

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the August 14, 2012 Planning Board Meeting

Present: Planning Board Members: Lori Clark, Steve Quinn, Mark Jones,
Ernest Dodd and Len Golder

Voting Associate Member: Brian Martinson

Non-Voting Associate Member: Mark Jones

Planning Coordinator: Karen Kelleher

Planning Assistant: Jesse Steadman

Absent: Kathy Sferra

Lori Clark called meeting to order at 7p.m.

Correspondence Update:

Stow Shopping Center Lighting:

Gordon Whitman sent to the Planning Board photos of proposed LED, full cutoff light fixtures to replace existing, non-conforming lighting fixtures at the rear of the shopping center. The specifications describe a downward directed dome of light, no more than ten feet across at the pavement level. Members agreed that the specification meets the intent of the Zoning Bylaw.

Discussion of 7/31/12 Planning Board Meeting Minutes:

Ernie Dodd motioned to approve the meeting minutes as amended.

Steve Quinn seconded and the Planning Board

VOTED (4-0) Unanimously (Lori Clark, Steve Quinn, Ernie Dodd, Len Golder) in favor.

Planning Board Member Update:

Steve Quinn attended an Elementary School Building Committee walk at the Center School and reported that although there are many small items to complete, the renovation schedule is still on target. The school would like to get a temporary occupancy permit by next week. Steve Quinn said they are trying to get as much done as possible before the children return for the school year.

White Pond Road/Crow Island Boat Rental Establishment:

Brian Martinson said he has not seen any evidence that the Crow Island Boat Rental business is still operational. Both a stationary and a floating signs have been removed and there are no kayaks at the end of Mr. Donahues dock. Lori Clark asked if any action had been taken by the applicant. Karen Kelleher answered that there

has been no activity at Crow Island nor has any of the required signage been installed.

Coordinators Report:

Villages at Stow:

Karen Kelleher reported that Habitech has swapped an affordable unit for a market rate unit at the Villages at Stow 40B development. In response, Karen Kelleher reported the swap to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. Karen Kelleher said she asked Mark O'Hagan to send a letter to the ZBA regarding the required sidewalk at the Villages. Karen Kelleher also explained that a resident of the Villages visited the Planning Department over concerns that the affordable units at Stow have been selling at multiple price points. The resident also voiced concern over the apparent differences in amenities offered to affordable units at the Villages, although Karen Kelleher could not verify the claims. She recommended that the resident contact the Housing Authority about her questions/concerns.

Sylvan Drive Update:

Karen Kelleher claimed that work at Sylvan Drive for the upcoming Town Meeting's Street Acceptance will likely make the September 11, 2012 Selectman's hearing for a vote. The as built plans and the trails are in, along with a variety of other minor items being completed. She explained that the Stow Conservation Trust has asked for an endowment for monitoring the Derby Woods conservation restriction, a request that has been communicated in the final stages of the restriction process. Karen Kelleher said that if the Trust cannot work out an agreement with Habitech, perhaps the land could be transferred directly to the Conservation Commission where it would be subject to article 97, which protects it to a high degree even without a restriction. Steve Quinn asked about a past conversation regarding the capacity of the Conservation Commission to maintain the restriction. Karen noted that Pat Perry, Conservation Commission Coordinator has voiced that concern. Karen Kelleher said conveyance of the open land to the Conservation Commission may meet the intent of the bylaw because it would be subject to Article 97. Mark Jones asked if this sort of issue should be a topic of future discussion. The board agreed it may be a suitable subject for future discussion with the Conservation Commission and the Stow Conservation Trust.

Karen Kelleher said that beside small adjustments to the as built plans, they have been reviewed by the Town's engineer and they seem to be very close to finished. Steve Quinn asked about the condition of the trees. Karen Kelleher mentioned that she has heard conflicting reports on whether or not a few of them have died.

Valeria Petri:

Karen Kelleher said that she sent a letter to Valeria Petri regarding her application for a repetitive petition. Karen Kelleher said she referenced the specific section of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40a to explain the Planning's Board decision to

not hear her application for a special permit without a material change in the submitted plans. Karen Kelleher explained to Petri that having a different make-up of the board hear the application is not sufficient to be considered a material change. Board members agreed.

Arbor Glen:

It was brought to Karen Kelleher's attention that the sign at Arbor Glen is larger than what the bylaw allows. Lori Clark said that if it is already a larger sign than allowed, Arbor Glen should not be allowed to add another non-conforming sign. She added that they can add another conforming sign and reminded that there is to be no lighting with it.

Center School Landscape Plan:

Karen Kelleher reported that James Pfeiffer, one of the landscape architects at the Center School project have begun to move plants to the property. Karen Kelleher said they have not yet contacted the concerned abutter, although they did move some plants around in the plan to fill in obvious gaps in foliage. Karen Kelleher said that while she is concerned that the plants could die if left out too long, she wanted to be sure the abutter was contacted and that perhaps a Planning Board member could take the lead on seeing this issue through to expedite the process. Members agreed to designate Ernie Dodd to work with the landscape architect to be sure the plan meets the Board's expectations and that the abutter is protected.

Shopping Center Sign:

Karen Kelleher said that Gordon Whitman reported that Mark Burell will be submitting a petition for a sign permit, and that Citizens Bank is planning on planting 16 inches of tree diameter on their property. The non-conforming lights on the rear of the building will be replaced. Gordon Whitman said that he will likely be before the planning board in September and the ZBA in October regarding the petition for shopping Center signs along Route 117.

Draft Letter to Linear Tenants:

The Board made several adjustments to a draft letter to be sent to the Linear Retail tenants detailing the outstanding conditions of Linear's special permit and the compromises made by the Planning Board to accept two proposed signs for the Shopping Center. Discussion centered on focusing the tone and direction of the letter, making it clear that the Planning Board has gone out of its way to compromise on the dimensions and character of the new signs.

Sylvan Drive Public Way Street Acceptance:

Lori Clark asked when the Conservation Trust and Habitech may come to agreement regarding an endowment for the conservation restriction at Sylvan Drive? Karen Kelleher said street acceptance should probably not be contingent on the Conservation Restriction issue due to Habitech having already endorsed the Conservation Restriction in the form agreed to by the Conservation Commission and the Stow Conservation Trust, as well as having submitted the deed to the Open Land.

Steve Quinn asked if the catch basins have been cleaned out. Karen Kelleher said that those issues have been resolved. Len Golder asked if they would still be holding a bond? Karen Kelleher said yes. Mark Jones asked if there should be any mention of the suspended conservation restriction.

Ernie Dodd motioned to recommend the selectmen schedule a public hearing for street acceptance.

Steve Quinn seconded and the Planning Board...

VOTED (4-0) Unanimously (Len Golder, Lori Clark, Ernie Dodd, Steve Quinn) in favor.

Minuteman Solar Update:

Karen Kelleher noted that Kearsage Solar called to notify the Planning Board that they will be requesting the Minuteman application be postponed due to further clarifications needing to be worked out between the Minuteman Airfield and the FAA.

Lower Village Working Meeting:

Discussion of Downtown Technical Assistance Grant:

Karen Kelleher received correspondence regarding a DHCD Downtown Technical Assistance Grant, which could help the Planning Board address design guidelines for the Lower Village. Ernie Dodd mentioned the “economics of downtowns,” stated in the application as another option for assistance, may be an appropriate topic. Lori Clark said design guideline assistance would probably be the most helpful. Members of the board came to consensus that design guidelines may be best for this grant application.

Coler and Colantonio Estimate:

Lori Clark revisited the original request by the Planning Board to Coler and Colantonio for the Lower Village schematics as requested at the July 31st, 2012 Meeting. Karen Kelleher asked the firm to give a progress report midway through their work so the Board can make sure it is the correct final product. Len Golder said the Planning Board should be getting a little more than just engineering lines for the money. Steve Quinn and Lori Clark explained that this is a worthwhile endeavor and that as long as the Board receives a progress report to monitor the status, the agreement with Coler and Colantonio should be sufficient.

Steve Quinn moved to authorize Coler and Colantonio to prepare a color presentation for a public meeting for \$1800.

Ernie Dodd Seconded and the Planning Board...

VOTED (4-0) Unanimously (Len Golder, Steve Quinn, Ernie Dodd, Lori Clark) in favor.

Design Presentation:

Jesse Steadman presented a series of photographs and historical design elements of locally appropriate village design.

Outline of Public Forum:

Lori Clark introduced the need to have a clear plan for the public forum scheduled tentatively for October 2012. Len Golder said an appropriate goal would be to inform on ideas and goals for the planning direction and solicit input to gain buy in. After some discussion the following draft outline was generally agreed upon as a starting point for the public forum agenda.

The Lower Village Planning initiative is to accomplish four goals, including:

- Attract more businesses to serve the needs of Stow residents
- Foster a more attractive, walkable “downtown” area for Stow that reflects the local and historic character of Stow.
- Advocate for infrastructure improvements that will foster opportunities for appropriate development and redevelopment
- Improve vehicular and pedestrian safety

The Planning Board turned toward deciding on the best information and presentation of materials and data to explain both the origin and significance of these goals. The following outline is a draft of the October presentation.

1. Overarching goal of Lower Village
 - a. Explain through visuals and verbiage, the existing conditions of lower village. *(Here is what we have...)*
 - a. Introduce the issues and opportunities assessment as a vehicle for addressing different scenarios
2. Show the Possibilities *(Here is what could be)*
 - a. Show photos of the other villages
3. Describe the four goals as action items to reach different possible scenarios.
 - a. *Here is how we can get there*
 1. Attract business expansion to serve the needs of Stow residents.
 2. Foster a more attractive, walkable “downtown” for Stow that reflects the local and historic character of Stow.
 3. Improve vehicular and pedestrian safety
 4. Advocate for infrastructure improvements that will foster opportunities for appropriate development and redevelopment

Regarding Goal 1: Attract More Business to Serve the Needs of Stow Residents (possible rewording: Delete “Attract more business”, add “Support business expansion”)The Board generally agreed that mixed use can:

- Give a developer more options.
- Allow for the right kind of architecture.
- Provide the feeling of a destination to lower village
 - Ernie Dodd suggested looking at “Duck Soup” on Route 20 & Rt 2 in Harvard
- Ernie Dodd said there are a few infill opportunities where we can show how to move toward mixed use.
 - For instance we can show that one way to move toward the vision is allow for more development on the Linear site.
 - New zoning would enable those options.
 - Perhaps Linear could one day renovate the façade of the strip mall.
 - Perhaps they would add a level or take it a step further.
 - Mark Jones asked about FAR and the board agreed that section of the bylaw would require updating.

Mixed Use Housing Discussion:

The board discussed the idea of mixed use housing in Lower Village. Brian Martinson was skeptical of the reality of that vision. Other members noted that the public would likely not support more housing. There was some consensus that housing at least should not be excluded as a use in the case that future conditions change. Steve Quinn noted that it would provide another option for property owners.

Regarding Goal 3: Infrastructure Improvements

The Board discussed that the issue of water should be stated at the outset to preclude any thoughts that the Lower Village planning process is ineffective without water. Steve Quinn said that perhaps starting with the Coler and Colantonio Plan could be a good segue into infrastructure issues.

Brian Martinson said he does not believe a water is necessary for good Lower Village Planning. He noted that the Lower Village has been a thriving business district for many years without a public water supply and only recently has the issue come to the forefront of the discussion.

Steve Quinn responded, saying that this planning process sets the town up for the right kind of growth when water and the economy does improve. Board members discussed the opportunities public water could afford, including:

- Increasing the value of the property
- Giving businesses more incentives for expansion or renovation

Lori Clark said from a resident’s perspective, she feels lucky there is no water, because the Town is still in the midst of the planning process that would prepare for the inevitable changes water would bring.

Sept 4th is scheduled as the next working meeting.

Tentative Agenda Items:

- Update the action items that Planning Board Members will submit.
- Finish discussion of table of uses
- Review finished Coler & Colantonio presentation plan
- Steve and Lori will look over the Coler & Colantonio progress map leading up to Sept. 4 meeting.

Public Hearing for Delaney Street Commercial Photovoltaic Solar Solar Facility -
Ernie Dodd reported that he prepared a matrix of comments on the Delaney Solar PV project for review by the board.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jesse Steadman