

# **TOWN OF STOW PLANNING BOARD**

Minutes of the October 12, 2010, Planning Board Meeting.

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

Associate Member: Brian Martinson

Planning Coordinator: Karen Kelleher

The Meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.

**PUBLIC INPUT** – none

## **PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS' UPDATE**

Kathleen Willis reported that she attended the October 11, 2010 Board of Health Meeting.

- A representative from Whitewater attended the meeting to discuss upgrading the water softener for the Town Building. The system is 16 years old and has not been on a preventative maintenance program. The cost to upgrade the system will be \$30,000.00+. They also discussed the possibility of installing a pre-treatment system in the future.
- Carol Gumbart of the Stow Conservation Trust attended the meeting to voice concern about encroachments onto the Red Acre Woodlands Property by an Elm Ridge Road homeowner. It was reported that horse manure, a horse corral, fencing and an invisible fence for a dog was encroaching onto the Red Acre Woodlands Property. The Board of Health issued a stable license and invited the homeowner to their meeting to discuss the complaints, however the homeowner refused to attend the meeting.
- Residents of the Lake Boon Commission also attended the meeting to voice concern that their wells may go dry as a result of the lake drawdown.
- The Health Agent reported on Harvard Acres. He has issued 108 well permits and several applications are pending. Seventeen (17) homeowners have not made any contact with the Board of Health.
- The Board of Health also discussed putting in a new kennel at the property where the highway barn is located. They are looking for as-built plans for the property to determine a location.

*7:15 p.m. Lori Clark and Len Golder arrived.*

Karen Kelleher reported that the Lower Village Sub-Committee is meeting tomorrow morning. They are in the process of updated the streetscape standard to include street trees.

Brian Martinson reported that he will be meeting with Health Agent, Jack Wallace and Jay Billings of NGI Environmental & Water Supply Consulting to discuss the issue of golf course groundwater monitoring.

## **COORDINATOR'S REPORT**

Karen Kelleher updated the Board on ongoing activity in the Planning Department.

- Karen contacted Habitech about their obligation, under the Pilot Point Subdivision approval, to install a sidewalk on Boxboro Road and urged them to do so now while the Highway

Department is paving Boxboro Road so that efforts can be coordinated with the Highway Department.

- Karen received a call from Carol Gumbart of the Stow Conservation Trust on the same issue discussed with the Board of Health. She also indicated that the property is on the market. Karen provided a copy of the Comprehensive Permit Decision, which outlines the setback requirements for this property. Karen also noted that the house in question is an “affordable home” and alerted the Housing Authority and the Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (SMAHT) that the house may be on the market. Karen also noted that the affordability restriction expires and that this might be a good time for the Town to obtain a restriction in perpetuity. Members noted that this would be a good opportunity for SMAHT to use funds to purchase the home, place an affordability restriction on it and then sell the affordable unit. Karen will contact the SMAHT chairman.
- Taylor Road PCD – Karen noted an email from Sue Carter Sullivan, included in the meeting packets, concerning a potential change in the drainage plan for the Taylor Road PCD. The drainage system as shown on the approved plan will necessitate removal of mature trees. An alternative plan could be to create a direct discharge across the road, where they noted erosion into the Delaney project from heavy rains last spring. This change in the plan would require a modification to the Planning Board’s Special Permit and to the Conservation Commission’s Order of Conditions.
- Derby Woods – Karen reported that Mark White stopped by to advise that he would like to amend the plan to remove a portion of the restriction on two of the lots. The restriction was to provide a wildlife corridor. Karen asked that he put his request in writing.
- Deerfield Lane Open Space Parcel – Karen noted an email from Town Counsel, included in the meeting packet, concerning the Town’s intent to use the PCD Open Space Parcel for development of public water supply wells. Town Counsel reviewed the Planning Board Decision and rendered the following opinion:
  - “It is my opinion that, provided that all other requisite steps have been satisfactorily completed (including revisions to the Conservation Restriction encumbering the property), portions of the open space within the project as approved by the Board may be used to install public supply well(s) (drinking water wells) and appurtenant structures supporting these well(s).”

Permitting this action will require a modification of the above noted approval pursuant to G.L. c.40A, s.9 and G.L. c.41, s.81-W. If the Board votes to modify these prior approvals, I recommend inclusion in the modified decisions the clear intent to allow portions of the open space to be used for the development of public water supply wells. In addition, the modified decision should specifically provide for access to the water supply to residents of the Crescent Farms subdivision, in addition to others. Provided that the Board modifies the decisions accordingly, it is my opinion that a variance from the PCD regulations (pursuant to G.L. c.40A, s.10) is not required.

Karen noted that the Town Administrator would like to know whether the Board is in agreement with the process before Town Meeting, as it is important that all parties involved are in agreement. Kathleen Willis questioned whether it would make sense for the Planning Board to hold its public hearing before town meeting so that the abutters are informed. It was determined that, due to publication requirements, there is no time to hold the public hearing before Town Meeting.

Members questioned if the warrant article is to request funds for development of the well? Karen noted that she has not seen the warrant article and is not sure if the intent of the article is to request a transfer of control of the land from the Conservation Commission to the Board of

Selectmen, or if it includes request for funding. Members voiced concern about not having the opportunity to see the warrant article and noted they should know the details of what they are being request to support.

### **LOWER VILLAGE PLANNING**

Members reviewed a Map of the Business District and Commercial Districts in the Lower Village area.

Steve Quinn indicated that the map shows there is a substantial amount of undeveloped commercial space on White Pond Road as well as business space on the Presti and the Beef and Ale (Steinberg) properties. He urged the Board to think about existing zoning, noted that under today's zoning (including pre-existing uses), the entire Presti property could be a large auto dealership or something like a large Walgreens or a Chili's without any design guidelines.

Members reviewed some photo's showing the type of businesses that would be allowed in Stow with examples of the typical chain design and examples of what those uses could look like with design standards. There is nothing in the current bylaw that would prevent a typical CVS, Walgreens or other similar building type.

Members also talked about whether it would be appropriate to have maximum setback requirements rather than minimum setback requirements.

Ernie Dodd noted that there are two sites (Presti and Beef and Ale) that would be attractive to business like McDonald's, Walmart, CVS, etc., versus the Business District on White Pond Road because there is no visibility.

Steve Quinn said any changes we make should be good for the Town and feasible for the developer. We would also need public buy-in.

### **White Pond Road – Commercial District**

Ernie Dodd noted that an Industrial Park similar to the Kane Property on Lower Main Street in Hudson could possibly work on White Pond Road as those types of businesses don't need visibility on a main road. He also noted that an Assisted Living Facility or Independent Senior Living development might work on White Pond Road, especially if sidewalks were installed. Steve Quinn noted there is also a potential for a large 40B development off of White Pond Road.

It was noted that a roundabout would make White Pond Road more accessible.

Lori Clark stated that people that live on White Pond Road like it the way it is now because there is the appearance of open space. She said open space near the abutters should be preserved. Karen Kelleher noted that sometimes people have false expectations that things will stay the way they are. However, White Pond Road does have development potential and the build out and uses could change over time and they may not like what would be permitted under existing bylaws.

Members noted that the Board should find ways to provide green space and pedestrian ways at White Pond Road.

Ernie Dodd said that he could foresee rezoning some of the residentially zoned properties that abut the Commercial District on White Pond Road. He noted that Stow-A-Way Golf Course could become a commercial use. Brian Martinson said that would plummet the value of

residential properties. He said it is known that residential lot values are negatively impacted if they are located next to commercial zoned properties. Lori Clark said she does not support rezoning residential properties to commercial and felt that a buffer between residential and commercial uses should be provided.

Len said he bought his house next to a commercial property (Digital) never envisioned anything would change to make it non-commercial.

Kathleen said it is important to focus on access to the river.

Lori Clark said this area borders the wildlife refuge and residential homes. It is possible to allow commercial uses without changing the character of the road and providing a buffer to the residents.

It was noted that Bose Corporation has a significant buffer from residential properties.

Ernie Dodd said the Town could consider purchasing the Golf Course and using it as a commuter lot.

Len suggested allowing both housing and commercial uses.

It was suggested that we capitalize on the wildlife refuge and the town forest by promoting recreational uses.

Brian Martinson said his vision for White Pond Road is to provide a buffer for residents. He said if a buffer is provided, residents might not care what is there because they won't see it. Design standards would not be important.

Lori Clark noted that the end of the road is a recreation destination.

Brian Martinson noted that there are development constraints due to the significant amount of wetlands.

Lori Clark said she feels the same about the other Golf Courses in Town. If they are developed the view should be maintained.

Steve Quinn said he envisions an overlay district to allow some option to provide incentive for developers to provide open space. He noted that because a business such as Walmart or another wholesale distribution center is currently allowed in the commercial district, we should provide incentive for them to provide a larger buffer. Members questioned what the Town could offer in return for the buffer. Brian Martinson questioned why we would offer something if we are changing the bylaw. Steve said we would have trouble selling the bylaw because it would be taking away a portion of the road.

Steve Quinn said the whole area could also become commercial condos in steel building 50' from road. It was noted that the bylaw requires a 100' setback if the commercial use abuts a Residential or Recreation/Conservation District. Brian Martinson said it seems that there are already adequate protections in the bylaw.

Brian Martinson said the properties on White Pond Road don't meet the criteria for large development. There is no infrastructure, and the property is bisected by wetlands.

Steve Quinn noted that auto repair shops are not allowed in the Commercial District and he thinks they should be allowed.

Kathleen said the golf course should be rezoned to Recreation/Conservation.

Len Golder said the golf course would most likely be developed under Chapter 40B (Comprehensive Permit or a wholesale building.) He said we should focus on setbacks. He also said the bylaw could provide incentives for one type of business over another.

All agreed that the Board should focus on Route 117 first.

### **Route 117 – Business District**

Members discussed the need for design standards for the Business District. Kathleen recalls the MAPC visual preference survey indicated it would be good to have a mix of buildings some brick and some clapboard.

Kathleen said if we focus on this area first it will show the results of village zoning and will pave the way for the Board to address other areas of town.

All agreed that it would be good to have staggered façades. The Board also agreed to look at other towns that are close to Stow's vision and review their design standards.

Len Golder questioned what we do about existing buildings. Members noted that the property owners should be encouraged to change the façade when they want to redevelop the property. It was noted that Linear Retail looks better, since they expanded and refurbished the façade, but it is still basically a strip mall.

It was agreed that parking lots behind the buildings would make a positive visual impact. A good example is the shopping center in Sudbury on Route 20.

Members agreed that some Infill development in front of Stow Shopping Center would be nice to buffer the view of the parking lot. .

Ernie Dodd said the Presti property could have a medical center which generates a lot of traffic and that is why we need design standards and to encourage parking the in back of the building.

Steve Quinn said it is important to find a way to give incentive to developers to build what we want, noting that it is easier for them to build a flat roof building.

Members discussed whether design standards should be in the bylaw, regulations or by policy. It was suggested that the design standards be included in the rules and regulations.

It was noted that the Town of Harvard does a good job with design of their commercial business. Kathleen Willis said when she inquired at the Planning Department she found that they did not have design standards; they were just lucky that several properties were redeveloped by the same developer.

Town of Harvard – does a good job with design of buildings – was by chance they had one developer. Should find out who he is. In a lot of instances there is parking on the side.

It was noted that the existing bylaws does not allow outdoor eating areas, which might be something we want.

It was noted that we should talk to Hudson Light and Power about the possibility of putting utilities underground and to also look for funding sources.

### **Vision Statement and Goals**

All agreed that we need to determine what we want and whether it is appropriate to make provisions through the bylaw, regulations or by policy.

Lori Clark said we need to set a goal of what we want, establish methods for achieving that goal and then get property owner and Town buy-in.

It was agreed that the Board would come up with a list of what we hope would be in the Lower Village Business District and then come up with visuals to demonstrate what we want. Steve Quinn said public buy-in is key.

Kathleen noted that she gets offended when she hears from residents that this board is not friendly to businesses and she doesn't think that is so.

In order to establish a comprehensive vision for the Lower Village Business District, members agreed to the following high-level goals:

#### *High-Level Goals*

- Safety
- Beautification
- Encourage businesses we want
- Aesthetics
  - Old New England town building styles (barn, historic house style)

Each member will be prepared to have a statement for each of the following elements, keeping in mind the high level goals, for discussion at the next working meeting.

#### *Key Elements*

- Placement of buildings
- Overall height of structures
- Building design (building style, roof styles, consistency of design with surroundings and surrounding structures)
- Degree of apparent mix and types of uses
- Relationship among uses: integration and linkages vs. separation and buffering
- Degree of apparent mix and types of uses
- Proximity of structures and uses
- Appropriateness of particular uses for specific areas
- Streetscape
- Landscaping
- Community areas
- Traffic patterns
- Lighting
- Signage

- Features to make a people-friendly areas: Pedestrian and shopper amenities and community gathering places
- Parking placement
- Bury utilities
- Interlot connections
- Energy-efficient features and/or orientation
- “Gateway” concept

The next Planning Board Meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2010.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Kelleher  
Planning Coordinator