

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the May 17, 2016 Planning Board Meeting

Planning Board Members Present: Lori Clark, Len Golder, Ernie Dodd, Steve Quinn

Voting Associate Member: Mark Jones

Absent: Margaret Costello

Lori Clark called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm

Discussion of Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes of 5.11.2016

Ernie Dodd moved to approve the Minutes of, 2016 as amended.

Steve Quinn seconded.

VOTED: 3-0 Unanimously in favor (Lori Clark, Ernie Dodd, Steve Quinn).

Public Input

None.

Correspondence Updates

None.

Planner's Report

Industrial Space Request

Karen Kelleher noted that the operator of a sign making business is looking for a building and/or developable land in Stow within the next year and asked if anyone knows of an opportunity for industrial land or a building in town. Karen Kelleher said they will need 7500-10,000 sq. ft. of flexible space. They would also be interested in property that may be developable or possibly re-zoned for that purpose. Karen Kelleher said she advised him of properties that are located in the Industrial District.

Staff Vacancies

Karen Kelleher reported that staff will begin interviews for the Administrative Assistant Position this week.

Cushing Property

Karen Kelleher reported that the Ducharme and Dillis has begun revising the Pennie Lane subdivision plan in anticipation of a potential purchase of the proposed 8+/- acre existing home lot.

Len Golder and Mark Jones Arrived.

Member Updates

Mark Jones said that it would make sense for the Board to routinely add language into covenants making them renewable for 20 year periods.

Housing Production Plan Discussion

The Planning Board discussed the draft Housing Production Plan, noting some of the prominent findings and reviewing the strategies for reaching goals. The Board agreed that the most in demand housing in Stow is in regard to middle income affordability. The Board discussed the potential for raising the inclusionary housing threshold. Lori Clark asked if there was anything to allow the Town to reach 10% that would be agreeable? Lori Clark said the key issues for affordable housing are identifying where it could go and what the Town would want it to look like.

The discussion was tabled to allow for the opening of the scheduled Public Hearing.

Minuteman Airfield Special Permit Public Hearing

Lori Clark opened the Public Hearing. The Applicant's were not present for the discussion.

Ernie Dodd moved to continue without testimony to June 7th at 7:15pm to choose a date to continue at that time with the Applicant's input.

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

Housing Production Plan

Present – Nathan Robinson of Metrowest Collaborative Development / Regional Housing Services Consultant for Stow

Lori Clark reconvened the discussion of the Housing Production Plan draft. Nathan Robinson said he has been working with SMAHT as the Regional Housing Services coordinator for a group of Towns in the region over the past several months.

Nathan Robinson discussed the reasoning behind having an approved Housing Production Plan stating that with an approved plan, when units eligible for inclusion in the Town's Subsidized Housing Inventory come online, they can be counted toward the Town's 10% requirement. The Town has been able to meet its goals with Pilot Grove II. Every five years the Plan needs to be updated and revised, he said.

Lori Clark tabled the discussion to allow for the scheduled appointment of Chris Merrill.

Chris Merrill – Concept Subdivision Discussion for Property off Wedgewood Road

Present – Suzanne Poitress, Attorney

Chris Merrill – Owner of Subject Property

Suzanne Poitress said that Chris Merrill has designed a 26 lot subdivision concept at his property, including an estimated 3200' foot subdivision loop road extending off of the end of Wedgewood Road. Suzanne Poitress said that the conventional subdivision would be a better suited to the land than a PCD, as it would allow future owners the ability to have two car garages and pools, which would be limited on smaller lots.

Suzanne Poitress said that one of the issues that came up the last time Mr. Merrill was before the Board was the length of the road. Suzanne Poitress asked what type of considerations are made by the board in determining the allowed length of the road? Len Golder said that the 20' foot width for fire safety is mandatory. Ernie Dodd said that an 18' foot travelled way with adequate shoulders to meet NFPA standards is acceptable.

The Board discussed the 500' subdivision road limit and the potential waivers to allow for a 1500' foot dead end road. Chris Merrill said that Wedgewood road is approximately 1100 feet long. Suzanne Poitress said that the reason the proposed road is a loop is in the event a tree came down. Ernie Dodd said the road length would be measured from Harvard Road. Ernie Dodd said if the road is longer than 500 feet it can be raised to 1500 feet with turnouts and other benefits to be added.

The Board noted that the fire department would require a cistern or sprinklers in the homes. Karen Kelleher said those are benefits written in the subdivision rules, but she is unsure what the Board would require to go beyond the 1500 feet. Ernie Dodd said those are things that could be done to provide the waiver.

Ernie Dodd said Wedgewood Road would have to be counted in the overall length determination. Ernie Dodd said waivers beyond 1500 feet can be provided given that it is in the Rules and Regulations and not the Zoning Bylaw. Chris Merrill said that Wedgewood Road is public up to the boundary with his property and the width varies up to 20 feet. The Board discussed bumpouts and turnouts required in the Rules and Regulations. Chris Merrill said together the parcels total 60 acres.

Suzanne Poitress asked if another road in town would provide a similar example to borrow from. Lori Clark noted the 10% open space option, which is part of the public benefit to allow the waiver to a longer road. Karen Kelleher said that the Conservation Coordinator noted it would be nice to have some sort of buffer to the trails on Flagg Hill. Lori Clark said encroachments into the open space can be an issue. Mark Jones noted that most of the property is bound by stone walls.

Chris Merrill said he wants to be involved with the development of the property and make sure it is done right. Steve Quinn said discussing the plan concept with the Fire Chief would be a good next step. The Board agreed they would need to see more detail to provide a better answer.

Steve Quinn said he remembers Wedgewood Road being quite narrow. Mark Jones asked if there was an issue when the road had a lot of snow? Chris Merrill said there was no issue and that he plowed to make it passable. Ernie Dodd said he would look to a plan that minimized the length of the road as best as possible, following any public safety recommendations from the Fire Chief.

Suzanne Poitress asked what the Board would think about an emergency access? The Board said it could help, but it would not need to be paved - only plowable. Suzanne Poitress said although they have not approached the property owners, there is potential for an emergency egress through the Wedgewood golf course.

Karen asked if they would file a preliminary plan? Suzanne Poitress said they would. Ernie Dodd asked about drainage. Chris Merrill said the site is well drained. Mark Jones noted that the Conservation Commission had asked for a wetland to be shown on the Forest Management Plan. Chris Merrill said that the Conservation Commission had no problem with the approved plan.

Karen Kelleher noted the inclusionary housing provisions. Ernie Dodd noted they do not have to be built on site, that a payment fee in lieu of can be made. Karen Kelleher said to look at the phasing of growth bylaw.

The Board discussed the 10% open space ownership. The Board said that there are options for the Applicant to choose from. Chris Merrill said knowing the land as he does, the current plan lends itself well to the topography. There are some nice view lots and the plan has been well thought through. Chris Merrill said he wants the land to be developed properly.

Draft Housing Production Plan Discussion

Lori Clark reopened the discussion of the Draft Housing Production Plan

Nathan Robinson resumed discussion of the Housing Production Plan process. Nathan Robinson said that the 2011 plan had used data that was nearly 10 years old. This update provides much more applicable data sets, he said.

Lori Clark asked why it was preferred that elderly would stay in their own homes? Nathan Robinson said that it was to give seniors a choice and not need to be institutionalized for care.

Nathan Robinson said apartment construction is the most efficient way to increase the SHI number.

Laura Spear said that it would be helpful to have Plantation come on line now to receive certification. Steve Quinn asked if it would be beneficial to have a friendly 40B project? Laura Spear said that the Stow Community Housing Corporation can only take on one project at a time, so SMAHT has been looking to other developers to understand what opportunities are out there. Laura Spear said the sweet spot is around 100 units.

Nathan Robinson said as the population ages, the average household size is decreasing. Nathan Robinson said that MAPC is projecting younger populations to continue to fall and the older populations to increase. Nathan Robinson added that in inner core communities said that there is a trend that older people are moving out and younger families are moving in.

Nathan Robinson said that there is a large disparity among income between household owners and renters in Stow. Steve Quinn said there is not a lot of benefits for renters in Stow. Nathan Robinson said despite the high income there is a substantial band of people within the affordability range.

Nathan Robinson noted that Middle Income households are not considered affordable through DHCD. The Board discussed that the middle income units are not being built throughout the region.

Nathan Robinson noted that Stow has a very high percentage of single-family detached units.

Nathan Robinson said they had 450 responses from the housing survey, almost 20%. Nathan Robinson presented the survey data, noting that nearly 32% responded that they would likely have future housing needs.

Nathan Robinson noted that the for the 2010 year round housing count the Town faces 71 units and 13 unites per year is .5% for one year of safe harbor. Laura Spear said she believes the 300 unit estimate for 2020 may be a low estimate.

Nathan Robinson said that there are 6 units that are eligible due to a Department of mental Health home in Stow.

The Board discussed the HPP Goals and Strategies

Karen Kelleher asked about whether the ZBA could require fees from developers for peer review? The Board agreed that it should be allowed.

Laura Spear said that the ED for Habitat for Humanity would like to discuss opportunities for the critical home repair program. Laura Spear said she would like to discuss with

Habitat how the organization can help to keep homes affordable even when repairs are necessary.

Len Golder asked about tax title lots. Laura Spear said that even though they have the right to borrow money, they have still set the expectation they would get approval from the Board of Selectmen first which can take a lot more time. To repair a unit, can cost an extra 300,000.

The Board asked about the Boxboro Road parcel. Laura Spear said that there appears to be access through a 50 feet of frontage. Laura Spear said that they will need to be renewing Leonardi's contract soon to avoid putting out another RFP.

Laura Spear said that SMAHT can borrow, rather than go to Town Meeting. Laura Spear said that to buy a property, the expectation was set that SMAHT go to the Board of Selectmen to purchase a property. Laura Spear said extra financing would help SMAHT react to projects as they arise.

Laura Spear said it appears that SMAHT may have to purchase and sell 33 Elmridge Road. Laura Spear noted that Nathan Robinson has collected and catalogued all of the data on each of the affordable units in Stow.

The Board discussed a variety of potential strategies. Ernie Dodd said there could be some requirements to include greater housing diversity types. The Board discussed Concords PRD bylaw regarding mixed housing types.

Laura Spear said that for the Town, they should never be in a position to maintain the property.

Nathan Robinson said the fee could be adjusted in the inclusionary housing bylaw.

Laura Spear noted that Medway had their HPP approved in 4 weeks by having Dimartino look at the plan first, prior to going to the Board of Selectmen.

Laura Spear said it would be helpful to hold open houses to engage with the development community. Steve Quinn asked if there was a way to get smaller developers to take on friendly 40b projects. Laura Spear said that SMAHT allows for grants or loans to circumvent the need for an RFP and allow for a quicker turnaround.

Laura Spear said they would like to see a vote of support. Ernie Dodd said it would be good to read through the final plan prior to voting.

Meeting Adjourned 10:15pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Jesse Steadman