

Beane
Andrea Doherty, Chair
April Lamoureux
Jeanne Schmidt
Bill Clark, Milton Planner

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Andrea Doherty at 7:05pm.

Andrea Doherty said that the minutes of the last meeting was the first item on the agenda. There were no comments or amendments offered by members of the committee, and the committee voted unanimously to accept the minutes of August 6th.

GRANITE AVENUE STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, September 16, 2013 at 7pm
Milton Town Hall

Attendees:

Bryan Furze (by phone)
Cindy Christiansen

Brian Andrea Doherty suggested that the committee pick a date to schedule the next meeting. The committee selected October 15th at 7pm in the Baker Conference Room at Town Hall.

The committee continued the discussion from the August 6th meeting of potential development uses for the site and the pros and cons of each option. Bryan Furze developed a document that outlines the discussion to date, including a variety of development uses and an assessment of each use including benefits, concerns, conclusions and potential guidelines.

The commission discussed residential uses. The committee listed benefits as: Supports affordable housing goals of the Town, Creates more foot traffic for East Milton Square businesses, Limited traffic impact on Granite Avenue that are likely to be dispersed throughout the day and not at peak travel times, and Property tax revenue. The committee listed the concerns as: Demands on schools, and Demand on Town services. There was a lengthy discussion about rental and ownership housing units, and there was a difference of opinion among the committee members regarding a preference for rental versus ownership units. The committee decided not to express a preference for rental or ownership units. The committee concluded that residential is an appropriate use for the site as either a stand-alone use or as part of a mixed use development. The committee determined that potential guidelines should include improvements to streetscape and a minimum density of 4 units to the acre.

Cindy Christiansen commented that the charge of the committee is to consider the Town's Master Plan. The committee discussed that the current Master Plan dates back to 1974 and is therefore not relevant to the committee's efforts, and the Master Plan update is unlikely to be completed before the work of the committee is completed. The committee agreed to include language in the committee's report to the Town and Selectmen that consideration of the Master Plan was not possible during the committee's deliberations, however it is the committee's desire that the Master Plan Committee consider adopting the recommendations of the Granite Avenue Study Commission report in the Master Plan update.

Bill Clark introduced Police Chief Richard Wells, who attended the meeting to discuss crime and police department concerns over new development on Granite Avenue. Chief Wells prefaced his remarks with a disclaimer that he was in attendance at the request of Bill Clark to provide feedback from a police perspective and to answer questions about crime, but that he does not have any preferences about the uses that site in this location. He said his primary concern over development of any kind in this area is traffic mitigation. He said that a high density residential complex would put the most demands on police services, and he said mixed uses are good for policing. He discussed crime as it relates to hotel uses, and he said that crime is not a concern.

Brian Beane expressed concern about police activity at the Homewood Suites in Canton and read from a police log about police calls to that hotel. Chief Wells said that Milton Police encourage residents to phone in any suspicious activity, and that Milton receives 1,800 suspicious activity calls per year. The Chief said that the suspicious activity calls may or may not be crime, and he reiterated that in his experience, he does not feel as though crime is an issue for hotel uses.

Chief Wells discussed the biggest issue for Milton Police is residential break-ins. He said that drug addicts meet at businesses in East Milton Square and travel into the neighborhoods to use.

Cindy Christiansen asked Chief Wells about any concerns about storage facilities and he said the only concern with that use is people trying to live in the units. He reiterated that residential break-ins is the primary vulnerability to Milton residents. He suggested the current status of an empty parking lot at Granite Avenue is likely to draw more crime and problems for the neighborhood and Town than any other use, because it is quiet, secluded and adjacent to the highway access point. The Chief and committee discussed the various ways in which the park and ride site is used currently, including use as a staging area for construction, law enforcement meet-ups and exercises, and snow removal.

The committee thanked the Chief for his input and Chief Wells excused himself from the meeting.

The committee continued with a discussion of the pros and cons of hotel uses. Bryan Furze said that he feels strongly that the committee must consider a hotel as an appropriate use, despite neighborhood objections. Andrea Doherty and Brian Beane discussed the neighborhood's vehement opposition to a hotel use.

The committee discussed the benefits of a hotel use as: Tax revenue including room tax, No impact on schools, and Minimal impact on Town services. The committee discussed the concerns as: Potential for peak hour traffic impacts, Potential for crime, 24-hour activity, and Neighborhood totally opposed. The committee decided to include hotel as an appropriate use and discussed the potential guidelines as: Center entrance into lobby, No outside doors (allow hotel and prohibit motel), Traffic mitigation, No alcohol service without food, Curfew for events, Encourage meeting rooms for small business meetings.

The committee discussed next steps and discussed committee member, Ellen Anselone's scheduling conflict and request to reschedule the meeting. Andrea Doherty said that she recently missed a meeting because the meeting was rescheduled by someone other than her, and she suggested that the committee adopt a policy that will apply to scheduling issues moving forward. The committee unanimously agreed that meetings will not be rescheduled to accommodate individual members unless the committee is unable to obtain a quorum of four members at a meeting. The committee then selected an alternate date for the October meeting of October 16, as a courtesy to Ellen Anselone. Andrea Doherty agreed to contact Ellen and determine whether October 15 or 16 was better for her.

April Anderson Lamoureux asked a question about electronic correspondence under Open Meeting Law and Bill Clark clarified that no members of the committee should “reply to all” via email under any circumstances, including discussions of scheduling.

The committee then reviewed the pros and cons chart and discussed making some changes. Andrea Doherty asked to add neighborhood support for medical office to the Office use. The committee agreed to further review the chart at the next meeting and discuss suggested changes at that time. The committee will also review the report drafted by Cindy Christiansen at the next meeting, and April Anderson Lamoureux requested that the committee discuss infrastructure improvements that should be considered for the Granite Avenue corridor.

The committee also discussed concerns about process and timing of the state disposition. April Anderson Lamoureux suggested that the committee ask Senator Brian Joyce to investigate. Bill Clark agreed to do so.

Bill Clark will follow up with the committee to confirm the date of the next meeting as October 15 or 16.

Cindy Christiansen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jeanne Schmidt seconded. The motion to adjourn was unanimously approved at 9:10pm.