

## PLANNING BOARD

DATE: October 26, 2017  
TIME: 7:00 P.M.  
PLACE: Large Meeting Room  
FOR: Regular Meeting  
PRESENT: Brandee Nelson, Chair; Jonathan Hankin; Jeremy Higa  
Pedro Pachano, Alternate Member  
Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Ms. Nelson called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

### **FORM A'S:**

There were no Form A's presented.

### **MINUTES: OCTOBER 5, 2017 & OCTOBER 12, 2017**

Mr. Hankin made a motion to approve the minutes of October 5, 2017 as amended, Mr. Higa seconded, all in favor.

Mr. Hankin made a motion to approve the minutes of October 12, 2017 as amended, Mr. Higa seconded, all in favor.

### **ZONING ITEMS FOR 2018 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING:**

The Board discussed zoning for State Road. Mr. Rembold gave the Board a handout, October 26, 2017 PB Zoning Amendments for May 2018 Town Meeting. The State Road area would be the new B-2-A zone.

Mr. Rembold said the existing B-2-A zone includes the Thornewood Inn and part of Fountain Pond. He recommended putting the current B-2-A properties into a residential zone. This would make the inn a pre-existing non-conforming use. He said he is not sure what the impacts would be. However, the area is more in keeping with a residential zone. Mr. Rembold said he thinks making the area a residential zone would be a better choice than expanding the business zone.

Mr. Hankin said Mr. Thorne has, in the past, expressed interest in expanding the operations at the inn.

Mr. Rembold said Mr. Thorne would still have options to maintain the use and grow it through the special permit process. He said the property would require a special permit in either zone.

Ms. Nelson said there is a lot of land in conservation on the east side of Stockbridge Road. She said it makes sense to rezone the area R-4.

Mr. Rembold said he would go with R-4 as the working presumption. He said he went through the bylaw and changed the B-2-A uses in the Table of Use as per the previous discussions. Mr. Rembold said the State Road zone mirrors very closely the existing B & MXD zones.

Mr. Higa asked what the minimum threshold for a lodging house would be.

Mr. Rembold said up to 3 people would be allowed by-right as a home occupation.

Mr. Rembold said #23 allows retail stores less than or equal to 20,000 square feet and it allows what exists. He said Plaza Package is approximately 7,000 square feet, the Pack & Ship building is approximately 8,000 square feet and Bike and Board is approximately 5,000 square feet. State Road is a bigger area than Housatonic that is zoned B-1 and HVC.

Mr. Hankin said he didn't want to prohibit redevelopment in the area. He said he would like to encourage retail on the first floors.

Mr. Pachano said he would like to have restaurants there too.

Mr. Higa said he can't imagine that we would want anything to be 20,000 square feet.

Mr. Rembold said we can leave it in for now and revisit.

Ms. Nelson agreed.

Mr. Pachano asked why restaurants need a special permit except in the B zone.

Mr. Rembold said it helps to control hours of operation, deliveries, dumpster locations. There are reasons to require special permit control. He said he can't think of a restaurant application that has been denied.

Mr. Higa said there is a cost to the "little guy". Mr. Higa suggested it could be reconsidered for that reason.

Mr. Rembold said Footnote 4 deals with little restaurants.

Mr. Rembold said the Footnotes can be dealt with later. He skipped the discussion to page 11, Dimensional Requirements, of the handout. He pointed out that the dimensional requirements are the same as the Downtown B district. He asked the Board if they wanted to apply Footnote 9 to this zone requiring a maximum 5 foot front yard setback, encouraging a zero lot line.

Ms. Nelson said the zero lot line may give the State some incentive to take action regarding the road. She said it take some time for the State to do anything because they paved State Road a few years ago. It could be 15 years before they look at it again.

Mr. Rembold said Footnote 10 deals with retaining what currently exists. He said zero lot lines can be maintained but what exists must be retained.

Ms. Nelson said this area is not the same fabric as Downtown.

Mr. Rembold said he didn't think the zero side yards would be wanted. He said it would seem that there would be room for access to the back.

Mr. Hankin said even if there were zero side yard setbacks allowed, it is likely that there would be one 12 foot setback to accommodate parking in the rear

Ms. Nelson said lets leave it at zero for now.

Mr. Pachano said zero would be optimal.

Mr. Hankin asked about maximum lot coverage. He asked if the build out is 75% would there be room for parking.

Mr. Pachano said no one would build to 75%. He suggested that parking could be reduced with a payment to an affordable housing fund. He said if we want to build affordable housing we need to raise money to do it.

Mr. Hankin said a parking garage fund might be a better plan.

Mr. Pachano said we need affordable housing more than we need parking.

Ms. Nelson said dimensionally we have some agreement.

Mr. Rembold went to the last page to discuss parking requirements in the new B-2-A zone.

Mr. Pachano discussed his drawing to show how the MXD would be important for lot coverage and the buildable area. He demonstrated how the parking could be reduced while having a 15 foot rear setback and 10 foot side yard setback and a maximum story building.

Mr. Hankin asked if parking could be in the setbacks.

Mr. Pachano said he didn't have any information for non-residential parking requirements.

Mr. Rembold said the reality is a lot of parking is on the property lines.

Mr. Pachano said two thirds of lot size is taken up by cars. Even with reduced parking.

Mr. Rembold said that is demonstration of how density is controlled by parking.

Mr. Pachano said we have gotten in the habit of designing for cars. This shows why it is dangerous to do. Designing for cars impacts the people who can't afford housing and they can't afford cars.

Mr. Hankin said we trade affordable housing for parking.

Ms. Nelson thanked Mr. Pachano for a good illustration. She said she doesn't disagree with the downside of parking. In Great Barrington and other rural areas with urban characteristics it is difficult to discard cars entirely. She said she doesn't see the need for cars going away any time soon.

Mr. Hankin said there is a population that doesn't have cars and are part of the workforce. He said these zoning changes can have the effect of diminishing cheap rundown housing. He said we will lose a portion of the population with redevelopment.

Ms. Nelson said everyone wants to encourage affordable housing.

Mr. Higa said we have very few tools to encourage affordable housing—workforce housing. He asked if more affordable housing would be built if they didn't have to provide parking.

Mr. Rembold said it is hard to build affordable housing with construction costs at \$250 per square foot. It would cost \$250,000 to build a 1,000 square foot apartment. We need to operate in the realm of what is happening now. He said it would be almost impossible to build an apartment that would rent for less than the affordable standard for a 80% median income.

The Board agreed to focus on study on affordable housing to help create a policy that the CPC and the GBMAHT can implement.

Mr. Pachano suggested looking at the parking needs of the Town. He said he is not sure there is a parking problem. He thinks a better job could be done of managing parking.

Mr. Rembold said the MXD does not allow parking in the front yard. It is allowed in the side or rear yard up to the property line. He suggested take the parking as written in the MXD and apply to the B-2-A.

### **DOWNTOWN B-3:**

Mr. Rembold said the only thing left to discuss with the R-1-B and B-3 zones is the remapping of the small lots and applying the MXD. The Board has not discussed the small lots in the B-3 zone on the other side of the bridge. He said there are 5 parcels between River Street and Humphrey Street. He asked if those lots should be included. He said the 5 lots compose approximately one tenth to four tenths of an acre each with frontage ranging from 50 to 110 feet. The uses are mixed ranging from single family homes to 2 family homes. He said the uses currently conform to the B-3 zone for both lot area and uses. Mr. Rembold said he doesn't see a change being needed in this area. He said he doesn't see where changing these lots gains anything. There is no harm in leaving them in the B-3 zone.

Ms. Nelson agreed they can be left but if something happens at 100 Bridge Street we may want to reconsider.

Mr. Rembold discussed where the parking can go in the B-3 across the river. He said he thinks we have a general consensus of the downtown rezoning.

Mr. Higa said 100 Bridge Street has affordable housing but also mixed use and market rate housing.

Mr. Rembold said the financing source for the project is complex.

Ms. Nelson we are looking for a consensus on the B-3. She said it seems we don't have any concerns.

The focus going forward will be on State Road, Thornewood and Downtown. The next meeting will have discussion of recreational marijuana.

**TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:**

Mr. Rembold said he nothing for his report.

**BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES & CONERNS:**

Mr. Hankin said Great Barrington Municipal Affordable Housing Trust is applying to the CPC for funding to have money available possibly to buy properties in tax lien or potentially foreclosures or land. He said the Trust is asking for \$100,000; \$300,000 for two programs. One program will provide up to \$10,000-\$15,000 to asset income qualified individuals for down payment assistance.

The other program would be similar to a Community Development Block Grant that would allow emergency repairs to income qualified households.

Mr. Hankin said it would be helpful to have a letter to the CPC from the Chair in support of this program.

Mr. Hankin made a motion for the Chair to send a letter in support of the GBMAHT, Mr. Higa seconded, all in favor.

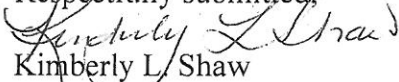
Ms. Nelson said Lake Mansfield Road was closed for 1 day. She asked if anyone had heard anything from any citizens. No one heard anything.

**CITIZEN'S SPEAK TIME:**

No one spoke.

Having concluded their business, Ms. Nelson adjourned at 8:29 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Kimberly L. Shaw  
Planning Board Secretary