

Special Planning Board Meeting
December 18, 2007
Town Hall

Present: Chan Rogers, Bob Tucker, Andy Rodenhiser

ALSO PRESENT: Susy Affleck-Childs

Meeting called to order at 6:09 pm

The purpose of the meeting was to interview candidates for 2 Planning Board vacancies - one regular and one associate.

John Williams

Andy – how is your time

John – we are all fairly busy – I am about to finish up a degree at school and I believe I do have some time to get involved

Andy – sometimes our meetings can go late – maybe not in the next year with the decline in residential housing market – also our endeavor to help develop commercial projects – sometimes we meet more frequently or go late –

John – I have noticed on minutes – it has gone to 11 pm ish – that isn't a problem

Chan – it has been a year or so since we have gone really late. .

Andy – in your engineering background, do you get the opportunity to work with infrastructure?

John – early career – distribution – review underground layouts – spent the last part of my career in the planning department forecasting electrical needs for a specific area – new job as a reliability engineer – investigate outages – I have some familiarity with the building process

Andy – how would a community like Medway go about working a relationship with a power company on easements to do a road along an easement?

John – probably talking about NSTAR now – typically NSTAR would be set up with a real estate department – they have full time people - if it is an active line and access is a problem, they would welcome a road to it – if you would be improving access for them, they would like it

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Andy – looking for access to back lands – we are looking to rezone it – it would be a substantial expense to build a road – foster a relationship to build a road – working with mass development

John – would depend on who the property owner is

Chan – I am pretty sure they own it

John – easement gives them the right to operate there but not to convey any other property interests – easements and wetland permits are part of what I have done . . .

Susy – why

John – time is right to volunteer – been here 8 years – hear more about how the town is dysfunctional – we have a good town here

Chan – where did you grow up?

John – Cranston, Rhode Island

Andy – do you have an overall

John – impressed with 1999 master plan, impressed with the residents survey – gives feedback – I agreed with the assessment of the citizens are looking for open space, less traffic, water issues – better tax balance – this board may be able to influence those things – it is an interesting to be part of that process

Andy – Karyl has a design orientation – very important to her – how do you feel about design and tell me what type of training –

John – I know there is a DRC – I know they look at plans and provide input – they work as a surrogate – I can see it as only a help – part of what they are trying to do is to ensure the quality of the projects what we in Medway feel is a standard – we are making decisions about the most important resource – the land – and how we live our life – the more people reviewing it the better, I think it can only help

Chan – have you lived in other mass towns?

John – Swansea for a couple of years; then west Bridgewater – then bought our first house

Chan – familiar with town meeting form of govt

John n- been to town meetings, ConCom meeting, school budget

Chan – children in school?

John – 9 years old – attends charter school in Franklin

Chan- I am comfortable with design review – Barbara saint André has pretty much said it is OK – I served on a PB 30-40 years ago and back then we were warned very much against design focus – I was heavily involved in representing planning boards before state for zoning changes – even today, there has been no material modification of the zoning –

John – what are they doing when they review design?

Chan – theoretically, they are only advisory

Andy – we generally grant waivers that are conditioned on doing certain things – tied to design or landscape features – in the case of special permits we have a lot of autonomy

Bob – with waivers, there has to be a benefit to the town

Andy – Susy refers to it as the dance. . It can be interesting - how do you handle – are you secure in making my point

John – I do feel strongly about how we should approach our planning – I think there is a lot of area for the idea of having a good master plan – we can't do it in a vacuum – it has to be within the system as a whole – and I think part of understanding how a particular project fits in with all of Medway is important

Andy – we enjoy healthy debate so right decisions get made –do you feel you will fight for something if you believe in the idea

John – yes. .

John – getting back to DRC – have they been able to negotiate things that the PB wouldn't have time

Susy – the drc pushes pretty hard –

John – does the board support them?

Bob – by and large – 98% - and there are some things we may not all agree with -

Andy – a lot of debate occurs there – very bright people with design skill – who influence the way things look

John – look at house designs

Susy –

John – I was reading minutes – you said big lot zoning isn't working

Chan – thru out state, towns have resorted to big lot zoning to try to control growth – and reduce tax burden on schools –

Andy – the percentage of commercial tax base is so much smaller –

John – why would going to cluster development?

Chan – this is a new initiative that the state has passed recently – smart growth

John – do we have to do this?

Chan – requirement now for affordable housing – 10%

Andy – smart growth –you score points when you go for grants – preserve open space that would be developed into large lot subdivisions- say 25 acre site – 15 for open space and 10 acres for housing – that seems to be trend – can give a density bonus –not so much roads, or infrastructure e- their cost is cheaper – can have attached homes -0 that types of construction preserves resources, less runoff – also may have more kids – lowering the cost of housing – couple traditional neighborhood design with commercial development

John – I don't know enough about smart growth – just reading the first couple of pages – it seemed to be a little bit contradictory to the master plan – sounds like the actual smart growth would not necessarily add any more residents

Andy – sometimes these are parcels that would not normally be developable – along Winthrop street or by the Charles River – by doing this, providing an alternate

John – I think you would have to be careful with lot design – we may look at a lot one way and the engineer may look at it another way and there may be debates over density – it is a lose lose and go to smart growth and you end up putting in more housing - I would be interested in the cost differential between smart neighborhoods and conventional – where would the cost benefit be between the two – I would be interested in finding that out – it seems counter intuitive to master plan to

Andy – some of the things in the master plan are patently illegal – they didn't know that at the time

Chan – those are all things that the PB is concerned

Andy – we are always looking at the yield –

Andy – we may need to throw a unit or two in return for getting some affordable housing

Bob – we have 2 positions open – one is a full time member and one as an associate member

John – if I am going to be involved, I would like to be a full member –

John – how do you feel the new proposed town charter will change things – relationship between PB and BOS?

Andy – mean that we will need to have a much better level of communication and linking and I think we are doing a pretty good job at that – I attend a lot of their meetings and I am constantly trying to keep board informed – it is important that we not get too far ahead – we have to be careful to not be engaged in serial meetings via email –

Chan – since Andy has been chairman, it has improved several hundred percent –

Bob – it may not meet everybody's goals immediately –

Andy – I think the authority of the PB with adoption of the charter – it is also going to mean the work of the sub boards that fall under the authority of the PB for appointment purposes – each

chairperson of those boards – good communication and liaisons between - that occasionally means additional meetings –

Chan – I think we have taken the lead in doing that – I think the charter committee –

Tom Gay

Andy – I originally met tom as a kind of adjunct to our software development – you

Tom –I read something in the Milford news

Andy –he offered to help the town with a GIS – so we met and talked for about an hour –I feel like I know a lot about him so you guys ask some questions -

Chan – what is your basic field of engineering?

Tom – started off in architectural/structural – my long term goal originally was to be an architect – I also wanted to travel and I went to work for factory mutual engineering and research doing site surveys where we would go into a facility we were going to insure and do a full evaluation of buildings and all systems – and then exposure – then send stuff off to the loss prevention engineers – that was a lot of engineers

Chan – what do you know about current PB PROBLEMS?

Tom – a little bit, based on our meetings – originally stopped by and walked in on Susy one afternoon, I know a little bit about GIS and scanning and offered to help – in general terms I know having lived in town for a long time and having watched the development – and my brother was on the master plan committee – I am living in the house that my great grandmother originally purchased – I have been here 53 years. . Watched the growth – not always thrilled – houses where I used to camp as a boy scout – I know there are some challenges to overcome based on its pattern of growth right wrong or otherwise – I referred to the master plan earlier – it fit the time it was written – it needs another look see and some adjustments

Andy – your architectural background – design or structural

Tom – mostly structural – as most people understand there are 2 ways to get into an architectural situation – from the engineering perspective with a sensibility of design and business – I always just liked to draw – I have become more fascinated with travel and with the site and that kind of stuff as opposed to pure design

Andy – are you familiar with our drc

Tom – yes, I know Gary Jacob is on it – his son and my son were in boy scouts together

Tom – I did some work with Bechtel with GDS –

Andy – what do you see as a vision for Medway –would you like to see

Tom – I think Medway needs to set a course that addresses its specific problems – we read in the paper all the time about all these little things that are wrong, there have been a lot of stove pipe solutions – now reached appoint where different pieces of infrastructure and layout don't match each other – we are constantly in a state of trying to patch that – to adjust tax rates or water rates – I think what really needs to happen is to take a good hard look at what exists today – what the build out rate, what is the capacity of the infrastructure and craft a sustainable model for what is there –

Andy – how would you characterize your patience on as scale of one to ten –?

Tom – I think it is pretty good – been involved in a bus environment for a lot of years in a bunch of different capacities – done technology projects inside a company – folks don't always do a good job of expressing themselves about what really matters to them – I currently manage a group of 55 people – my assistant manager says we have them all – all kinds – corporate issues and departmental issue – I think I handle most stuff pretty well except STUPID . . . and I guess to qualify that, it is one thing if you don't understand but . . . I don't have tolerance for the stupid act . . . I am polite . .

Bob – do you do a lot of traveling still –

John – yes, quite a bit

Bob – we have two positions open –one full time, - preferences either way . .

Tom – not really – here is where I am at – I have lived here a long time – brought my kids up – always traveled – I have always had to fit things – when my kids were younger and around, they took up my time and I did stuff with them – now I am at a point where the kids are not there – what I would like to do, what I am proposing to you is – you know what I am about and what skills I bring to the table – I am offering up time and knowledge wherever folks feel that fits best – wherever you get the most value from my experience and current activities – the folks I know and my knowledge of the town – I am willing to give you a shot – maybe if I put in some time at this level, maybe there are some other rewards that come out of that – help stabilize the town – so that tax rates settle down or services improve – rather than really worrying about what the past problems were – what happens as we go forward – how do we recognize what things need to be worked on – what things can we do

Susy – would you be interested in serving on the master plan update committee

Tom – ok, where you feel best

Andy – we will develop this horsepower however we can

Chan – now in a position – we have 3 people interested

Tom – frustrating to go down to vote and have no contests

Andy – Tuesday night meetings

Tom – second and fourth Tuesdays are not going to cause me any grief – most of my travel I do with my job is a couple of 3 days at a time and I pretty much call the shots – typically that is true – when it is along term trip, I know when that will be and I can give plenty of notice – I know things well in advance for longer trips –

Andy – any questions for us?

Tom – I had some problems with my brother on the old master plan – I am ready to apply skill and knowledge to where the best fit is – I offered up the help, if it is a good fit

Bruce Hamblin

Andy – Bruce and Susy and I met up at coffee sensations and had a discussion and he expressed an interest and a resume – in starting off, how would you describe your visions for Medway and what you would like to bring to the PB

Bruce – visions does and should change – there has been a fair amount of development over the past few years. . I see this as kind of a period – coming closer to filling up the community and reaching maximum density – make sure we have enough open space, protect ground water and also that our transportation system has enough capacity and mobility – critical period for us – being able to enhance pedestrian access throughout town, open space is important – balanced growth pattern – commercial, industrial and different type of residential uses – been here since 1990 – standards for infrastructure don't seem to take account of differences in areas of town – we need to enhance the neighborhoods – built up area like the village – different types of sidewalks different trees to enhance what is there – we also have a lot of well maintained older period houses and mixed in with those are houses that are not well maintained – be aware of those things and have your policies to help those areas for reinvestment – so it becomes a more sophisticated look at planning and development – another good example of that – many of the businesses we have on route 109 – they back up to residences – I don't see any fences, or restrictions on lighting – that is something we want to be careful of – collision of uses there is the potential for the downgrading of one of those uses – less reason to buy or invest in it – that becomes a critical piece how we manage that and activities of commercial are so it doesn't impinge on residential area – example – dunkin donuts deliveries between 2-4 pm – people couldn't get sleep- we worked with corporate and shift the delivery times – it was a real benefit to the people who lived near that – I think you guys have fairly similar example – trucks avoiding route 109 by using village street – solution was to contact those companies and try to get them back onto route 109 businesses – try; to find a way to deal with problems – that is a critical role for the planning board – you have to show that you are interested in the community as a whole . .

Chan – are you still in the office in Lancaster?

Bruce – I am retired. .

Chan – while you were serving in that capacity you were also the rep for the MBTYA

Bruce – yes and rep to the regional transit authority

Chan – obviously well qualified as far as planning – what you would like to see anyways

Bruce – lived here since 1990

Chan – how big is Lancaster?

Bruce – 7,000 people – structure was very good there – we served a lot of boards/- it made it very effective for us to coordinate –

Any – you had served before on the PB? What caused you to disengage?

Bruce – I ran unopposed – first thing I was interested in doing a master plan – mid 90's – I ran on that as a platform – so I got on the board and the chairman and other members had no interest in working on a mater plan or to meet with other boards to – I thin it is good to meet regularly with various boards – good way to surface ideas for zoning bylaw amendments – see other board problems – none of that was important – I kept trying to put planning items on the agenda – I felt very frustrated – the PB did not want to do any planning g- then at the time, I was working for the federal head start program in Boston, but in that program we had field representatives and I had grantees in Harford, ct and Vermont and new Hampshire and the chairman at that time would put anybody on the agenda if they came thru the door on Friday afternoon – meetings went very late – impositions and inappropriate – I don't function well at that time of night and it was affecting my ability to do my job the next day – I thought that was a poor way of running a planning program –

Andy – bob has a work schedule when he has to be up at 4 am in the morning.

Bruce – also important to take things seriously – no matter what type of application – don't want to miss things – do your due diligence – I think it is important to have that time – not effective

Andy – what is your philosophy on design review committees and their role in the planning process?

Bruce – I haven't worked in that – my focus has been open space, urban design and transportation – it has always been part of planning board's process – you want to try to avoid them making a decision – important to have everybody on the same wave length – one thing that is good about is that you have a group people really focused on the issue – have you had a good experience

Andy – pretty solid group

Bob – by and large, we go along with their decisions, there is the rare exception – spurs on some very healthy discussion

Chan – you were living here in Medway when you were working for the Swansea planning board – odd commute

Bruce – it was an odd town, next to Fall River

Bob – not going to be an easy decision

Bob – question do have – we have 2 positions open – regular and then an associate – do you have a preference

Bruce – I would prefer to be a full member of the planning board – when I was on before and when I ran for BOS at the time, Representative Gardner at the time, she was very frustrated with Medway at that time – she would ask them and they would never pursue – I think I could be helpful – I know a lot of people in state government – there are a lot of programs out there that we as a community could apply for and have a good chance to get funds – I have volunteered to serve on the open space committee – there are a lot of things we could become involved in –

Chan – we are doing very well with Gino Carlucci as far as getting state grants -

Bruce – how is your working relationship with the BOS

Andy -0 very good

Chan – thru Andy, it is great – PB has done more to outreach to other boards – lack of communication among boards

Bruce – I think one of the problems is communication and boards going in different directions

Chan – lack of synergism –

Bob – those are – having the right qualified people working in town hall –

Bruce -- I noticed the things with the water department – I got a grant which funded a water conservation study in Lancaster – that is a prerequisite for any grant funding –

Bruce – there are a lot of ways to make connections with other boards – example in working in Rhode island – design for safety - lighting, windows, - how to make a site safer for police calls – I live up in Crestview - close to middle school – all these kids have to walk out to Kelley Street and down to the schools or be picked up along Holliston street – it would have been so easy when that subdivision was being developed to put in some walkways. .

Bob – what is the surrounding area and what are the access issues – doing more on that with pathways built – linking neighborhoods and whatnot -

Bruce – I talked to Susy about coming in during the week, do some research – help out – review plans . . .

Chan – state has a program for seniors to work for senior hours and earn credit for your taxes - income is not involved at all

Bruce – I worked for quite awhile in New Jersey – more power and authority for planning boards than Massachusetts –

Bruce – I worked on a Committee in Lancaster – looking to upgrade Fitchburg train line -

Bruce – I think I could be of help with everyday work – I am glad to see that you are looking broadly – I can help point us in directions for funding – for example, state and federal highway funds can be used for open space – redesigning some intersections – working thru the bureaucracy to get things done – in Lancaster I was able to get 5 intersections upgraded -

Bruce – I would like to serve on the PB and assist the OS committee and master plan committee, especially for transportation . . .

Andy – thank you so much for coming in We have a difficult task before us - everybody is willing to participate at some level – there will be something for everybody I am sure –

Joint appointment with the BOS – we will probably meet Jan 8th and discuss and then make a recommendation to the BOS and then a joint meeting –

General discussion . . .

Bob - Motion to recommend/invite tom gay to the BOS as being the permanent member, seconded by Chan -

Chan withdrew second,
Bob withdrew motion

Take no action –

Definite interest in tom gay – all on hold. .

Chan to do some research/references

Adjourn – Bob, Chan – 9:15 pm