is just one example of how Economic Development spans multiple departments and civic priorities. These efforts benefit significantly from the coordination, visibility, and authority that come with placement in the Mayor's Office.

In conclusion, moving Economic Development from the Planning Department to the Mayor's Office would:

- Strengthen relationships with existing businesses
- Improve efficiency and predictability for businesses working with City Hall
- Increase Newton's visibility and competitiveness in attracting new businesses
- Create a more unified, responsive, and strategic economic development framework

This change would position Newton to better support its commercial base, enhance quality of life, and ensure long-term economic vitality for the entire community.



Josh Morse  
Chief Operating Office  
City of Newton

## Experience

Bronze Memorial, Inc. - Sharon, MA  
**General Manager & CEO** 2017 - 2025

Led and optimized operations including finances, IT, sales, marketing, and HR - including digital and business model change initiatives - and managed industry and vendor relationships for the leading provider of custom bronze cemetery markers in New England.

- Delivered record gross sales and shareholder returns
- Developed and implemented rebranding strategy driving a cohesive new brand identity across all platforms
- Relocated, designed and managed the build out of new retail space
- Conducted market research and competitive analysis resulting in more effective sales and business strategies
- Implemented retirement program resulting in employee retention
- Spearheaded major IT overhaul, and document scanning project converting 65 years of business records
- Streamlined operations by transitioning to an outsourced payroll system, improving accuracy and efficiency - and implemented digital purchase agreements resulting in a 20% reduction in the sales cycle
- Led the company's COVID-19 response, establishing remote work policies and business continuity plans that ensured employee safety and continued business operations

Cheryl Lappin Consulting - Chestnut Hill, MA  
**Principal** 1990 - 2017

Provided custom marketing and business solutions to start-ups and established businesses in tech, financial services, nonprofit, healthcare, telecom, organic food and death care industries.

- Worked with internal and external stakeholders to identify and create opportunities for expanded visibility, customer loyalty, improved business protocols and increased sales
- Analyzed market dynamics to adjust pricing models and create more efficient business strategies
- Developed and implemented branding and rebranding strategies
- Created and implemented custom marketing communications and business plans that included website design and development, digital marketing, media relations, content creation, fundraising campaigns, competitor landscape assessment, advertising campaigns, event planning, public relations campaigns and product launches
- Managed SEO companies, graphic designers, printing companies and event vendors

Newton City Council - Newton, MA  
**Ward 8 City Councilor** 2002 - 2019  
**Vice President Newton City Council** 2010 - 2017

Represented the citizens of the City of Newton for nine terms. Elected for four consecutive terms by colleagues to serve in leadership of the City Council.

- Created best practices for committee chairs, presided over City Council meetings and served as acting Mayor
- Improved City Council communications with the executive office, city departments and the public
- Saved taxpayer money by establishing a "Lessons Learned" database for public building projects
- Strengthened services for seniors by advocating for a new Senior Center, making Newton an "Age-Friendly City", increasing senior transportation and expanding the Senior Tax Deferral Program
- Helped facilitate the acquisition and organization of the Newton Community Farm
- Improved public safety with new pedestrian activated lights, crosswalks, signage and intersection redesigns
- Collaborated with the State legislature and State agencies on public policy effecting Newton

**Committees:** Finance: 2012-2019 (Vice Chair 2018-2019), Public Facilities: 2002-2019 (Vice Chair 2004-2019), NewCAL Executive Building Committee: 2018-2019, Investment Advisory Committee: 2018, Re-codification Committee: 2012, Search Committee for Capital Planning/Building Commissioner: 2010-2011, Re-Precincting Committee: 2011, Search Committee for Commissioner of Inspectional Services: 2007, Zoning & Planning Committee: (Vice Chair 2004-2005, 2008-2011) 2002-2011, Committee on Community Preservation: 2002-2011 (Chair 2008-2009).

Network Engines, Inc. - Canton, MA

**Marketing/Web Manager** 1999 - 2001

Created website, managed subcontractors and on-line marketing for a start-up Internet Server company.

- Created, designed, maintained and wrote content for corporate site and company intranet
- Developed and implemented online marketing campaigns and analyzed effectiveness
- Managed search engine positioning company, graphic designers and interactive designers
- Increased partner loyalty and sales by creating individually focused partner pages
- Expanded global customer and partner base by developing language web pages and collateral in 8 languages

Linx Communications, Inc. - Newton, MA

**Marketing Manager** 1997 - 1999

Managed marketing efforts for start-up enhanced telecommunication services company specializing in unified messaging.

- Increased company visibility and generated leads through collateral, trade shows, press releases, advertising and the company website
- Increased employee performance by developing materials for training and testing program
- Developed new applications for existing products and collaborated on the packaging and positioning of services

Lappin Wallcoverings - Boston, MA

**Marketing Director & Showroom Manager** 1986 - 1989

Directed marketing efforts for a regional distributor of designer wallcovering and managed showroom in the Boston Design Center.

- Created and implemented marketing programs resulting in increased sales
- Hired, trained and managed sales/operations staff and developed operating budgets
- Determined which lines to promote and designed showroom displays
- Maintained manufacturer and customer relationships

Mayor's Office of Business & Cultural Development - Boston, MA

**Special Events Coordinator** 1983 - 1986

Coordinated Boston events ranging from small parades and road races to the Boston Marathon, Tall Ships visit and First Night celebrations.

- Acted as event logistics liaison with Police, Fire and Public Works
- Trained and supervised interns
- Wrote press releases and Mayoral speeches for city events
- Created and maintained a calendar of Boston special events

## **Volunteer**

Newton Farm Commission - Newton, MA

**Founding Chair & Member** - 2005 - 2008, 2022 to present

Local and State Political Campaigns

**Campaign Strategist and Campaign Manager on political campaigns 2000 - 2020**

## **Education**

Boston University - School of Public Communication - Boston, MA

Bachelor of Science in Public Relations - Concentration Corporate Marketing

# LAUREN BERMAN

Founder, All Over Newton — A Community Marketing Platform  
Newton, Massachusetts

## PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Founder and community-based economic development leader with deep roots in Newton and a proven record of supporting small businesses, activating village centers, and strengthening local commerce. Brings a collaborative, execution-oriented approach informed by private-sector experience and hands-on local implementation. Skilled at translating strategy into programs that deliver measurable, community-level results.

## CORE COMPETENCIES

Economic Development • Small Business Retention & Support • Village Center Revitalization • Public-Private Collaboration • Business Outreach & Community Engagement • Program Design & Implementation • Marketing & Communications • Stakeholder Coordination & Operational Improvement

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Founder

**All Over Newton** — Newton, MA | 2020–Present

- Founded and lead a citywide community marketing platform supporting Newton's small businesses, restaurants, and village centers.
- Designed and executed economic activation initiatives, including retail crawls, holiday strolls, pop-ups, and plaza events that increased foot traffic and local spending.
- Partner with small business owners to improve visibility, participation in local initiatives, and customer engagement results.
- Build partnerships with business associations, nonprofits, cultural organizations, and municipal partners.
- Develop structured programs, sponsorship models, and digital tools aligned with broader community and municipal priorities.

### Senior Marketing & Sales Roles

**IBM | Gartner** | Earlier Career

- Held senior roles within global organizations serving enterprise and institutional clients.
- Led go-to-market strategy, client engagement programs, and value-based communications.
- Developed analytical, financial, and cross-sector stakeholder management skills applicable to public-sector roles.

## EDUCATION

**Master of Business Administration (MBA), Marketing & Finance** — Columbia University  
**Bachelor of Arts (BA)** — Tufts University

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Longtime Newton resident with deep knowledge of village-specific business environments and active collaboration across small businesses, chambers, and community groups.

beautification, including but not limited to: landscaping of streets, parks, playgrounds and public areas, public and private parking lots; air rights construction; municipal buildings; private buildings; gasoline station design and landscaping; requests for zoning changes and special permits; signs; setback, height and bulk of new public and private construction, as may be required to assure that the aforementioned are aesthetically designed, located and landscaped; advise the parks, recreation and culture commissioner and the public works commissioner in the carrying out of their responsibilities; study the availability of public and private sources of funding for urban design and beautification programs and projects; and perform other such functions as may be delegated to it by ordinance. (Ord. Z-43, 02-17-09; Ord. No. B-53, 03-02-20)

Secs. 22-82—22-99~~94~~ Reserved.

**ARTICLE V.  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**Sec. 22-95. Economic Development Commission: establishment, purpose, membership, officers.**

~~(a) There is hereby established under General Laws chapter 40, section 8A, a development and industrial commission to be known as the Newton Economic Development Commission for the promotion and development of business and industry within the City of Newton, for the purpose of strengthening the local economy, thereby providing additional jobs and expanding the city's tax base, so as to enable the city to maintain existing service levels and if possible, enhance them; said commission to be governed and operated in accordance with the provisions relative thereto of the General Laws or any special act or amendment thereto.~~

~~(b) Said commission shall consist of fifteen (15) members who shall be residents of the city and who shall be appointed by the mayor subject to section 3-3 of the Charter. Initial terms shall be as follows: three (3) for a term of one year, three (3) for a term of two years, three (3) for a term of three years, three (3) for a term of four years, and three (3) for a term of five years. The mayor shall fill the vacancies in membership, arising from expired terms, by appointments for a term of three (3) years. Any vacancy in the membership of the commission shall be filled for the unexpired portion of any member's term by the mayor. Each member shall serve until his or her successor is appointed and duly qualified.~~

~~(c) The members of the commission shall elect annually one (1) member of said commission to be chairman, another to be vice chairman, and a third to be secretary.~~

~~(d) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services.~~

~~(e) Said commission shall be staffed by the city's department of planning and development, such staff to be provided for in the city's budget. The economic development director shall serve as executive director to the commission. Said commission may hire consultants and purchase materials and supplies necessary for the discharge of its duties, within the limits of any sum appropriated for such purpose.~~

~~(f) Said commission may apply for and receive funds through gifts, grants, and donations for the purposes of carrying out its activities, subject to the approval of the city council.~~

~~(g) Said commission shall have the power and duty:~~

~~(1) to study, investigate, and appraise economic conditions and trends affecting Newton industry, business and commerce;~~

~~(2) to promote, assist, and encourage the preservation and development of existing Newton industry, business and commerce;~~

- ~~(3) to promote, assist, and encourage the location and development of new industry, business and commerce in the city;~~
- ~~(4) to investigate and assist in the establishment of commercial projects, including projects involving private enterprises, for the purpose of strengthening the local economy; to identify appropriate commercial areas and zones for the establishment of said commercial projects; to consider and evaluate the environmental and traffic impacts of commercial developments;~~
- ~~(5) to prepare, collect, compile, advertise and distribute books, maps, charts, pamphlets and graphic material for the purpose of furthering the objectives for which the commission was established;~~
- ~~(6) to cooperate with, and seek to coordinate the activities of, all official and unofficial civic, neighborhood, research and promotional agencies, commissions, groups, associations and organizations having like or kindred economic development functions and concerns;~~
- ~~(7) to confer and cooperate with agencies of the state and federal government in the exercise of the aforesaid powers and duties;~~
- ~~(8) to confer and cooperate with other municipal departments and official and unofficial groups, associations and organizations in Newton, including but not limited to neighborhood associations and organizations, in order that industrial, business, and commercial development shall be appropriately related to residential, recreational, and municipal land uses in the city;~~
- ~~(9) to advise and make recommendations to appropriate officials, agencies, boards, departments and commissions of the City of Newton, including the mayor, the city council and the department of planning and development, regarding actions which, in said commission's judgment, would affect or improve the economic conditions and development of the city;~~
- ~~(10) to prepare and transmit to the city council, annually during the month of February, a report of said commission's activities and of its recommendations for improving the economic condition and development of the city. (Ord. No. S-71, 5-21-84; Ord. No. V-52, 12-4-95)~~

~~Secs. 22-96—22-99. Reserved.~~

**ARTICLE VI.  
COMMISSION ON DISABILITY**

**Sec. 22-100. Created, membership, terms, removal, chairperson, officers.**

There is hereby established within the city a commission on disability, consisting of not less than five (5) and not more than thirteen (13) members to be appointed by the mayor with the approval of the city council. Such members shall be residents of the city and shall serve without compensation. A majority of said commission members shall consist of people with disabilities, one member shall be a member of the immediate family of a person with a disability and one member of said commission shall be either an elected or appointed official of the city. The terms of the first members of said commission shall be for one, two or three years, and so arranged that the term of one-third of the members expires each year, and their successor shall be appointed for terms of three years each. Any member of said commission may, after a public hearing, if so requested, be removed for cause by the appointing authority. A vacancy occurring otherwise than by expiration of a term shall be filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as an original appointment. The chairperson and other officers shall be chosen by a majority vote of said commission members. (Ord. No. Z-74, 01-18-11; Ord. No. A-26, 08-12-13)

Chapter 44, Section 55C, of the General Laws, as may be from time to time amended, and with the provisions of any relevant general or special law. (Ord. No. B-93, 12-06-21)

**ARTICLE XI.**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**Sec. 7-104. Economic Development Commission: establishment, purpose, membership, officers.**

(a) There is hereby established under General Laws chapter 40, section 8A, a development and industrial commission to be known as the Newton Economic Development Commission for the promotion and development of business and industry within the City of Newton, for the purpose of strengthening the local economy, thereby providing additional jobs and expanding the city's tax base, so as to enable the city to maintain existing service levels and if possible, enhance them; said commission to be governed and operated in accordance with the provisions relative thereto of the General Laws or any special act or amendment thereto.

(b) Said commission shall consist of fifteen (15) members who shall be residents of the city and who shall be appointed by the mayor subject to section 3-3 of the Charter. Initial terms shall be as follows: three (3) for a term of one year, three (3) for a term of two years, three (3) for a term of three years, three (3) for a term of four years, and three (3) for a term of five years. The mayor shall fill the vacancies in membership, arising from expired terms, by appointments for a term of three (3) years. Any vacancy in the membership of the commission shall be filled for the unexpired portion of any member's term by the mayor. Each member shall serve until his or her successor is appointed and duly qualified.

(c) The members of the commission shall elect annually one (1) member of said commission to be chairman, another to be vice-chairman, and a third to be secretary.

(d) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

(e) Said commission shall be staffed by the city's economic development director or their designee. Said commission may hire consultants and purchase materials and supplies necessary for the discharge of its duties, within the limits of any sum appropriated for such purpose.

(f) Said commission may apply for and receive funds through gifts, grants, and donations for the purposes of carrying out its activities, subject to the approval of the city council.

(g) Said commission shall have the power and duty:

(1) to study, investigate, and appraise economic conditions and trends affecting Newton industry, business and commerce;

(2) to promote, assist, and encourage the preservation and development of existing Newton industry, business and commerce;

(3) to promote, assist, and encourage the location and development of new industry, business and commerce in the city;

(4) to investigate and assist in the establishment of commercial projects, including projects involving private enterprises, for the purpose of strengthening the local economy; to identify appropriate commercial areas and zones for the establishment of said commercial projects; to consider and evaluate the environmental and traffic impacts of commercial developments;

- (5) to prepare, collect, compile, advertise and distribute books, maps, charts, pamphlets and graphic material for the purpose of furthering the objectives for which the commission was established;
- (6) to cooperate with, and seek to coordinate the activities of, all official and unofficial civic, neighborhood, research and promotional agencies, commissions, groups, associations and organizations having like or kindred economic development functions and concerns;
- (7) to confer and cooperate with agencies of the state and federal government in the exercise of the aforesaid powers and duties;
- (8) to confer and cooperate with other municipal departments and official and unofficial groups, associations and organizations in Newton, including but not limited to neighborhood associations and organizations, in order that industrial, business, and commercial development shall be appropriately related to residential, recreational, and municipal land uses in the city;
- (9) to advise and make recommendations to appropriate officials, agencies, boards, departments and commissions of the City of Newton, including the mayor, the city council and the department of planning and development, regarding actions which, in said commission's judgment, would affect or improve the economic conditions and development of the city;
- (10) to prepare and transmit to the city council, annually during the month of February, a report of said commission's activities and of its recommendations for improving the economic condition and development of the city. (Ord. No. S-71, 5-21-84; Ord. No. V-52, 12-4-95)