

# **TOWN OF STOW PLANNING BOARD**

Minutes of the September 15, 2009 Planning Board Meeting.

Present: Planning Board Members: Kathleen Willis, Leonard Golder, Steve Quinn, Ernest Dodd and Lori Clark

Associate Member: Bruce Fletcher (arrived at 9:30PM)

Administrative Assistant: Kristen Domurad

The Meeting was called to order at 7 P.M.

## **REVIEW OF CORRESPONDANCE AND MINUTES**

### **Minutes**

*September 8, 2009- Ernie Dodd moved to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2009 meeting, as amended. The motion was seconded by Steve Quinn and carried by a vote of four in favor (Ernest Dodd, Steve Quinn, Kathleen Willis and Lori Clark).*

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

No public input

## **PLANNING BOARD MEMBER'S UPDATES**

### *Pedestrian Walkway Sub-Committee*

Lori Clark told the Board that most Pedestrian Walkway Sub-committee members have been sworn in and they will be holding their first meeting on Thursday September 17, 2009. Tory Fletcher will be sworn in at the meeting and Tom Ruggerio will be sworn in at a later date.

### *Elementary School Board Committee*

Steve Quinn reported to that the Elementary School Building Committee would be up in front of the Financial Committee tonight. One item that is difficult for the committee to justify is the cost for storm water drainage. The town follows the state storm water drainage by-laws. The high costs the town faces for water drainage are not unique to Stow but are not the norm for most towns in Massachusetts. Kathleen Willis noted that it was smart of the town to adopt the state by-laws for storm water management, and the state should see this as the cost-driving factor and may be more willing to reimburse half of the project. Steve explained that the average cost for each taxpayer would be \$500.00 after the reimbursement from the MSBA.

[Lenny Golder arrived at 7:15P.M.]

Steve explained that the engineers anticipate the water coming from Crescent St. and that additional costs could be associated with the extension of this waterline.

### *Draft Master Plan*

Kathleen Willis clarified that there are 9 sections of the Master Plan, and the Planning Board will review all 9 because the Master Plan Committee is a sub-committee of the Planning Board.

Other boards and committees will be reviewing parts of the Master Plan that are relevant. The Planning Board should expect chapters 4 and 7 to be released by next week for revision. Kathleen also advised the Board that the Public Forum to discuss the Master Plan is set for September 30, and she will acquire consensus from the Committee on where they will be holding it.

Lori Clark noted that the Master Plan Forum is also on the same night as the School Building Committee meeting, and this might take citizens away from one meeting to attend the other.

#### *Community Preservation Committee*

Kathleen notified the Board that the Community Preservation Committee had not taken an official vote on the money requested from the Stow Community Housing Trust Corp.

Lori Clark asked if they have made any further plans or progress on their proposal. Kathleen answered that they don't own either properties and aren't connected to the Assabet Water line. This project would be contingent on connecting to this line. Kathleen explained if the project went through, Stow's affordable housing rate would increase to 8.9%. Although she supports the increase of affordable homes she still has concerns of Community Preservation money being used for non-Stow residents and that some residents are worried about the 10% being spent on non-Stow families.

Kathleen also expressed her on going concern about the Minuteman Home Care Services for Plantation Apartments, and still objects to addition affordable housing at Pilot Grove because the affordable housing is not spread throughout the community.

Steve Quinn questioned if there is a need for affordable units in Stow seeing as Stow lacks infrastructure and jobs.

Lori Clark mentioned that the order of the Special Town meeting will be interesting and turnout might be dependant on what precedes the Community Preservation Committee's items. Kathleen Willis suggested to the Selectman that they should wait to vote on the Community Preservation Committee's items until next town meeting to allow for more education to get out to the public. This was turned down because the Stow Community Housing Trust fears losing one of the parcels if they do not vote on the issue now.

#### *SMAHT*

Kathleen updated the Board that the Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust has asked to meet with the Planning Board. Kathleen explained that the Planning Board was disappointed that they did not show up or notify the Board when they missed their prior appointment. Kathleen said she would try to find a time for them to meet and discuss the issues. The Housing Plan has not gone to print yet and is still in draft form.

Kathleen also notified the Board that she was interviewed for the Stow Independent's article on the use of Community Preservation funds.

Kathleen reminded Lenny Golder to sign the updated Ridgewood Plan sheet after the meeting or sometime this week.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT**

Kristen Domurad advised the Board that the letter and chart to Senator Eldridge and Representative Hogan explaining the Board's concerns about the Land Use Partnership Act and Community Planning Act II have been sent out to both parties as well as the Board of Selectman and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

The Board discussed if this document should also be sent out to surrounding towns or the entire Mass Planners list serve. The Board decided to have Kristen wait to send it and check with Karen Kelleher when she is back from vacation.

## **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

### **Draft Master Plan Comments on Chapters 5 and 6**

The Board discussed the comments submitted by Ernie Dodd, Kathleen Willis and Lori Clark from Chapter 5. (See attached.)

### **Wedgwood Country Club (Rezoning from R/C to RES)**

Kathleen Willis stated that the Planning Board needs to make a decision to either support or not support the request from Mr. Pittorino to rezone 1 ½ acres of land on his land zoned RC. Kathleen explained that the land was previously zoned residential and was changed to Recreation Conservation for Wedgwood Country Club.

Lori Clark questioned if the applicant would have been able to cut out a 1 ½ acre lot for a single family home at the time of the original decision, and if the zoning laws allowed for it. Lori suggested reviewing the original decision before making a recommendation and to speak with Karen Kelleher when she returns.

Kathleen voiced concern that other property owners on R/C zoned land would also want to rezone their land to RES, and felt it is necessary to remain consistent when making their decisions and recommendations.

### **Lower Village Sub-Committee Update**

Don McPherson the Lower Village Subcommittee, Chairman updated the Planning Board on their achievements to date;

- Continued our education with trip to Norfolk to learn how they achieved dramatic town center improvements, including a pair of roundabouts. Attended 'Walkable Community' workshop.
- Began implementation of our standard fence design purchasing granite posts and wood rails with funds from Meeting House developers.
- Committee member volunteers installed fence sections on the Common with able help from Mike Clayton and members and the SHD. More is to be installed between Red Acre and Pomposcicut and still more by Linear Retail in front of the bank and Shopping Center.
- Continued to work with stakeholders towards implementation of the preferred alternative described in the Town funded Traffic Study, namely a dual roundabout system.
- Continued public outreach on the topic and are developing an FAQ brochure.
  
- Developed a plan for trial traffic calming islands. This has improved pedestrian safety and traffic management and was acknowledged by the Stow Police Department Safety Officer, Tim Lima.
- Worked with Mike Clayton of SHD to finalize calming island locations and

install several new ones; each to include a crosswalk.

- Developing design for permanent islands for SPB approval
- Reviewed former gas station proposed car wash – recommend reducing and re-aligning south side curb cuts – adding inter-lot connections.
- Lucille King discussed eliminating one curb cut on her property.
- Reviewed Linear Retail landscape plan will make pedestrian friendly recommendations to SPB.
- Recommended construction of sidewalk on Pomposcicut Street
- Working with Garden Club to plan use of their generous \$2000 donation
- Continued our liaison with Selectmen, SPD, SFD, BI, SBoH (water)
- Developed our short term work plan (next page)

They hope for the Planning Board's support once this is completed, if they are supportive then they will move to gain the Selectman's support to use some funds to get 25% plan development completed.

The Lower Village Committee asked the Planning Board for their current budget, Kathleen said she would obtain clarification of the Lower Village Committee's remaining budget at the next Planning Board meeting.

The Lower Village Committee will formally recommend their design scheme at a later date, but showed an example of some curb cuts they had been working on. They discussed the possibility of shared driveways for businesses in Lower Village in order to create further curb cuts to make the area more walkable. Ernie Dodd suggested considering raised pedestrian crosswalks in their design scheme for Lower Village.

Don McPherson mentioned, in total there are six traffic islands and people have already noticed they slow the traffic down and Bruce Fletcher is already driving a design to put in permanent traffic islands.

Ernie Dodd mentioned that if the town will be putting a waterline into the Lower Village they should consider putting overhead utilities underground since they will already be trenching. Don McPherson also suggested as a cost effective alternative, to construct utilities behind the buildings.

Ernie Dodd agreed with Coler and Colantonio's suggestion of creating a separate Master Plan for the Lower Village. Kathleen Willis supported this idea explaining that the current Master Plan draft is not designed to concentrate distinctively on Lower Village. She expressed that having a detailed master plan for this area would be extremely beneficial.

[Bruce Fletcher arrived at 9:30PM]

Kathleen Willis asked Bruce Fletcher if the storm water issues in Lower Village are related to the roadway or abutting properties.

Bruce commented on the storm drainage issues in Lower Village, stating that during heavy rainstorms the drainage system can't handle the volume of water, the pipe running down Crescent St. that dumps into the wetlands-eventually goes into Malone's road and Hastings St..

Kathleen Willis thanked the Lower Village Committee for attending the meeting and for their attendance and participation during the Coler and Colantonio presentation.

Lori suggested the Board summarize the key points from tonight's meeting on the Lower Village and Coler and Colantonio's recommendations for that area.

The Board discussed the current Chapter 90 money that the Highway Department receives from the State. They questioned if they could use this money for traffic remedies in Lower Village without putting the project out to bid, and if the Director of the Highway Department, Mike Clayton, could afford a 25% engineering plan for the Lower Village.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Coler and Colantonio, Inc.

Paul Guertin, Rob Cohoon and Brian Sullivan from Coler and Colantonio, Inc. presented information on engineering traffic remedies in downtowns. They strongly recommended focusing on a goal for the Lower Village, opposed to focusing on a remedy (i.e. roundabouts). They suggested working with an engineer to create a paper plan with measurements for Lower Village to make sure a roundabout is the best remedy for traffic claming. The group explained the work they had done in downtown Norfolk. Originally Norfolk's cost for their street plan was three times more expensive than the grant they received, so the town reached out to Coler and Colantonio to understand their alternatives to achieve their downtown goals. (The presentation from Coler and Colantonio can be found in the Planning Office).

Coler and Colantonio recommended hiring an engineer through a Quality Based Assessment rather than going through a RFP process. Coler and Colantonio's representatives offered their services to write the project plans, which could then go out to bid if the town chooses, recognizing this would give them an upper hand but would allow them to view the competition. He also advised the town that if one places a project out to bid the engineer is no longer a professional and becomes a contractor, meaning they would cut their costs where they can, which can open up the possibility of hiring a firm of questionable competence. Often times small communities can send project plans to Mass Highway for review, they can tell you if the fees the engineer proposed are reasonable or not.

Once a plan is finalized with estimates and measurements, the town can confidently apply for state funding. Coler and Colantonio's services extend to state grant representation. The group has employee's whose function is dedicated to securing state funding for town projects. This service does come at an extra charge, but was highly recommended Coler and Colantonio because of their personal connections with Mass State Highway.

Paul Guertin explained that each funding program, particularly the TIP program normally does not fund water or sewer but if the water and sewer project is a direct result of a transportation project that does qualify, such as digging up a road, they would consider it.

Coler and Colantonio representatives described a unique way that Norfolk obtained money to put their utilities underground. The town was funded through the utility company, who then applied an impact fee to the residents. The town sold this idea stating if everyone switched to

Coler and Colantonio representatives fielded questions from the Lower Village Committee and the Planning Board:

- Lenny Golder asked what other aspects of the project could the town obtain funding for, such as streetlights. Paul Guertin said that there is a possibility that the town could obtain funding for this but was unsure.

- Phil Mosley asked if the town would be better off completing the project all at once or bit by bit. Paul Guertin from Coler and Colantonio explained that there are two forms of thought: Norfolk took the project in parts, and this was effective because they had several grants with different timelines and regulations. They suggested phasing in the project, and that acquiring the support from the town's highway department would be pertinent.
- Steve Quinn asked about the Norfolk roundabouts and if the land they were built upon was either private or public. The representatives explained that it was a combination of both public and private. The town offered an exchange of property to a landowner, giving them a little more frontage in exchange for a carved out piece on a side lot. Coler and Colantonio also helped the town work with abutting private land developers who had a vested interest in the project. This allowed them to work in unison and avoid mitigation fees.
- Lori Clark asked, in Norfolk, what were the driving factors of their plan changes, they answered, the budget was the main driving factor. Once the plan was put onto paper the funding they obtained was not enough to complete the project. Coler and Colantonio worked within their budget constraints to achieve their goals for downtown but with a different method.
- Steve Quinn asked how Norfolk developed their plans/ideas for their downtown. The representatives answered, that the town developed a master plan for the downtown before applying for funding.
- Lenny Golder asked if the representatives have seen roundabouts with fewer than four legs. The representatives described a few local three-leg roundabouts that have been very successful; Lori added that there is one in Pembroke, MA.
- Don McPherson asked about the fees that Coler and Colantonio require for their services, the group explained that Norfolk has them on call as consultants; this allows them to have a very flexible relationship. Most of the smaller towns they work with go into agreement with their firm first. They do ask new clients to go into the project expecting to pay a couple thousand dollars to create the concept plan, generate an existing conditions survey, and acquiring a topographic map. They have found that towns that invest in a solid plan end up having an easier time getting all their departments working efficiently (this is especially helpful when documentation or files are needed). Once the project proposal is completed then they would negotiate a lump sum fee for construction.
- Ernie Dodd asked the Firm if rumble strips near crosswalks are affected by the snowplows, they reported that they have not seen any snow plow issues, but often times in climates like New England, the icing can get into the grooves and create problems over a long period of time.
- Lenny Golder asked if communities have had issues with emergency vehicles going over speed bumps or raised crosswalks. The group explained that speed bumps or raised crosswalks are designed to make traffic go slower, so it would slow emergency vehicles down, but communities have not reported having problems because of it.

Kathleen Willis mentioned that Coler and Colantonio helped with the Stow Recreation project and have some recent history working in the community. Paul Guertin told the Board they had worked with over 50 communities and have done more than 200 million dollars worth of work combined. Their recent work can be seen in Andover, MA.

Kathleen thanked the group for presenting at the Planning Board meeting and for their time answering all their questions.

*Ernie Dodd moved to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing ongoing litigation and to return to adjourn at the conclusion of Executive Session. The motion was carried by a unanimous roll call vote (Kathleen Willis, Steve Quinn, Ernest Dodd and Lori Clark).*

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Domurad  
Administrative Assistant