

TOWN OF STOW PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the March 20, 2012 Planning Board Meeting.

Present: Planning Board Members: Steve Quinn, Ernest Dodd, Lori Clark, Kathy Sferra and Lenny Golder
Voting Associate Member: Brian Martinson
Planning Coordinator: Karen Kelleher
Administrative Assistant: Kristen Domurad-Guichard

Called to order at 7:00PM.

REVIEW OF CORRESPONDENCE AND MINUTES

Minutes

No minutes were reviewed.

Correspondence

Members discussed the email, dated March 15, 2012, from Donna Jacobs, Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (SMAHT), including a draft Comprehensive Permit Policy Update. Karen noted that she understands that SMAHT discussed process only and not content of the document. It was noted that Bill Byron agreed to participate in the committee as a Zoning Board of Appeals Representative.

PUBLIC INPUT

No public input.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS' UPDATE

Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) Conference. Kathy Sferra reported that she attended the CPTC Conference at Holy Cross. She attended the sessions on Non-Conforming Uses and Structures, Downtown Zoning, and Comprehensive Land Use Reform and Partnership Act (CLURPA). She noted that the presentation for the downtown zoning session was excellent and will get a copy to share with the Board. She also noted that Stow's Lower Village is more of a commercial corridor than a downtown.

495/Compact Development Plan

Kathy Sferra reported that the 495 Compact Development Plan was released and noted it is a very large document, which she could not download. Karen will provide a link to the report.

PUBLIC INPUT

No public input at this time.

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

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

Hudson Light and Power

Karen stated she spoke with Yakov Levin of Hudson Light and Power, who explained that full cutoff flood lights do not exist, but agreed to adjust the light at Stow House of Pizza. He also

noted that he cannot turn off a light without the customer's request. Hudson Light and Power does have full cutoff street lights, which will be replaced over time, as the old fixtures break – unless the customer wants to bear the cost of replacement. Karen noted the liability HLP might have because the light could be considered a hazard by shining in drivers eyes- causing an accident when he argued that it would be a liability to remove the fixture without the customer's authorization.

Karen stated she then received an email from Yakov later this afternoon to advise that they adjusted the light vertically, shining downward.

Brian stated there were about five flood lights on Kosta's property. He noted the light that Lori saw off at their last meeting is now back on. Brian stated that the owner should disconnect the light. Brian noted they have been talking about this light for the past five years.

Lori noted that they invoked the new process in which the Board is to inform Craig Martin of any zoning violations relating to their special permits; Craig spoke with Kostas and issued a letter with a deadline; the light was turned off, and now the light is back on.

Brian asked if they required full cut off lights in the Special Permit.

Karen stated she would check.

Brian asked how long Kostas had owned the property.

Kathy Sferra asked if the problem would revert back to the Building Department to take care of, since the light is back on.

It was noted that there has been activity to turn the lights off but it has been inconsistent.

Brian stated that they need to have the lights disconnected so there is no chance of being out of compliance.

Karen stated that Hudson Light and Power would need the request to come from the property owner.

Brian stated that this situation will only turn into the H&R Block sign if it is not disconnected.

Lori suggested the Board defer back to Craig Martin.

Collings (Riverview Estates)

Karen reported she received a phone call inquiring about Bob Collings clear-cutting his property. She spoke with Town Counsel, Jon Witten who advised if the clear-cutting is in anticipatory to the subdivision he should be stopped. Also, if he cleared more than one acre of land he needs a NPDES permit. Craig Martin, Building Commissioner will check out the site.

Stow Fire Department

Karen reported the Fire Department plans to install a new radio tower. She advised Chief McLaughlin, that he will be required to file a Special Permit Application with the Planning Board because the tower will be over 35' tall. Also, as Captain Benoit stated the tower will be taller than 100' and they will need a variance. Captain Benoit also noted that the Building Commissioner advised them that a setback variance will be required.

Ernie asked if the Department could make use of existing cell towers.

Karen stated they looked into this option at Hillcrest and Wheeler Road and neither site met their needs.

Steppingstones

Karen reported the Steppingstones preschool is looking at the 23 Gleasondale Road property. They met with Department of Environmental Protection and got the okay to move forward. They will need a Special Permit from the ZBA for the preschool use. Karen noted that the Board should anticipate future development at Rich Presti's site where Steppingstones is currently located.

Public Records Request

Karen noted the Town Clerk received a Public Records request for any and all documents since January 2, 2003 related to any meeting or decisions concerning the development of land in Stow owned by Douglas and Harvey Trefry, which is the Meadowbrook Estates (Trefry Lane) subdivision. The request refers to the Cricket Hollow Subdivision and parcels in Stow related to Cricket Hollow Subdivision. Karen will confirm if they want the entire Trefry Lane file or just files related to the access road.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Wireless Service Overlay District – Input to Isotrope

Lori stated that the Board needed to consider their options and how they wanted to move forward with the study.

Lori noted Steve Quinn's comment from last meeting, where he questioned having an overlay district at all, as cell companies tend to locate where they want and file suit if it's not in the overlay district, which is typically upheld.

Lenny stated that he felt the Board should review what the current district is as well as places where the Board would consider acceptable to add into the district. He noted that the Board should look at it from the standpoint of providing coverage for the public without negatively impacting neighborhoods.

Ernie said they should look at properties where we know owners will be willing to have a cell towers.

Lori noted the deficiency in the south east quadrant of Stow.

Kathy Sferra stated that she did not think the Wildlife Refuge would be interested.

Ernie stated that Honey Pot may be an opportunity and that it could go some place near the river. Kathy said this could be a good source of revenue for the orchard.

Lenny suggested another area is possibly in Hudson on top of Pompositticut Farm.

Ernie Dodd offered to contact the Fire Academy, State Forest, Honey Pot and the Channel 66 tower.

Lenny stated that the highway barn or the land next to the highway barn may be a good location. Kathy also noted the Jokinen property off of South Acton Road is another parcel to consider.

Lenny suggested considering town owned land like the Pompositticut and Center School sites.

Kathy noted the old well site in Harvard Acres.

Brian questioned whether, after going through this whole initiative, it will actually stop cell companies from constructing where they wish to go.

Steve noted that Isotrope did say it gives the Board a more defensible position.

Lenny said another argument is that we could be subject to litigation no matter what we do.

Lori said suggested identify potential sites that would result in minimal impact and contact those owners to see if they would even be willing to have a facility at their property, and then go back to David Maxson for him to prepare models of those sites.

Brian questioned the criteria of getting the property owner's acceptance to cell towers. Kathy said she saw this bit of criteria as putting the town in a more defensible position. Brian said people move and the landowners may not always be the same and may not be worth contacting them.

Lori noted that by identifying spots that would provide the coverage in the soft spot areas, and then communicating with property owners to see if they would even be willing to site a cell tower on their property, we would have a better idea of what we are dealing with when David models the sites.

Kathy said if the property owners support the idea it could help the Board at Town Meeting. She also noted this could help the Board to know if a property is or isn't really an option for a cell company and if other parcels should be considered.

Steve Quinn suggested getting the overlay districts from surrounding towns to see our maps and theirs next to each other.

Lenny noted we should be looking across boundaries.

The Board will take the following next steps:

- Identify potential favorable locations in soft spot areas identified by David Maxson.
- Obtain overlay districts from surrounding towns and look at our maps together.
- Make a list of property owners currently in the district.
- Contact the owners of those properties.
- Narrow down the areas the Board would like David to model.
- Hold a public meeting.

The Board will look into the following properties: Ernie will contact the Fire Academy, Honey Pot, Channel 66 Tower, Kathy will contact Libby of the Wildlife Refuge and property.

Kathy noted that the Red Acre Woodland site cannot have a wireless facility on the parcel but it is included in the overlay district. She suggested moving the overlay district across the street.

Brian stated he thought the Board was making it more difficult than it has to be. He said if the location is a good place for the district the Board should just include it and if the property owners don't want to lease their land they don't have to.

Ernie noted that it is important to know if some property owners would be completely unwilling because then they would be zoning knowing it wouldn't work.

Lori agreed, she stated that the consent of property owners would not be the only deciding factor but it would help them identify good locations after gaining input from property owners. She also noted that getting input from the owners will make it a lot easier and they should have their input in this.

Kathy stated that there is also a courtesy factor by including the property owners.

Brian suggested they should contact the property owners last.

Kathy and Karen both felt the research could all be done in tandem.

The Board will also consider looking at changes in the allowed structure, monopole vs. unipole.

Steve asked if any towns don't have an overlay district.

Karen stated that she believed it was the Town of Weston, but it was subject to special permit which is a discretionary permit, which could be denied.

Steve questioned if it would be better to do that or have an overlay district.

Lenny stated that either way there could be a chance for appeal.

Lower Village Traffic Planning – Working Meeting

The Board reviewed the original goals, outlined in their agreement with Coler and Colantonio. Lori gave an overview on what the Board has done and where we are now. She stated that Coler and Colantonio proposed a variety of options for the Board based on their traffic goals. They learned that a one lane roundabout was not a viable option at this time, as the volume of traffic on Route 117 exceeds the state recommended capacity of one lane roundabout.

Lori stated that the alternative they presented calls for permanent pedestrian traffic islands, sidewalks on both sides and left hand turn lanes.

Ernie Dodd passed out a traffic plan he created which showed a middle turn and an acceleration lane.

Brian stated that the idea was interesting, but seeing as it is relatively unique it could cause confusion to drivers who would not be familiar with it.

Other members questioned the safety of the design and suggested Coler and Colantonio share their opinion on it.

Steve Quinn stated that the last scenario presented by Coler and Colantonio would slow traffic down with the traffic islands, left turn lane, narrowed road and eliminated curb cuts.

Brian stated that he felt the left turn lane at Pompositticut Street was solving a problem that did not exist.

Lori stated that people are able to then pass by on the right.

Brian said this would make it more difficult for people to turn left out of Pompositticut Street.

Kathy Sferra suggested making Pompositticut Street a no left turn out during rush hour.

Brian stated that this might be a good idea and noted that hardly anyone takes a left out of Pompositticut Street during that time.

Kathy would like to see a traffic island design that includes more landscaping and suggested an adopt an island program.

Brian stated that the original Lower Village report has information about a gateway sign.

Brian stated he was in favor of making the existing temporary pedestrian islands permanent.

Steve stated he felt the temporary islands have been working well and could see them working well in the other locations suggested by Coler and Colantonio.

Brian noted that we don't necessarily want to let cars travel through fast, we want to slow people down.

Steve noted this plan will accommodate through traffic and also be aesthetically pleasing with the curbing and sidewalks and plantings.

Lenny also noted the Board could add rumble strips.

Ernie Dodd stated that it is difficult for people to make left hand turns out of the shopping center.

Kathy suggested the Board should ask where the curb cut alignment should be, especially the south side properties. She suggested requiring curb cut alignments as part of zoning change.

The Board will ask Coler and Colantonio for recommended locations for inter-lot connection and curb cuts. .

Lenny suggested Coler and Colantonio also make a recommendation on the exact locations for the pedestrian islands.

It was noted that the Board should consider future curb cuts when planning for the location of pedestrian islands.

Ernie suggested the Board include Mike Clayton in these discussions so the Board understands his vision on drainage considerations.

The Board mentioned concentrating on interlot connections for Presti's property and the former Beef and Ale site, as well as Curtis Septic and the shopping plaza to the west.

Karen reminded the Board the contract with Coler and Colantonio was for the entire length of Lower Village, defined as ElmRidge Road to White Pond Road.

Karen asked the Board when they wanted to involve Mike Clayton, Highway Superintendent. She noted that he does not need the borings taken but they should still meet.

Lori said she would like Coler and Colantonio to show the streetscape in addition to just the sidewalks and details for the islands.

Brian noted the Lower Village created a standard streetscape.

Lori stated that this could be used as their guideline.

Kristen noted that if the Board wanted to consider different zoning in the future that would allow for infill development without a minimum setback, the location of the fence in the Lower Village Streetscape design may not be appropriate for every property.

Karen asked the Board how they wanted to proceed with their last invoice, as Coler and Colantonio exceeded the budget for Task 3 by \$3,800. John suggested using a portion of the budget remaining from Task 1 and 2 to apply the overage from Task 3.

Board members asked why he ended up going over.

Karen stated that the Board had John come back a few times and had asked him for additional designs.

The Board agreed to his suggestion, as the funds for the remaining part of Task 1 are no longer necessary.

The Board will ask Coler and Colantonio for the following :

A full concept of the Lower Village with the most recent scenario (left turn lanes), and a few phases broken up that they could implement separately . The Board would also like to know what the best ways to tackle each item and in what order.

Steve asked about the funds for utility conversion.

Lenny suggested the Board not consider this unless funding is available.

Ernie felt it was too much money.

Brian agreed.

It was noted that Norfolk passed a tax increase which was passed at town meeting. They sold the idea by saying if everyone bought an energy efficient light bulbs for their homes they would save the amount needed for the project.

Brian questioned if the Board should be considering curb cut alignments before the properties are redeveloped.

Karen noted that it is important to make a vision now for improvements like curb cuts so property owners can be directed in that direction.

Kathy agreed and stated that knowing where we want curb cut alignments will help guide development in the right direction. She also noted the Board could use incentives, giving developers something in exchange for following the Board's vision.

Lori asked how the Board could force development to come closer to the street.

Kathy suggested requiring maximum setbacks.

Kathy noted that the Board could consider utility conversion at a later date.

Brian asked how the Board would go about achieving their vision, especially with all the buildings on the south side they would like to see redeveloped.

Kathy stated that the Board first needs to be clear about what they and the community wants, which is still unclear. Next they would need to write it into the zoning and give developers things they want that would entice people to invest in the Lower Village such as allowing higher density and other incentives. Then we wait until properties get redeveloped and improvements get made.

Lenny said even things like signage would improve the look.

Karen noted that by making the area look aesthetically pleasing with standard streetscape, vegetative traffic islands and curbing, could pull businesses into the area.

Ernie stated that development will also depend on growth in surrounding towns, specifically Maynard.

Kathy mentioned other zoning tools, such as making existing uses that don't fit into the vision non-conforming in order to get what you want.

She stated that if you have an area you want to develop, you should focus the uses in one concentrated area and not allow them elsewhere.

It was suggested that we should take this into consideration when zoning for Gleasondale.

Brian stated that the Lower Village Sub-Committee studied this area in-depth and the Board needs to start implementing something to show more progress. He suggested making the temporary islands permanent.

Lori suggested they check with Coler and Colantonio first to make sure they are in the right location.

Brian stated that he really liked Bruce's pedestrian island sketch.

Kathy stated that she would like to see both ends of the pedestrian island with and plantings. vegetative materials.

Lori suggested asking Coler and Colantonio for a design scheme for the pedestrian islands.

Karen suggested researching surrounding towns to see what styles they like.

The Board will take the following next steps:

Contact Coler and Colantonio to use the overage from Task 1 (Utility Conversion Planning) for Task 3 (Advancement of Surface Improvement Program), as utility conversion is the lowest priority.

Meet with Mike Clayton in the first meeting in April to discuss drainage and compile any other concerns he may have.

Members agreed to a list of items for Coler and Colantonio to include in their design.

Entire length of Lower Village with Scenario 7 (left turn lanes)

Addition of traffic island and village sign at White Pond Road end of Great Road
Streetscape design
Traffic island design
Potential curb cuts with inter-lot connections
Information given from Mike Clayton

Brian stated that he still felt the roundabout would work.

It was noted that it would be very difficult to get funding with this scenario with a professional traffic engineer's statement that the design criteria for the level of service in this area dictates a two lane roundabout.

Karen will relay the Board's information to Coler and Colantonio and Mike Clayton.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:36PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kristen Domurad-Guichard