

Lynn getting into the zone

By Thor Jourgensen / The Daily Item | Posted: Wednesday, October 14, 2015 3:00 am

LYNN — City councilors are poised to push zoning codes left unchanged for decades into the 21st century, correcting mismatches between more than 100 locations across Lynn and their zoning designations.

King's Lynne housing complex is an example of proposed changes the Planning Board and councilors will review during separate Oct. 27 meetings. With its manicured lawns, tree groves and tennis courts, King's Lynne doesn't look like a light industrial site, but that is how it is listed on city zoning maps.

"Making zoning compatible with current uses is what the council is taking a look at," said city Inspectional Services Director Michael Donovan.

Zoning codes limit the type of construction undertaken in different parts of the city, and the push to reform and modernize local codes has come from business community members and councilors. The council voted last spring to change light industrial zoning for Boston Street from Washington Street to Chestnut Street to a business district designation.

The Oct. 27 meetings will also focus on revamping site plan review, a process allowing city officials to look at a development proposal's detailed elements, including how it affects city parking needs, water and sewer and trash services.

Separate site plan review boards now pore through proposals requiring special permits, as well as plans for the waterfront, the central business district and the rezoned Boston Street corridor.

"They are all slightly different. The council wants to combine it into one process," Donovan said.

City Councilor-at-large Brendan Crighton called site plan review reform "pretty straightforward."

"It protects our neighborhoods while growing our local economy," he said.

But local businessmen, like Lynn Business Partnership executive board member James Moore, said



Lynn zoning changes

City attorney James Lamanna, left, and Inspectional Services Director Michael Donovan look over a zoning map.

zoning codes must be recrafted without “setting up barriers to development.” Donovan said one of the best ways to make sure that happens is to ensure zoning codes match the activities actually taking place in different parts of the city.

Homes occupy lots along Fays Avenue, but some of the lots, said Donovan, are zoned for business use.

“In 1926, there might have been something different there,” he said.

Revamping site plan review will include a proposal asking councilors to establish a seven-member board, including housing, inspections, water and sewer and public works officials, who will have 60 days — not the current 90 days allotted for site plan review — to conduct reviews.

Reviews would be required for projects calling for 2,000 square feet or more construction and ones involving driveway and parking lot alterations. Neighborhoods zoned for single-family and two-family residences would be exempt from site plan review.

The proposed zoning changes also allow mixed-use development combining residential and retail uses to expand beyond the central business district but not into single-family residential neighborhoods.

“Hopefully, this will be a lot better for the business community,” Donovan said.