



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING BOARD

Town Hall Offices • 63 Main Street • Northborough, MA 01532 • 508-393-5019 • 508-393-6996 Fax

Approved by Planning Board on June 3, 2008

Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals Joint Meeting Minutes May 14, 2008

Planning Board Members Present: Rick Leif, Michelle Gillespie, George Pember, Daniel Lewis, Bob Rosenberg (arrived at 8:10 pm)

ZBA Members Present: Richard Rand, Mark Rutan, Dan Ginsberg

Others Present: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Judi Barrett, Community Opportunities Group; Pat Doyle, Historical Commission

Chairman Rand opened the ZBA meeting at 7:00 pm.

Chairman Leif opened the Planning Board meeting at 7:00 pm.

Presentation by Pat Doyle RE: Historic Perspective on Development of Main Street

Ms. Doyle presented a slide show of photographs of historic homes and structures on Main Street dating from the mid 1700s through the 1980s and some pictures of the downtown area taken from the Trinity Church steeple in 2007. The information presented indicated the main street, Route 20, including downtown Northborough, developed over the years into a largely commercial and business area, supported by the rail road, and supplying goods and services to the surrounding towns of Marlborough and Shrewsbury.

Mr. Leif asked Ms. Doyle, from her perspective and based on her previous research, what kind of design she would encourage if the parcels including Honey Farms, Shattuck's and the former Lowe's Market were combined and the buildings removed or renovated. She stated she would like to see commercial buildings with parking in the back, store fronts close to the street and heights relative to the height of the Old Town Hall building at 4 West Main Street and include residential units on the top floors of these buildings.

Kathy Joubert, Town Planner, explained a slide show had been created and presented by architect Daniel Lewis during the last Master Plan update. This slide show represented what the Master Plan Committee members would like to see the downtown area look like. Mr. Lewis added there was also a citizen's group working with him on the presentation at the time. He stated the boards need to make sure zoning regulations allow what they want to see for the downtown and that they encourage that, also.

Joint Meeting with Zoning Board of Appeals and Judi Barrett, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., RE: Continued Discussion of Proposed Zoning Bylaw

Ms. Joubert presented a summary of what the boards agreed to at the last two joint meetings regarding multi-family densities, with voting as indicated below:

April 1, 2008 Meeting

To allow multi-family in the Neighborhood Transition (NT) district

- ❖ Up to 4 units by right
- ❖ 5-8 units by special permit

March 18, 2008

❖ To allow multi-family in the Downtown Business (DB) district

- Up to 8 units by right
- 9-16 by special permit

❖ To allow multi-family in the Business East (BE) district

- Up to 8 by right
- 9-16 by special permit

❖ To allow multi-family in the Business West (BW) district

- Up to 8 by right
- 9-16 by special permit

❖ Not to allow multi-family in the General Residential (GR) district by right or special permit

The boards continued their discussion regarding multi-family units in mixed use developments. Ms. Joubert stated that per the January 27, 2008 memo from Judi Barrett, the proposed zoning bylaw suggests:

- ❖ Vertical mixed use by right in the Downtown Business, Business East, and Business West
- ❖ Horizontal mixed use by special permit in DB, BE, and BW
- ❖ Density would be up to 2 units within each district's minimum lot area and an additional 2,500, 3,500 or 5,000 square feet per unit for the 3rd unit and each unit over 3

The boards continued their discussion of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for the Neighborhood Transition (NT) and Downtown Business (DB) Districts. Ms. Joubert noted she had emailed a document to the board members from Judi Barrett with an explanation of FAR as follows:

"Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the gross floor area of a building (excluding parking and building mechanical systems) divided by the area of the lot. Accordingly, the FAR limit for a certain area multiplied by the lot size gives the maximum allowable floor area for that parcel. For example,

on a 10,000 square-foot lot in an area with a maximum FAR of 1.0, the floor area of a building cannot exceed 10,000 square feet. By combining horizontal and vertical limits into a single measure, FAR allows some flexibility in the design of a structure while still controlling overall building size and volume.”

Bob Rosenberg arrived at the meeting at this time.

Judi Barrett explained that horizontal use means more than one building is on a lot, but still requires a mix of uses. Vertical mixed use involves only one structure. She suggested the boards would not want to interfere with the tradition of downtown buildings which is residential and business uses.

Ms. Joubert stated the benefit of using FAR is that the boards would not be limiting the developer to what he has to build. It lets the owner decide how to build up space.

Ms. Barrett stated when you start to tell people what to do it gets difficult for the developer. The boards have to decide what they are trying to accomplish and need to keep it simple.

Mr. Lewis stated the parking may be a concern. Ms. Barrett responded there is a provision for shared parking.

Ms. Barrett presented information on a few areas in town, comparing building/structure size to lot size. The building sizes were acquired from the Assessor’s office, however the figures relate to leasible floor area and not the size of the whole building. To estimate whole building size, 30% should be added on to the Assessor’s figures. The locations, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), Gross Floor Area (GFA) & Net Floor Area (NFA) of the structures and lot sizes, were as follows:

| Location | Use | Floor Area Ratio (FAR) | Net Floor Area & Gross Floor Area |
|----------------------|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 63 Main Street | Town Hall Offices | .531 | 34,154 sf & 44,413 sf |
| 64 Main Street | Single-family home with apartment | .137 | 3880 sf |
| 53 West Main Street | Avidia Bank (formerly Westboro Savings) | .111 | 2563 sf & 3332 sf |
| 31 Blake Street | Apartment building | 1.176 | 10,707 sf & 11,778 sf |
| 112 West Main Street | Coleman House Nursing Home | .244 | 18,020 sf & 23,426 sf |

Ms. Barrett stated the best example of FAR as far as scale and how it was designed is the apartment building at 31 Blake Street.

Mr. Leif stated if using FAR to create a mixed-use project in the downtown business district, a structure up to 1.5 times the lot size built vertically would be allowed by right.

Ms. Barrett stated it would be harder on some lots due to parking considerations.

Mr. Lewis stated parking will limit itself. For some projects it won't be advantageous because parking would be needed for each unit and every room.

Ms. Barrett stated the proposed zoning bylaw states 30% of the building has to be mixed use. Mixed-use zoning requires a certain percentage to be commercial and the balance can be residential. She stated it makes it hard when you mix density with use density.

Ms. Barrett stated height regulations were proposed in order to encourage pitch, but Bill Farnsworth, Inspector of Buildings/Zoning Enforcement Officer, had told the subcommittee they shouldn't have regulations in the zoning bylaw that are different from the state building code.

Mr. Lewis agreed it should be the same as the building code.

Mr. Leif wanted a consensus from the board members as to which they preferred, FAR or number of units. Members responded as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Michelle Gillespie, Planning Board | FAR |
| Bob Rosenberg, Planning Board | Units |
| Mark Rutan, ZBA | FAR |
| Rick Leif, Planning Board | Units |
| Dick Rand, ZBA | FAR |
| Dan Ginsberg, ZBA | FAR |
| Dan Lewis, Planning Board | FAR |
| George Pember, Planning Board | FAR |

Mr. Leif stated the majority of the members present want FAR. He asked, for the next meeting, to have a review of the current proposal for FAR in 3 districts so everyone can feel comfortable.

Ms. Barrett said they may want to reconsider what is allowed by right.

Mr. Leif stated the proposed zoning bylaw, dated January 27, 2008, suggests:

- Vertical mixed use by right in the Downtown Business, Business East and Business West Districts
- Horizontal mixed use by special permit in Downtown Business, Business East and Business West Districts
- Density would be up to 2 units within each district's minimum lot area and an additional 2,500, 3,500 or 5,000 square feet per unit for the 3rd unit and each unit over 3

Next Meetings

Ms. Joubert stated the next joint meeting has been scheduled for June 3, 2008.

Ms. Barrett stated she will email information on FAR samples.

Mr. Leif stated concerns submitted from other board members need to be reviewed, as well as unresolved issues of the proposed zoning bylaw.

An informational public meeting for people in the proposed Downtown and Neighborhood Transition Districts will be held on June 19th and an informational meeting for the southwestern section of town will be held on June 11th. Ms. Joubert will check if the library at the Middle School is available and notices will be sent to the various landowners in these districts.

Approval of Minutes

Mark Rutan moved to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2008 joint meeting of the Planning Board and ZBA as written. Dan Ginsberg seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous to approve.

ZBA Adjournment

Mark Rutan moved to adjourn the ZBA meeting. Dan Ginsberg seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous to adjourn.

Proposed Scope of Services for Planning Analysis of Southwest Cutoff - Judi Barrett's contract amendment

The Planning Board reviewed the proposed scope of services submitted by Community Opportunities Group. Ms. Barrett stated two informational community meetings will be needed to let residents and property owners know that the boards are looking at the Neighborhood Transition District. In addition, an initial meeting will be needed to discuss how they're going to tackle the project.

Ms. Joubert stated all meetings should include the ZBA. She suggested Wednesday, June 11th for one of the informational community meetings.

Tuesday, June 3rd meeting schedule:

7 - 8 pm Angela Meehan (Judi Barrett's assistant)

8 - 10 pm Review/discussion of proposed zoning bylaw

Mr. Leif stated his concern all along has been that decisions already made without the Southwest Cutoff section will have to be looked at again in light of this.

Mr. Rosenberg stated he thinks it is an ambitious undertaking and they are over-reaching. He agrees it needs to be done, but it may be well in excess of 20 pages in addition to the proposed zoning. He stated they are going to be pushing themselves past another deadline.

Ms. Joubert reminded the board they had decided they could bring this section to 2010 Town Meeting if it was not ready for the 2009 Town Meeting.

Mr. Leif stated it is distinctive enough to be put on the shelf until 2010.

Mr. Rosenberg stated there would have to be funding in 2010.

Ms. Barrett stated she is already being paid for zoning and it doesn't really matter what year it's done in. The contract extends to 2009 and they keep the contract open. There will be no extra charge for writing the zoning.

Michelle Gillespie moved to approve the contract as written and submitted. George Pember moved to second the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Approval of Minutes

Michelle Gillespie moved to approve the **February 7, 2008** joint Planning Board/ZBA minutes as amended. George Pember seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

George Pember moved to approve the Planning Board minutes of **February 12, 2008** as amended. Michelle Gillespie seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Michelle Gillespie moved to approve the **April 1, 2008** joint Planning Board/ZBA minutes as written. George Pember seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Registry of Deeds - Member Signature Sheet 2008

The members signed the signature sheet for the Registry of Deeds, which lists their original election/appointment date and their current term expiration date.

ANRs

ANR plans were signed for:

540 West Main Street
Southwest Cutoff

M. & W. Bigelow, Applicants
Linda Realty Trust, Applicants

Adjournment

The Planning Board meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Grampietro
Board Secretary