

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF NEWTON

Massachusetts

DATE: March 20, 2023

TO: Zoning Board of Appeals

FROM: Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director of Planning and Development
Katie Whewell, Chief Planner for Current Planning

SUBJECT: Authorization of Peer Reviews
528 Boylston Street Comprehensive Permit

The rules of the Zoning Board of Appeals state that the Board may “hire outside consultants whenever the Board determines that the City lacks sufficient staff resources or expertise to provide timely reports or reviews of pending matters.” Since 2020, the City has contracted an on-call consultant team for Comprehensive Permits, consisting of one consultant for stormwater and site design, and one consultant for transportation. More recently, the City has sought authorization for a review by an on-call consultant for design. For the anticipated 528 Boylston Street filing, the City seeks authorization for a consultant team with expertise in the subject matters of site design and stormwater, transportation and building design. The transportation consultant’s scope consists of reviewing the traffic study, including trip generation, as well as loading, and proposed parking and circulation. The site design and stormwater consultant’s scope include reviewing drainage plans, stormwater and flood storage analyses, as well as sustainability. The design consultant’s review consists of reviewing proposed open space, building placement relationship to the street and nearby structures and overall massing of the proposed building. While the design consultants are careful not to redesign the project, it has proven to be a useful analysis in examining the presentation of the building in context with the neighborhood and pattern of the City and its villages. The scopes for each consultant also include context specific directive, for example, the site’s location on Route 9/Boylston Street.

The City seeks authorization for the following on-call consultant team: Horsley Witten as the site design and stormwater consultant, Beta as the traffic consultant, and NBBJ as the design consultant. Historically, the on-call consultants have been authorized at the first public hearing of the project. This often results in minimal analysis of the project between the time of application and first public hearing, which is required to take place no more than 30 days after filing the application, unless an extension is granted by the applicant. Due to the schedule of the Board, this item is likely to have its first public hearing in May, and the consultants need approximately 6-8 weeks of lead time for their review. In the case of the above referenced project, the City seeks authorization of the on-call consultant team prior to the first public hearing so that review and analysis can occur between the City, on-call consultants, and development team can get started in advance of the first public hearing.