

TOWN OF STOW PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the November 10, 2009 Planning Board Meeting.

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

Planning Coordinator: Karen Kelleher
Administrative Assistant: Kristen Domurad

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

REVIEW OF CORRESPONDENCE AND MINUTES **MINUTES**

Ernie Dodd moved to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2009 meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Steve Quinn and carried a vote of four in favor (Ernest Dodd, Kathleen Willis, Lori Clark and Steve Quinn).

Ernie Dodd moved to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2009 meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Steve Quinn and carried a vote of four in favor (Ernest Dodd, Kathleen Willis, Lori Clark and Steve Quinn).

APPOINTMENTS **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Ernie Dodd moved to enter into Executive Session until 7:50 P.M. for the purpose of discussing on going litigation concerning the Trefrey Lane Emergency Access Way and to resume in open session at the conclusion of executive session. The motion was seconded by Steve Quinn and carried by a unanimous roll call vote (Kathleen Willis, Steve Quinn, Ernest Dodd and Lori Clark).

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

(Phil Poinelli-Architect, James Warren-Civil Engineer, Paul Griffen-Project Manager at CMS presented the site plan to the Planning Board.)

Phil Pernellie gave a general introduction about the project and its proposed timeline. The team then described the site plan to the Planning Board and fielded their questions. The group agreed to look into re-harvesting rainwater for irrigation, but described their plan to minimize the need for watering the landscape by using native plantings. They also assured the Board that all lighting would be full cutoff as they are striving to make the building as green as possible.

The group explained that the underground system would be very large due to the 100-year flood bylaw. They are unable to use the Hale School well as it has its own issues. They understand the bylaw requirement for a 50' landscape buffer and will submit a draft site plan application for the Board to review prior to a formal submission.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS' UPDATE

Political Banners

Kathleen Willis reported to the board on her meeting with Steve Dungan to address the concerns raised by citizens about the political banner hung over 117, as a follow up to the memo the Planning Board sent to the Selectmen. Kathleen explained that the Selectmen have requested further input from the Planning

Board on policy creation for this matter. The Planning Board asked Karen Kelleher to put this item on next meeting's agenda for further discussion.

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Karen Kelleher updated the Board on ongoing activities in the Planning Department:

Karen reported on her meeting with members of the First Parish Church, Liz Mosley and Roy Miller, to discuss their long-range plans for a future addition to their community building. Karen provided the members with site plan regulations and discussed set back variances that may be necessary. The members plan to meet with Bill Wrigley to discuss a town owned triangular shaped lot located within the grove that they would like to use for parking through a possible land transfer.

Karen Kelleher and Kristen Domurad attended the State Resource meeting earlier that day and obtained materials on grants and funding information.

Karen reminded the Board that a public hearing would be held on the 19th to discuss the removal of the Smith Dam.

Karen mentioned to the board about a proposal for a 4300 hundred square foot house plan that came through the building department.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

South Action Road Property

Kathleen Willis described her meeting with Dick Mortenson Real Estate agent, and the property owner. The property in discussion is located next to the municipal garage, 1-½ acres of the 5-acre parcel are potentially usable. The property has been assessed at \$32, 400.

The Board discussed potential benefits this land could bring to the municipal garage or other uses. Access is from the municipal garage and could possibly be used by the highway department. Steve Quinn noted for short money its worth looking at.

In conclusion of their discussion the Planning Board decided to write a memo with recommendations to the Selectmen in their support to purchase the land to add to the municipal garage site.

Chapter 61 Notification of Warren Land for Pilot Grove Expansion

Planning Board is in receipt of the Chapter 61 Notice of Right of First Refusal on the Warren property. This property is proposed for the project to expand Pilot Grove apartments. Under the new policy the Selectmen are supposed to appoint a working evaluation group

Kathleen reported that the Community Preservation Committee supports the land coming out of chapter 61 for this project and is forwarding a letter to the Board of Selectmen. Karen offered to get a copy of Community Preservation letter from Deb Seith.

The Board discussed being preemptive in obtaining easements or construction for sidewalks on this property.

Plantation Apartments II Supportive Housing

The Board reviewed a draft letter of support for the Stow Elderly Housing Corporation's application for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Grant. The Board approved the letter and asked Karen to sign and send it to the Stow Elderly Housing Corporation.

Meeting with Gordon Whitman of Linear Retail Re: Stow Shopping Center

The Board discussed the topics they would like to cover on their upcoming meeting with Gordon Whitman. The main points they agreed to discuss were;

The current bylaw requirement states on one sign per site, concerns about the size and placement of the future proposed sign and the potential need for a special permit from the ZBA, still missing from the site are planter boxes and trash receptacles, suggesting replacing the removed tree from the Citizen's Bank site.

The Board also planned to discuss the upward facing lights on the Citizen bank site, which is in conflict with lighting bylaws. The Board also noted trees on Samuel Prescott drive, which are obstructing the view of turning traffic as well as the turning radius for trucks out of this street.

Ernie Dodd noted that he heard from Don McPherson of the Lower Village Committee about the lack of turn radius for truck traffic at Samuel Prescott Drive. Members agreed that the Highway department should be asked to make the appropriate improvements rather than Linear Retail. It was noted that Samuel Prescott Drive is a private way. Bruce Fletcher advised that there is adequate space within the Route 117 to make the necessary improvements. Karen Kelleher will forward a memo to the Highway Department and Board of Selectmen recommending the improvements.

Kathleen discussed the Lower Village Committee's memo and rendering of the Linear Property. from the Lower Village Committee. She commented on the number of pedestrian entrances for pedestrians off 117, Ernie agreed and suggested one entrance from 117 instead of the five proposed on their drawing. It was also noted that putting in a painted crosswalk at the easterly entrance and possibly a raised island could encourage people to walk safety to the shopping center.

Master Plan Section 4 Discussion

The Board reviewed their comments to Section 4 of the Master Plan, and asked Karen to submit them to the Master Plan Committee (see attached).

The Board will prepare their Section 7 comments and submit them to Karen Kelleher for compilation for discussion at the next meeting.

ANR Plan, White Pond Road

The Board decided to review the ANR Plan at next weeks meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen Domurad
Administrative Assistant

Planning Board Member Comments

Chapter 4: Economic Development

Section B (Economic Development Objectives)

Subsection 1 (Vision)

Page 48

- Include something about how we want businesses in Stow to be built/renovated in a way that is in character with the town. For example, Bose is likely acceptable because it is set back and does not disrupt the scenic vista of the Town. Another example would be that it is desirable to indicate that small business, such as the shopping plaza, should have an external appearance that is in character with the rural nature of the Town. Without this, we are saying that we are open to selective larger business and small business regardless of what they look like. **(LC)**

Subsection 2 (Approach)

Page 48-49

- The connection between the 2004 CDP chart actions and goals. Given the current state (and looking at this as a 5 year plan), the first approach should be to look for ways to encourage development in the open leased space in the current business district. While there are always a few open slots, clearly after last year's economic downturn there are more open slots than ever. **(LC)**
- In terms of the 2004 chart itself and the 2009 status/views – I don't truly understand what the benefit of having a mixed-use overlay in the LV brings. If we are saying that there is evidence that mixed-use leads to higher occupancy, then at the very least, I would want to acknowledge that the sentiment was clearly that the mixed-use only be considered in the current business district. **(LC)**
- In terms of White Pond Road, before we say we want to rezone the Commercial to Business, I think we should assess the business uses and ensure that we truly want to encourage those uses on a dead end road. **(LC)**
- Include something that indicates we would like to protect selective historic buildings to encourage saving vs. tearing down and/or rebuilding in the same form. **(LC)**

Subsection 3 (Contributing Plans), CDP Excerpt b)

Page 50, Excerpt b)

- Some discussion on potential development of the Business District at the intersection of Great Road and the Bose access road should be included. **(EED)**

Subsection 4 (Progress on 2004 Community Development Plan)

Page 51- (Community Development Plan Chart):

Fourth row (Airport Industrial Area), fourth column (Comments/Current View)

Page 51- (Community Development Plan Chart), fourth row (Airport Industrial Area), fourth column (Comments/Current View)

- Add the word “and” to read as follows Remaining land still could be pursued for zoning changes to promote lower intensity uses as recommended in the CDP as well as commercial ***and*** recreation uses. **(KW)**
- A major portion of the industrial land identified has been permitted for an AAN development although this could change if the applicant pursues an industrial development of the land. **(EED)**

Page 52 (Community Development Plan Chart), Sixth row (Route 117 Business Zone), second column

- Statement “Effort initiated but stalled due to neighborhood opposition”. I do not think this is a true statement. It is stalled because of the economic conditions and because the developer is experienced in building homes not business facilities. Other uses of “Route 117 – Far West (Commercially zoned lands at West boarder of Town” has never been discussed in any public meeting forum to my knowledge. **(EED)**

Section C. (Current Economic Activity)

Subsection 1. (Tax Base)

Page 52 -

- Consider a chart showing total acreage of Business, Compact Business, Commercial and Industrial zoned land. **(KW)**
- Is the data here for all of the above referenced lands or just commercial? **(KW)**

Subsection 2 (Tax Rates)

Page 52-53

- The last sentence on this page starting with “The combined residential and open...” to the end of the paragraph provides no additional important information and should be deleted. **(EED)**
- What does it cost the town to have a business vs. a residence? Both pay the same tax rate. The residence likely has a cost implication on the school system. The business would have costs associated with infrastructure (if increased traffic), police/fire, etc. It is stated that having a business does not necessarily lower the tax burden, and I think it may be worthwhile to research actual numbers. **(LC)**
- It seems as though having a large commercial/industrial business like Bose is ideal as it did not disrupt the character of the Town, but yet supplies a large tax benefit to the town. While there are a few companies like Bose, it would only take one to have a significant tax benefit to the Town. As a result, I think it should be a high priority for the Town. **(LC)**

Page 53

- The table should probably list the \$ tax rate rather than %. **(EED)**

Subsection 4 (Population of workers)

Page 54, first paragraph

- I am not sure how the statement (“...which indicates a relatively low number of children and/or retirees per household.) can be supported. **(EED)**

Page 54-55

- It is unrealistic to think that people really expect to live AND work in Stow. Most people have chosen the Town because of the character not because they want it to be filled with corporations. Therefore, I think it is not practical to indicate that we should build up businesses in Town for the purposes of reducing the footprint. Unless we want to have the whole town be commercial/business there is likely a saturation point we can expect that would be the maximum amount of people who live AND work in Stow. Saying what it is now and setting a goal or a small increase would be a good way to indicate that we are not looking at turning a large majority of the town into commercial/business. If specific parcels are targeted for “desired” commercial use, it may be worth having a business development team try to proactively attract businesses. I believe larger towns have done so and wonder what we can learn from them. **(LC)**
- Being more proactive with Bose is mentioned. While Bose was considering expansion on their current campus, it may be worth having someone proactively in ongoing discussions with them trying to better understand what their needs are and how Stow can help. Bose has buildings in Framingham, Westborough and Stow. Having these ongoing discussions would guarantee that Stow is always seen in a positive light so that future plans may even be considered to move more people to Stow. **(LC)**

Subsection 5 (Commuting patterns)

Page 56

First paragraph after first chart

- The statement “...it would also allow more people to work closer to home.” is not necessarily true. Stow’s professionals are high tech and would probably require companies the size of Bose, Raytheon or Intel to provide employment. We may be able to attract a few small businesses if we had facilities for such but there is limited land and fewer parcels, which are zoned for such use. **(EED)**

Page 56- first paragraph after the second chart.

- Combine sentences 3 and 4, i.e..... above average wages; however, many of the jobs in Stow are more moderate wage jobs. **(KW)**

Section D (Future Economic Activity)

Page 56 - _____

- It is unclear why so much focus is given to mixed-use zoning. Sure, I realize MAPC is pushing it, but frankly the MAPC does not always have Stow’s best interest in mind. Mixed-use has been seen to be successful in urban areas where infrastructure exists. I believe it remains to be seen what mixed-use zoning does in a small town like Stow. While

a few suburban towns have adopted it, these areas have not yet been built out to see the final product. Additionally, allowing residential in the business does NOT guarantee that you will “foster economic development without significantly changing the community character”. Just because your allowing mixed use does not imply anything about what will be built or how it will be built. (LC)

- I will also repeat my statement above that I think it should be clearly stated that for the Lower Village, mixed use should only be considered in the current business district. There is the fear that the mixed-use is a means to get to higher density development or affordable housing – which according to the MP survey is not desirable. And, given that recent projects seem to me moving forward, I would not want these documents to imply that we are encouraging higher density development. Higher density, from a tax standpoint, would put a greater number of people in schools per square foot, but in lower priced residences, which – wouldn't that increase the taxes? (LC)
- It may be worth noting the most desired uses for the Lower Village explicitly. This may only be a subset of the allowed uses, but would send a signal what the Town should try to encourage. (LC)
- If there is any way to encourage development in the Gleasondale Mill – keeping the building, I think it should be included. It seems as though there should be a proactive committee put together to proactively go after development in the mill whether it be residential or business. (LC)

Page 57

First paragraph

- The survey may have asked the question, but the lands available for industrial or commercial use are very limited by existing developments and the environment issues (EED)

Fourth paragraph

- I agree with the desire for Gleasondale but I don't see a present “growing artisan industry.” Development of the mill will be required for this to happen. (EED)

Seventh paragraph (continued onto next page 58)

- Some discussion of the first draft of a mixed-use bylaw for Lower Village should be included. Its problems, weaknesses and its good points should be discussed. The zoning of White Pond Road should also be discussed. (EED)

Page 59

- Chart at end of Section D is not clear. Columns should be labeled as yes or no responses. Additional column needed? (KW)

Section E. (Additional Factors)

Subsection 1 (Discussion of commercial tax implications)

Page 59 –Second paragraph, last sentence.

- Clarify the term “commercial”. Does it mean commercial zoned land or “Business, Compact Business, Commercial and Industrial zoned land? (KW)

Subsection 2 (Discussion of infrastructure)

Page 61 - last paragraph of subsection 2, second to last sentence

- Add the words “should consider” so that the second to last sentence reads: “Stow should continue practice of using peer review guidelines and ***should consider*** having peer review consultants at-the ready or “on-call” to assist when large projects come up. (KW)

Section _ (Conclusions regarding economic development costs and benefits)

Page 61, second paragraph, second sentence of Section _

- Clarify the term “commercial”. Does it mean commercial zoned land or “Business, Compact Business, Commercial and Industrial zoned land? (KW)

Page 62

First paragraph- carried forward from page 61

Remove the last sentence “Asked whether they would support possible zoning changes that would foster the development of small retail businesses in West Stow, approximately 70% of respondents to the 2008 Master Plan survey indicated that they would; almost exactly the same number said they would support the rezoning of existing industrial properties for retail classification.” This sentence also appears on pages 58 and 67.

Section F (Recommended Areas of Focus for Economic Development)

Page 62

Second paragraph

- The idea for a “bureau of tourism” is presented here and the idea for an economic development committee is presented elsewhere. I think the vision should identify the need for an “Economic Development Board” which emphasizes both industrial/commercial/business development and tourism development. (EED)

Page 63

First complete paragraph

- The words sound great but the fact is that Stow has very few areas that could be developed even with a zoning change and we have few existing small business buildings except for the mill in Gleasondale which can house the expanded cottage industry. The expanded cottage industry cannot afford to build buildings. (LC)

Section G (Specific Recommendations for Key Areas of Town)

Subsection 1 (Lower Village)

Page 63

- Why are we saying a goal for Lower Village is affordable housing? While mixed-use implies potential for diversified housing, how does affordable housing relate to economic development? This was not discussed in the document. And given the Master Plan survey results, I don’t think we should be throwing in affordable housing willy-nilly. (LC)

Subsection 2 (Gleasondale)

Page 65 – third paragraph of Subsection 2 (Hazardous Waste Sites)

- Is this site continuing to be monitored and tested by BOH and DEP? (KW)

Page 66

- A discussion of the water and sewage problem should be included. Kane well, Hudson sewage, leach field easement on abutting lands, etc. (EED)

Subsection 3 (Southwest Stow)

Page 67

Sixth paragraph, third sentence

- Add “ANN development”:
A 66-unit AAN development was permitted and is currently under construction on a 44+-acre parcel. (KW)

Last paragraph on page

- The last sentence is not true. The AAN overlay district was added to provide a needed use for the industrial parcels. Even the most desirable industrial parcel was purchased by a developer for a 40B (Village at Stow). There did not seem to be any interested parties for Stow’s industrial parcels. (EED)

Subsection 4 (Northwest Stow)

Page 69 – Correct acreage? (KW)

Last sentence continuing to the next page

- I am not familiar with this project or its status. Has it been superseded by the Ridgewood AAN? (EED)

Page 70

First paragraph

- Add “is” between “...to the site, which is fairly narrow...”
Access to the site may diminish its build-out potential as an industrial subdivision because only Boxboro Road leads to the site, which *is a* fairly narrow, winding country road which becomes much narrower at the Stow/Boxboro town line. (KW)
- Northwest Stow Recommended Actions is duplicated. (EED)

General Comment on Specific Recommendations

In general for the recommendations area, if we are identifying specific parcels where we want to encourage certain uses, again, I think it is in our best interest to explicitly list the ideal uses regardless if the bylaw allows for more. (LC)

Section H (General Action Items)

- A more complete list of the concerns should be provided.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Again, I want to stress the importance of calling out that any business development be done in a way that is desirable to the Town residents. This document talks a lot about potential development, but has only a few slight mentions about this specifically. I would like to suggest

that the Planning Board lead an initiative to identify desired “designs” both for business and commercial (frankly this should also include residential). Once these are defined, the Town should look for ways through bylaws, rules and regs or other to encourage development towards these designs. (LC)

For example, if we are concerned about future development on golf courses or orchards, it would be great if there were guidelines as to preferred development layouts and designs readily available (e.g. saving the scenic vista, having the development set back, etc.). While PCDs offers some of this, it does not talk about saving the scenic vistas. Many PCDs can be done in a clear cutting way and still be called a PCD. The town could even consider giving concessions to those who followed these designs. (LC)