

TOWN OF STOW PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the January 4, 2011 Planning Board Meeting.

Present: Planning Board Members: Kathleen Willis, Steve Quinn, Ernest Dodd, Lenny Golder
and Lori Clark
Associate Member: Brian Martinson

Planning Coordinator: Karen Kelleher
Administrative Assistant: Kristen Domurad

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

REVIEW OF CORRESPONDENCE AND MINUTES

Correspondence

Letter from Resident Nancy Arsenault to Planning Board

Lenny Golder commented on Nancy's concern about the lack of lighting in the Stow Shopping Center Plaza parking lot. Lenny noted that the Planning Board has been pushing for less lighting and that Nancy's concern is going against what the Board has been asking of Linear Retail.

Brian Martinson stated that there are some dead lighting zones in the parking lot near the gym and that the Board should look into this.

Kathleen agreed the Board should check the lighting in the parking.

Steve Quinn noted that the parking lot is being used more at night because of Red Ginger Restaurant's patrons.

Letter to Pedestrian Walkway Committee RE: Sidewalks near Randall Library

Steve Quinn noted that a plan for snow removal might be important to discuss as more walkways are installed in Town. He suggested that walkways could be plowed a day or two after the storm as there is no requirement for walkways to be plow for school to be in session. He suggested the Town purchase a snow blower.

Karen Kelleher noted the reason the walkways are not cleared is mainly due to lack funding for the labor more so than the equipment.

Steve Quinn suggested the Town should consider brining forth an article at a future town meeting for funds to buy a snow blower and for labor costs for plowing significant walkways such as the ones from schools to the library. He stated that a snow blower would be more cost effective and efficient than a snowplow.

Ernie Dodd questioned who was currently clearing the walkways at the Library.
Karen suggested she could ask Craig Martin.

Email from Sergeant Lima RE: Highgrove Estates

Kathleen Willis commented on the email sent from Sergeant Lima stating his concerns about the safety of the roads at the proposed Highgrove Estates development.

Steve Quinn asked how much jurisdiction the Town had over safety requirements for a private road.

Karen Kelleher stated that the safety officers still need to have safe access to the homes and the Common Driveway Special Permit allows them to make safety comments on the plan.

MINUTES

Ernie Dodd moved to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2010 Planning Board meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Kathleen Willis and carried a vote of five in favor (Ernie Dodd, Kathleen Willis, Steve Quinn, Lenny Golder and Lori Clark).

APPOINTMENTS

Kenny Caputo of Coler and Colantonio

Kenny Caputo of Coler and Colantonio presented the working base plan showing the extent of their field study and discussed ideas for Lower Village with the Planning Board.

The field study included 3,000 data points that were collected in the Lower Village. He noted they would eventually show the entire field study in a larger scale.

Kenny noted their group is still working on the right of way lines and will also add the detailed survey of the Stow Shopping Plaza to their plan. He believes they should have a 90% draft completed in about 2 weeks. From there, the field crew will do field editing depending on weather conditions, to determine if they missed any points. After this, final edits will be made.

Kenny noted the subsurface utilities have been collected for the drainage. He stated that typically the private subsurface utilities can be difficult to find.

Steve Quinn suggested contacting residents and Highway Department employees such as Mike Clayton, Bruce Fletcher and Jon Mackey to help with tracking the older drainage structures and identify direction of flow.

Kenny said he would make sure to send the 90% draft to the Highway Department as well so they can make their edits to the plan from the knowledge they have. He also noted that they might need to get in contact with the utility companies as there may be a need to go through securities to get the information on their utility locations.

Kenny Caputo then asked for the Board's comments on Lower Village issues and suggestions.

Ernie Dodd suggested creating an ellipse going through the front of the Stow Shopping Center allowing in-fill development in front and making an entire one-way ellipse. He said that this would slow traffic down and provide for easier access into the shopping plaza and other stores on the south side.

Kenny said that some benefits of one way streets are that they are much more narrow, slowing traffic, but overall you get more pavement because each one-way lane needs to be 20ft. where as a two way street only needs to be 30ft. wide.

Kenny Caputo said that they did explore an ellipse option for the Norfolk downtown, but another concept ended up being more attractive to the residents.

Brian Martinson stated that it would be very controversial to lose more of the Lower Common as the Town has been trying to expand it the past few years.

Ernie Dodd noted that the right of way could be moved over to provide more room to the Common on the other side.

Kenny Caputo suggested looking into closing off the end of Red Acre Road at the Common and to continue the road along the Papa Ginos side of the Common bringing it to Great Road.

Karen noted FST had proposed this scenario in their traffic study.

Members noted that the Town's parking bylaw requires more spaces than necessary.

Kathleen asked for examples of where Coler and Colantonio had used the ellipse concept. Kenny said they used an elongated roundabout at the intersection of Rt. 228 and Cushing St. in Hingham. He noted that one-way streets could be a great accommodation without much impact because you can use existing paved structures and get on street parking for businesses that want to move their businesses closer to the street.

Kenny said Bridgewater, MA has a town center with a very long town common when you enter from Rt. 128, and Foxboro, MA has a large ellipse/roundabout around their town common. Lenny also noted that Barre, MA also has a similar configuration.

Kathleen stated she would be concerned with more impervious surface created from an ellipse design.

Ernie Dodd suggested the Board look into the piece of land beside Kosta's (Stow House of Pizza) and Steinberg's property (owned by Habitech) for future inter-lot connections behind the buildings.

Kenny said the Board could also consider angled parking in the front of the buildings along the road.

Kathleen Willis stated that she does not like on-street parking and that Rt. 117 is already a narrow road. She is concerned that it would create more impervious surface and be dangerous to park along this main road.

Kenny suggested these are some opportunities to bring businesses closer to the road and provide the village feel. He noted that this is a very popular design in older New England towns.

Ernie Dodd noted that with any infill development, pervious surface would be lost.

Brian Martinson stated that he also likes the idea of moving businesses closer to the road, but does not want to encourage on street parking.

Kenny asked the Board what their ultimate goal was for the Lower Village area. He noted that the Board could discuss improvements from a circulation and safety standpoint and/or ways to improve infrastructure that will allow for more dense development of the village.

Board members agreed that their goal was to help develop the Lower Village as long as it improves safety and aesthetics of the area.

Brian stated that the improvements to encourage development must be aesthetically pleasing, and be safe for pedestrian and automobile traffic.

Kenny explained that a one-way street is much safer to cross for a pedestrian than a two way street, he also noted that it automatically improves safety by slowing the traffic and limiting the amount of left hand turns.

Board members noted that westbound traffic in Lower Village backs up a great deal, but the timing for the lights at the Gleasondale Road/Rt.117 works well and does not get back up as often.

Karen noted that the Lower Village area has a lot of conflicts with cars entering and exiting the shopping plaza, Red Acre Road and Pompositticut St., which is different than the above-mentioned intersection.

Lori noted that the individual curb cuts on the south side of Lower Village makes it more dangerous for drivers and pedestrians.

Steve noted the Board should consider opportunities and constraints for future development so when new buildings are constructed they are done in such a way that allows for good design.

Karen said once a Master Plan is established this will help gear development to those desired locations.

Kenny said there are several ways to accomplish these goals, one being giving incentives to reduce yard set backs to zero in exchange for providing shared parking with neighbors.

Lori noted that right now all the shops on the south side of Rt. 117 are individual destinations.

Kenny said right now there are no pedestrian friendly curb cuts or appeal to the frontage. He said that in a lot of older towns the stores were built close to the road, so now they have established parking areas encouraging people to get out and walk from door to door on foot.

Kenny stated that the Town of Sharon created a business district (District D) with a lifestyle center with mixed use, small retail, but no residential. Some criteria for the site planning was geared around the real intent which was to create stores on the street and pedestrian amenities.

Kenny noted that Coler and Colantonio had some reservations about the roundabout scenario as there appear to be real constraints in the right of way and there may not be enough space to provide the correct angles.

Kenny noted that a roundabout could be a good traffic mitigation measure when there are four entrances feeding into it at 90-degree angles.

Board members explained to Kenny that there is heavy traffic on Pompositticut St. but most of the traffic is backed up from Rt. 117 continuing into Maynard.

Lori noted the Lower Village Sub-Committee's informal speed study concluded that traffic entering Lower Village traveling west was fastest. She suggested traffic calming devices before White Pond Road.

Kenny stated that most tenants want 5 parking spaces per thousand sq. ft. and therefore the owners are forced to keep this amount of parking, although some will consider going down to 4 spaces per thousand sq. ft. (Currently the Linear Retail Shopping Center has 5/thousand sq ft.)

Kenny said a lot of downtowns with mixed uses (businesses on top and retail on the bottom) are using shared parking spaces. He noted that towns could get creative with land developers.

He stated that Norfolk is looking into adding residential uses to bring a bigger population into the center.

Board members said they are considering residential uses in Lower Village, but only as a secondary use to a business/retail.

Kathleen asked for suggestions on how to present the Lower Village revitalization to the property and business owners.

Steve said it would be interesting to hear what the business and property owners have for ideas in the Lower Village.

Kenny suggested in looking at all different strategies to get people to think differently, and then they will be more receptive to a zoning or land use change. He noted it would be very important to discuss and receive ideas from business/property owners in the Lower Village before any clear plans are created. He said workshops and open forums are very productive. He suggested going door to door to invite the property owners.

Ernie Dodd noted that Lower Village suffers from a lack of public water supply and that some businesses are not able to expand.

Karen reported that the Selectmen are opposed to a municipally owned water supply but were actively seeking private companies and other alternatives for water in the Lower Village.

Kenny said that Mark Devine of Coler and Colantonio works with water companies and has dealt with the owners of "Aquarian" several times. Aquarian took over several municipal water systems in Massachusetts, he noted that they could eventually look into this.

Karen Kelleher asked Kenny to explain his recommendations for future budgeting suggestions.

Kenny explained that putting utilities underground or behind buildings could create a big change in the Lower Village.

Kathleen remembered Hudson Light and Power giving the Planning Board a quote of 1 million dollars a mile for putting utilities underground and asked if this was a reasonable quote. Kenny said this quote is about average, but that moving the utilities behind the buildings is much cheaper and that companies can sometimes incorporate the cost into their rates.

Kenny suggested putting two alternatives in the budget, one for underground utilities and one for relocating the utility lines. He noted that surveying and concept plans would still need to be created and budgeted for to identify what is involved to move the poles.

He noted that the Town should consider some street-lighting (light posts) for safety and that over time more lighting will be put in. He said there are several types of full cut off pedestrian lights.

Karen stated that the Board discussed submitting a special article for the next step for Lower Village Planning in the amount of \$20,000, but this was before any quotes from Coler and Colantonio.

Karen suggested keeping line items; B, C & D.

Kenny suggested keeping the geotechnical aspects would be important from a funding perspective for grant applications. He noted if they have this information their engineer could provide a typical drawing or pavement design if the granting agency requests extra information. Kenny stated that often times granting agencies will ask for additional information with the intention of narrowing the applications when Towns cannot supply additional information.

Kenny noted that there are public works economic development grants available, and that he is still working to get Chapter 90 funds for the second phase of their existing contract with the Town.

He noted that they would need to include planning and concept design in their budget so they are able to provide reasonable cost estimates for the grant applications.

Kenny said that larger funding programs like TIP, do require more compliance to State regulations, such as pavement depth as well as greater width. He noted that smaller STRAP and PEWAP grants could be more flexible in terms of pavement width.

He noted that a TIP grant might work with an ellipse scenario the roads will require wide turns anyway.

Steve noted the Board needs to start talking and getting residents and business owners involved early in the process.

Kenny said the total projected cost of the entire project rehab will be somewhere between 1-2 million and when streetscape components are introduced this could add another ½ million. He noted the amount the Town pays for will depend on various cost elements, development of concepts, how fast you can implement it, and the funding you can get.

Kenny said engineering services tend to be about 10% of the project cost.

Steve suggested the Board conduct a meeting with property owners to ask them for their ideas and concerns before showing them any plans.

The Board agreed this should be done in early February.

Kenny said it would be very important to go door to door inviting the owners to this forum.

Karen will put together an outline for a forum for property owners and reach out to the property owners to get a sense of when they are available to meet. Karen offered to personally approach the owners to invite them to a meeting.

Karen will send Kenny an electronic copy of the Linear Retail Shopping plaza site plan.

Kenny said Coler and Colentionio should have a draft base plan by the end of January/beginning of February.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS' UPDATES

No new updates.

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Karen Kelleher updated the Board of the ongoing activities in the Planning Department.

Floodplain Map

Karen referenced correspondence from Aerial Survey in the Planning Board packets.

She explained that the IEP digitized map does not match up with actual wetlands and water on the Stow ortho photos. Rob Rogers is looking for input as to whether the floodplain line should be adjusted to better fit the MassGIS Imagery.

Kristen will prepare a map showing the floodplain lines from all referenced studies, as digitized by Aerial Survey to compare to the existing wetland shapefiles.

Karen said the Board should discuss this at their next meeting and she and Kristen will gather more information.

Stow Shopping Center

Karen referenced the draft letter to Linear Retail. She explained that she took the items listed at the last meeting with Linear Retail and included those in the letter.

Kathleen noted the planters should be added.

Kathleen suggested adding more language to the item discussing salt, "Ensure the pile is under proper cover at all times to ensure there is no run off into the wetlands."

Kathleen was concerned about the snow storage area being consistently piled in the correct space.

Brian Martinson asked for the language in the 3rd bullet to be changed so that it is clear that neon lighting does not conform to the Town's lighting bylaw.

Kathleen requested a sentence be reworded to read, "On a regular basis several tenants keep lights on after business hours and that all exterior lights and illuminated window signs should be turned off after business hours.

Members of the Board decided on the language to read, "no exterior lights on after business hours" and to reference this section of the bylaw.

Lori suggested a sentence be added that the Board is still waiting to hear from Linear Retail on a new sign proposal as they said they would work with the.

Karen noted she believes from her conversations with Gordon Whitman, that Linear Retail is still having internal discussions about a solution for the pylon sign.

128 Great Road (former Tara Professionals)

Karen explained that the owner, Andy Curtis has a potential tenant for a dry cleaners (drop off, no cleaning on site). Karen said she and Craig told him that such a use would be considered retail and would trigger the need for a Special Permit as no Special Permit exists. He would like to meet with the Board next week to get a feel for what level of detail the Board will require for a site plan. Karen gave him a heads up about the Lower Village Standard Streetscape, which he seemed receptive to.

Lori stated that if he plans to add a sign for the new business, he should be aware that there are size requirements.

Karen explained that Andy Curtis plans to make the garage into a small office for his business and will lease out the rest of the main building.

The Board noted the main issues they will look for in the special permit would be; landscaping, lighting, signage, parking, standard streetscape and curb cuts.

Cemetery in the Residential District

Karen reported an inquiry about putting a private cemetery on a 10-acre parcel in a residential zone. She noted that cemeteries are not mentioned in the Bylaw, and are therefore not allowed, but that the existing cemeteries are all municipal uses.

Banks Property

Karen reported that she, Steve Quinn and Ernie Dodd met with met Richard Lannan, of The Lannan Company, Inc., Nashua NH regarding the Banks property. Also present: Harry Dumont of The Lannan Company, Attorney Doug Dushenes, Bill and Ken Banks, Attorney Sherry Gould, representing the Banks' and Bob Young, Broker.

Karen reported that The Lannan Company is currently working under their 90-day due-diligence period. They had percolation tests scheduled but cancelled once they found out about the Town's Inclusion of Affordable Housing Bylaw in order to seek further information before proceeding. Karen advised them that:

- The number of units may be increased if providing multi-family units.
- For fractional units you round up to the nearest whole number unless providing fee in-lieu then the fee is based on fractional units.
- Fee in lieu is based on 3 x 80% of the median income for a household of four (4),

She, Ernie and Steve urged them to consider a Planned Conservation Development, Low Impact Development, affordable units be built on-site, (They discussed the idea of duplex units and/or single family detached homes.) and recommended they come to the Planning Board with a concept plan before investing in final design plans.

Karen reported that they plan to reschedule their meeting with the Planning Board to a later date to allow time for them to prepare a concept plan. She noted that they seemed to be more interested in a conventional subdivision.

Derby Woods – Restricted Septic Areas

Karen reported on an inquiry from Mark White. He noted the Derby Woods plan shows Restricted Septic Areas on lots and that the draft document states that, except for development of septic leach fields for the lots, the area must remain in its natural state. Mark White said you shouldn't let the area above a septic system grow back to its natural state, as the root system of a tree will damage the system. Mark requested the Planning Board revise this easement language to allow it to be mowed twice a year.

The Board reviewed the plan and agreed that the septic system should be mowed occasionally. *Karen will ask Mark White for suggested revised language.*

Inclusion of Affordable Housing Rules and Regulations

Karen reported she had started a draft document for the Board's Review at the next meeting. She suggested the Board brainstorm ideas such as design guidelines. She suggested including language that the affordable units be compatible in design, to the extent practicable, indistinguishable from the single-family dwellings in the same development.

Lower Village Planning

Karen noted some Board members submitted their ideas for uses in the Lower Village District and suggested all Board members submit their responses before next week's meeting for discussion. Karen noted there is space labeled "other" where you can add your own uses if one is not mentioned.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Derby Woods II Dunster Drive Request for Lot Release

Karen referred Board members to the email sent from Mark White requesting a bond reduction and release of lots for the Dunster Drive Road Subdivision. She explained to him that the Board had adopted a policy a few years ago, which states they will hold back at least one or two lots depending on the size of the subdivision. Mark White did voice concern that it would be considered double dipping because the Board is also asking for a bond of 150% of anticipated costs, but if the Board insisted, he requested lot 24 be held.

She explained that he is requesting to reduce the bond from \$215,000 to 113,000 and for the Board to release lots 24-32.

Kathleen Willis moved to reduce the bond amount for the Derby Woods II Dunster Drive Subdivision from \$215,000 to \$113,000 and to release lots 25-32 and to withhold lot 24. The motion was seconded by Lenny Golder and carried a vote of five in favor (Kathleen Willis, Lenny Golder, Ernie Dodd, Steve Quinn and Lori Clark).

Derby Woods Open Space Trail

Board members reviewed Karen's memo to the Conservation Commission and suggested language be added by the Conservation Commission specifying the surface of the trail (i.e. Will the trail be stumped and leveled?). Kathleen Willis asked that they also make a recommendation for the portion of the trail that meets basin #2 as the Conservation Commission members voice safety concerns.

Arbor Glen Trail Easement

Board members reviewed Karen's memo to the Conservation Commission. Karen will point out that Town Counsel is still not comfortable with the language in the easement document.

OTHER BUSINESS

Car Flags and Lighting at Omega Motors (Presti Property)

Kathleen Willis stated that although the floodlights at the Omega Motor's used car lot are not turned on, they are still on the property and thinks they should be removed.

Kathleen also stated that there are several flags at Omega Motors that are flopping in the wind and look very tacky.

She also noticed wooden boards on the property that looked as if they had held up Christmas lights and are holding up flags and that those flags are also a violation.

Some Board members agreed that they considered flags to be moving signs and thus in violation of the sign bylaw because they are moving.

Lori Clark stated that the Board should make Craig Martin, Building Enforcement Officer, aware of this violation.

Steve Quinn cautioned Board members that they have been spending 75% of their time on enforcement issues and they should be on planning. He suggested individual members contact Craig when they notice a zoning violation, rather than sending a memo from the Board.

Kathleen Willis stated that she wanted a memo sent to Craig from the Board about this because it's an issue that they have notice and the protocol is to contact Craig when they notice a zoning violation. She argued that it is a very serious issue and that the Planning Board should be able to send a memo about this, as a Board.

Steve also noted that this item was not on the agenda tonight.

Lori Clark stated that, based on the meeting the Board had with Craig they were asked to stay in communication with him and they are just letting him know they have concerns.

Kathleen Willis stated that they should do this as a Board because it is an ongoing issue and several members of the Board have observed these waving flags on the Presti Property.

Brian Martinson stated that it would be a good idea for Craig Martin, Building Commissioner to give the owner of Omega Sports a copy of the Zoning Bylaws. He also noted that Mr. Presti has not been making his tenants aware of their responsibilities to the Zoning Bylaws.

Board members cited page 9 of the Zoning Bylaw for the definition of a sign and felt that a flag qualifies under this definition. They also noted page 65, stating that the flags moving in the wind is considered, "oscillating and operating with moving parts."

The Planning Board took an informal vote to send Craig Martin a memo stating the flags at Omega Motors are in violation of the sign bylaw. Three members (Kathleen Willis, Lori Clark and Ernie Dodd) were in favor of sending this memo as a Board, one member was opposed (Steve Quinn) and one abstained (Lenny Golder).

Karen was asked to send a memo to Craig Martin.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55PM

**Respectfully Submitted,
Kristen Domurad**

Administrative Assistant