

TOWN OF STOW PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the June 14, 2011 Planning Board Meeting.

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

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

Planning Board Members' Updates

All were reminded that the Annual Planning Board Dinner will be held next week in lieu of the regular meeting.

Comprehensive Land Use Reform and Partnership Act (CLURPA)

Ernie Dodd and Len Golder reported that they will be meeting with Jeff Lacy on Thursday, June 16 to discuss the proposed Comprehensive Land Use Reform Partnership Act. Kathleen said she doesn't understand why the State is pushing for increased density throughout the Commonwealth. It was noted that they think increased density will control housing costs. Members voiced concern that CLURPA does not take into consideration small towns such as Stow and small towns are not represented in the process.

Arbor Glen

Kathleen Willis reported that, in reviewing the approved plan for Arbor Glen, Pulte Homes did not follow their own specifications for tree planting.

Coordinator's Report.

Karen Kelleher reported on ongoing activity in the Planning Department

Solar Bylaw

Karen reported that the Assessor's Officer was told that the Teradyne property, located off of Delaney Street is under agreement with a Solar Company. Also, the Building Commissioner informed Karen that Don McPherson contacted him about the permitting process for a Commercial Solar Photovoltaic Installation at the Minute Man Airfield property.

Arbor Glen

Karen reported that Pulte Homes is looking for release of the Hudson Road Bond. She noted that they have a letter from the Supt. of Streets stating there was no damage to Hudson Road. Karen will put the request on the next meetings agenda. Pulte advised Karen that they are still working on the landscaping issues.

Lower Village Common

Karen reported that she, Phil Mosley and Susan McLaughlin met with Diane Decker, who offered to donate a bench for the Lower Village Common.

The original intent was to donate the bench, Susan seemed to steer her toward a cash donation. We discussed the donation in terms of the Lower Village Common Improvement plan, which is included in the Lower Village Committee's Final Report. Karen expressed concern that if the Town accepts a cash donation and doesn't have sufficient funds or man power for installation it, it may never get done. Karen's original thinking was that the bench could be the first step in implementing the common improvement plan. However Phil noted that the Warren Fund may be willing to fund the entire improvement plan and that this bench should be for another location on the Common.

It was agreed that Diane should hold off on her donation for a couple of weeks to give Phil and Karen time to come up with a recommendation on a location for this bench as well as the overall plan for the Common. Susan said she doesn't think the Selectmen would want to be responsible for implementing the Plan – she thought it would be the Planning Board. Karen explained that, in any event, as the Board of Selectmen is responsible for the Common they should, at a minimum, vote to adopt the plan and delegate implementation to someone.

Pedestrian Walkway Planning Committee

Karen reported that the Request for Bids will be posted in the Central Register on June 12th and the pre-bid conference will be held on July 11, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING - Town Building Parking Lot Expansion

At 7:30 p.m. the Public Hearing to consider the application for Site Plan Approval for the Town Building Parking lot was called to order.

Ernie Dodd moved to waive the requirement to read the Notice of Public Hearing. The motion was seconded by Steve Quinn and carried by a unanimous vote of five members present (Lori Clark, Ernie Dodd, Steve Quinn, Kathleen Willis and Len Golder).

Craig Martin, Building Commission and Mike Clayton, Superintendent of Streets were present to review the plan.

Craig Martin reviewed the Plan and gave an overview of comments from the Conservation Commission. They came to an agreement to extend the silt fence to the edge of the existing parking lot.

The Plan shows an expanded 14 space parking area to be approximately 2 ft. lower than the existing parking lot.

Due to the existing slope, fill material will be required to meet the final grades. 3:1 grading is proposed at the southerly side and a boulder retaining wall is proposed along the easterly side.

One deep sump catch basin with a hooded trap is proposed with an open pipe discharge to a rip-rap swale to the east.

The parking surface will be paved with a wood guard rail fence. Traffic Flow is intended to be one-way access/egress for the existing upper parking area and the proposed parking area. Egress from the lower parking lot (Council on Aging Lot) is shown as one-way through the proposed parking lot expansion.

Hay bales and silt fence will be installed for erosion control measures

Craig Martin explained that the area they have to work with is very tight due to restrictions on the land that was conveyed to the care and custody of the Conservation Commission, wetlands and setback requirements from the public water supply.

He explained that DEP did grant a waiver to allow the parking lot expansion and maintain a 100' buffer to the paved surface. Craig will provide a copy of the waiver to Karen for the file. DEP reviewed the site plan, as presented with this application. DEP wanted to make sure the drainage is not directed toward the well. Craig explained that drainage from the proposed parking lot expansion will be discharged in the wetlands.

Kathleen Willis asked if the Conservation Commission approves of the drainage being discharged to wetlands. Craig responded that the Conservation approves of the plan, which includes a plan to trap sediment.

Kathleen Willis noted that normally the Board has drainage calculations for its Consulting Engineer to review. Craig Martin noted that this is a very small project. Kathleen said she assumes that Craig and Mike will take drainage issues into consideration.

Kathleen asked if there will be any restriction on the use of salt. Craig and Mike responded that there will be no restriction as to the use of salt.

Craig Martin noted that he inherited the plan and had to work with what he had. He assumed elevations and that there will be a 2-foot drop with a 3-1 slope.

Kathleen noted the grass strip between the existing and proposed parking lot and voiced concern about plantings being ruined by plows. Mike Clayton agreed that that could be an issue as the snow will most likely be stored between the lots.

Craig Martin noted that the Conservation Commission didn't want any grading over the conservation line. Therefore the plan shows a stone retaining wall and a guardrail. The existing drop is almost 3-1 slope.

Steve Quinn noted a well in front of the building. Craig believes it is the old well that used to go across to the Town Hall. Mike Clayton said he doesn't think there is an actual well there anymore.

Kathleen asked about lighting for the parking lot. Craig said lighting is not indicated on the plan. He is not sure if the existing lighting will be sufficient. If deemed necessary and they have enough in the budget, they will use full cut-off lights.

Steve Quinn asked if they considered handicap spaces. Craig Martin said they already meet the requirement, even with the additional spaces.

Ernie Dodd noted that he supports diagonal spaces in order to reduce the area of disturbance. Mike Clayton said they might lose a space if the plan were to be changed to diagonal spaces.

Ernie Dodd referred to a sketch plan he drew, which shows they may be able to extend the lot to pick up a couple of spaces.

Kathleen Willis asked if they will need fill to construct the new parking area. Mike Clayton said the Highway Department has plenty of fill and fields stones.

Kathleen noted that additional parking spaces are needed and would not support a reduction in number of spaces. Someone questioned how many spaces will be lost across the street when the sidewalk is installed. Craig Martin said they would be losing two official spaces. Bruce Fletcher said it would be a loss of 7 spots if you include the area where people park on the grass now. Ernie Dodd said that Great Road could be re-stripped to provide parking along Great Road. Mike Clayton agreed that would be possible and noted that delivery trucks now park on the sidewalk along Great Road.

Kathleen Willis asked if there will be an as-built plan. Craig said only if there are sufficient funds.

Public Input

Resident Malcolm FitzPatrick of Meeting House Lane, stated that from a historic perspective the site was known as the "Upper Green". The property was acquired after buildings were demolished. The gas station got the corner lot and this lot was to be a green space. The Committee for the Town Building was originally looking at the Hale Road but decided on this site. At the time, there was quite an objection. The property was first know as the Smith Hurst Site and was also known as Lady Bird Park. The Town determined that it didn't have park protection because it wasn't designated a park. When the Town Building was proposed Malcolm raised problems with the parking and was told the parking was sufficient and there would be no need for expansion. He was also noted at the time that the rest of the property was to be designated as a park. When the proposal for additional parking for the seniors came forward, he found that the Selectmen never designated conservation area. Karen noted that the land was conveyed to the care and custody of the Conservation Commission and that line was shown on the plan for the senior parking lot. Malcolm argued that the line was moved each time additional parking was proposed. Malcolm said he is disturbed to see that we are looking for green space for the Lower Village Common and continue to needle away the parkland. He said, given the history, the town should look at alternatives like parking on Great Road and/or extending the parking area to where the crab apple trees, which have blight, are located in the front of the building, where you could get a row of spaces. He also noted you could extend the parking lot toward the gas station.

Karen Kelleher noted that the parking lot would be more visible if the crab apple trees were removed for parking. There would be no buffer from Great Road or the gas station. The parking area, as proposed, would be stepped down so as not to be so visible. Craig Martin said there is a visual barrier to the proposed parking area. He said, in his opinion, the buffer in front is more valuable. He also noted that they are maintaining the open space that was transferred to the Conservation Commission.

Malcolm FitzPatrick said another alternative would be to lease parking areas at the business on Gleasondale road and build a bridge across the wetlands to the Town Building.

Lori Clark asked what the expectation was when the Town approved funds for the Town Building. Ernie Dodd said there was no expectation that the building would grow. He said the issue is not insufficient space for employees. The issue is adequate spaces for meetings. Malcolm FitzPatrick noted that the town is not becoming so urban that we need to constantly increase parking. The Town should be conserving open space.

Len Golder noted there is still land beyond that line delineating the conservation land. He said the Town needs to think about imaginative ways to use the space. Kathleen said the only time she ever sees anyone use the conservation land is when the Council on Aging has its picnic. Malcolm said it was more of a park before the Town Building. Ernie Dodd said he would like to see Historic Commission put the church steeple on the open land. It would attract people.

Kathleen Willis noted that the Council on Aging parking spaces are often used for meetings.

Kathleen questioned what the distance is from the edge of the existing parking lot. Craig said it was about 70 feet. Ernie noted that they would only need about 60 feet with diagonal parking. Mike Clayton said they discussed a lot of different options and it was safety reasons why they decided to keep with the vertical spaces. Lori Clark noted that the Safety Officer does not like the idea of on-street parking.

Malcolm FitzPatrick suggested reducing the width of the Great Road and adding landscaping such as evergreen bushes that are not too high. He said the proposal is paving a lot of area when you could get additional spaces here and there. Mike Clayton said you would still need paved areas.

Len Golder asked if they considered a gravel parking lot. Mike Clayton said a gravel parking lot would be higher maintenance. It could get muddy, cars could get stuck and the mud would be tracked into the building.

Kathleen Willis noted that there is a huge invasion of bittersweet in the trees between town building and the gas station, which should definitely be cut. Malcolm said there is no real visual barrier from Great Road or the gas station. Kathleen Willis said evergreen shrubs would be better at the gas station. Malcolm asked: Why not add parallel parking by the gas station. Craig Martin said they need to maintain a buffer and that space is needed for the dumpsters. Kathleen suggested moving the dumpster down below. Craig and Mike said it would be difficult to access.

Steve Quinn said he agrees that the one-way traffic flow would be better.

Kathleen Willis said the crab apple trees should be left where they are. She is not aware of blight and noted that they are being professionally maintained. Malcolm said they are not really a buffer. Kathleen agreed but noted they distract the eye.

Ernie Dodd questioned if they considered using pervious a surface. Craig said they did not because it would be cost prohibitive.

Malcolm noted that the problem with economizing is that you will get something that won't look good just because working off limited budget and an old plan.

Kathleen Willis said her idea was for a parking garage in back, where the Council on Aging Parking is. Malcolm noted there is a lot of wasted ramp space in parking garages.

Kathleen Willis asked if there are any plans for landscaping behind the lot. Craig and Mike said it would be grass.

Len Golder asked if they considered future demand for parking spaces. Craig said the town is ever changing, but they project the additional spaces should serve us well for another 20 years. He noted this is a well-used building and is busy all day long.

Ernie Dodd moved to close the hearing. The motion was seconded by Steve Quinn and carried by a unanimous vote of five members present (Lori Clark, Ernie Dodd, Kathleen Willis, Steve Quinn and Len Golder).

Parking on Common Road in front of the library

Ernie Dodd asked Mike Clayton if he ever considered making Common Road in front of the Library one-way in order to get additional parking spaces. Mike said that is a good thought but you would need to think about a turning lane when going east on 117 and turning onto Common Road. He noted that it is wide enough for parallel spaces with two-way traffic flow. Ernie Dodd suggested angle parking. Mike said he would look into it. Ernie Dodd told Mike if he supports it, he would be willing to go the Board of Selectmen to propose it.

Members asked when they expect to start the parking lot expansion project. Mike said hopefully next month. They hope to have it paved by the fall.

Members asked Bruce Fletcher, Tree Warden, about the weeping cherry tree that is proposed to be removed. Bruce explained that it can't be moved without damaging it because the weeping nature of the tree. He also noted that an arborist said it wouldn't survive a move because it is diseased and would not even survive much longer even if it stayed in place. Bruce noted that, although it is not considered a public shade tree, he decided to hold hearing for an educational process. Lew Halprin attended the hearing and said it was a memorial tree, but could not provide the documentation. Bruce noted that some that attended the hearing objected to its removal. He said there is a process to bump the issue to the Board of Selectmen if objections are voiced at the public hearing. He hasn't decided if he will do that, as it is only a guideline. He will probably go ahead and cut it down.

Kathleen noted that the copper beach tree was moved and she noted that some roots are exposed. Mike Clayton said he will call the company that moved it and have them check it out.

Pedestrian Walkway Planning Committee

Members reviewed the letters of interest for re-appointment to the Pedestrian Walkway Planning Committee.

Kathleen Willis moved to appoint Kris Wile, Martha Monroe and Joelle Spear to the Pedestrian Walkway Planning Committee for a term to expire on December 31, 2011. Steve Quinn asked why the term would be only 6 months. Lori Clark noted that the 6-month term was recommended by the Pedestrian Walkway Planning Committee as that is the deadline they are working toward to complete a walkway master plan. The Motion carried by a unanimous vote of five members present (Lori Clark, Ernie Dodd, Kathleen Willis, Steve Quinn and Len Golder).

Golf Course Groundwater Monitoring.

As requested by the Board at the June 7th meeting, Karen drafted a letter to the Board of Health outlining discussions with them and Jay Billings on Golf Course Groundwater monitoring. Members requested that the letter be forwarded to Jay Billings for his review before forwarding it to the Board of Health.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Kelleher
Planning Coordinator