

Sutton Planning Board
Minutes
August 5, 2013

Approved _____

Present: J. Anderson, R. Largess, S. Paul, W. Whittier
Staff: J. Hager, Planning Director

General Business:

Board re-organization:

Motion: To appoint John Anderson as Chairman for the upcoming year, R. Largess

2nd: S. Paul

Vote: 4-0-0

Motion: To appoint R. Largess as Vice-Chairman for the upcoming year, W. Whittier

2nd: S. Paul

Vote: 4-0-0

Minutes:

Motion: To approve the minutes of 7/1/13, R. Largess

2nd: W. Whittier

Vote: 4-0-0

Minutes of 7/15/13 - Tabled until next meeting for lack of quorum of those who were in attendance.

Release Executive Session Minutes:

J. Hager noted there were numerous Executive Sessions minutes that can be released as the legal issues they relate to have been settled.

Motion: To release all Executive Session minutes related to Stonebridge Estates/Colonial Acres, Home Depot, ZBA/Connor, and Walker, W. Whittier

2nd: R. Largess

Vote: 4-0-0

Ch. 61A Release – Helgesen – Manchaug Rd.: The Board discussed the release from Chapter 61A of approximately 32 acres of land on Manchaug Road across from Camp Blanchard. In response to questions from the Board, Knick Nunnemacher, lead Assessor, confirmed the land is not part of the Manchaug Greenway and Wildlife Corridor, there are likely some wetlands on the property, and the property includes a white house. The offer is \$345,000. The Board tabled action on this item until the next meeting to allow them an opportunity to view the site and consider from the Planning Board's perspective if there is a value to the Town in acquiring the property.

Form A Plans: None

Correspondence/Other:

CMRPC Delegate – The Board discussed appointing their delegate to CMRPC for the upcoming year. S. Paul attended half of last year's meetings. He volunteered to continue as delegate.

Motion: To appoint S. Paul as the Planning Board's Delegate to CMRPC for the upcoming year, W. Whittier

2nd: R. Largess

Vote: 4-0-0

Sutton LLC v. Planning Board and Galaxy – J. Hager noted the Board received a copy of Town Counsel's notice to the Court that they represent the Town. The accompanying letter to the Board also notes, as is the standard protocol, they will allow the applicant's Counsel to defend the Board's actions as it is in their client's interest to defend this approval. Town Counsel will take an active role, but only if the applicant pays for their time.

Potential Bylaw Changes –

Low Impact Development Bylaw- This bylaw would encourage less invasive/mechanical methods of dealing with development impacts like drainage. It tends toward less piping and structures and more "old school" methods like open swales and rain gardens to process storm water. These methods require less expensive maintenance and repair and potential problems are more readily recognized and resolved.

The Planning Director will determine if use of this methodology can be accomplished by just adding a brief section to the existing Site Plan Review bylaw or if an entire new Low Impact Development section should be added to the Zoning Bylaw.

It was noted that this type of technology may be tougher on tight sites as it takes up more area compared to underground infrastructure.

Sign Bylaw Changes- This bylaw is in need of an update to deal with new methods of signage and generally needs to be better organized.

The Board requested representatives from the sign making community be invited to the meeting to gain their input on the existing bylaws as well as information on up-coming technology. Bob Rochon from Creative Signworks in Millbury was present and Dave Glispin from Sunshine Sign in Grafton was also present. Mr. Rochon specializes in smaller custom signs, while Sunshine works with both small and large clientele.

With respect to the current bylaw Mr. Rochon stated it was better than many he has seen but he questioned prohibitions on roof signs and painted wall signs and noted digital signs are not addressed. Mr. Glispin noted in general the maximum sizes in the bylaw are about half what they need to be and bylaws that require relief through the Zoning Board of Appeals or Special Permit process are expensive and time consuming. Both gentlemen agreed that a bylaw that both realistic in advertising needs and contains a different type of process for requests that don't comply with the regulations would be highly beneficial.

The Board discussed specialty signs like multi-tenant signs and digital signs and different methods of sign review such as a Design Review Committee. Mr. Rochon provided some literature about digital signs. Both sign makers shared their experience in various communities and noted locations with good examples for the Board to draw upon. The Board really liked the idea of providing a size bonus as an incentive for high quality sign design. The sign makers offered their assistance should the Board decide to form a study committee to revamp the sign bylaw.

The missing height limit needs to be put back in the bylaw this year, but other than this change the Board decided to form a study committee to comprehensively address the bylaw for next year's Fall Town Meeting. They thanked both gentlemen for their help.

Re-Zonings- The Board needs to decide if they want to pursue re-zoning the Industrial(I) area that includes Aggregate on Providence Road to Office Light Industrial(OLI). This zoning designation will allow most of the same uses, including commercial earth removal so existing operations do not become non-conforming, but will also allow some additional uses like retail. More importantly the change will give better permitting control through a wider use of Special Permits. Most Special Permits in the OLI are granted through the Planning Board so no additional time will be added to the permitting process. The Department provided a comparison of the uses that are allowed in one or both of these districts to demonstrate how a zoning change would affect existing and future uses.

R. Largess felt that all owners of land in the district and those immediately adjacent should be notified that the Board is considering a change so their input can be considered. W. Whittier asked if there has been a specific interest from anyone interested in OLI uses that aren't allowed under Ind. zoning? J. Hager stated that of the few parties who have been interested none are seeking uses that aren't allowed in Ind., but they have been discussing uses that could be potentially devastating in their effects if the right permitting process isn't in place.

Additionally, before the property goes actively on the market, the Town has the opportunity to influence through its zoning decisions whether they want to encourage large scale industry and distribution or smaller industry and manufacturing with a mix of other uses like retail, restaurant and even multiunit/apartment type housing. She noted in a conversation earlier in the day: the Planning Intern, also a Sutton resident and recent UMass graduate in his 20s, asked why Sutton doesn't have apartments and expressed his desire to live here but that he can't with the current housing stock. The Planning Director had to agree that Sutton does not accommodate the 20-30 year old bracket nor the older individuals who want to downsize and be near other people, these people need to move elsewhere. The Board noted examples like Felter's Mill in Millbury and the Canal condos off Kelly Square as excellent examples of high quality multi unit housing that has character and could also benefit Sutton.

The Board agreed that the Town is at a juncture with this nearly 400 acre area and that they should explore innovative zoning that is both business friendly but can also serve the needs of Sutton residents. They asked the Planning Director to add some housing types like first floor retail with upper level housing and the like to the comparison chart and send this along with notice to those parties who would be most affected. S. Paul said the Town would be remiss to not pursue a re-zoning and consideration of innovative zoning for the area. R. Largess noted at recent development meetings in Worcester he was made aware of Federal funding for small rail spurs and this might prove beneficial to the spur that serves this area.

The Planning Director also noted that it may be beneficial to designate this property or area as a 43D site which would require expedited permitting but would also allow state funds to flow to development of infrastructure to serve the site. The Board also noted Boston and Worcester's use of Innovation Districts and wondered if this type of designation may also be something to consider. It was noted unless a house is valued at more than \$500,000, most single family homes with two or more children lose money for the Town and this needs to be considered going forward.

The Board asked the Planning Director to prepare the area for 43D Designation at this Fall's Town Meeting as well as a potential re-zoning from I to OLI.

Tree Issues: W. Whittier noted serious visibility issues at numerous intersections in Town and asked if the Tree Warden is responsible for taking care of this type of issue. J. Hager noted the Tree Warden's budget is not adequate to do basic response to tree concerns. She noted visibility issues are generally the Highway Department's responsibility, but she will contact both the Tree Warden and the Highway Superintendent with the concern and cc: the Town Administrator.

Motion: To adjourn, S. Paul
2nd: W. Whittier
Vote: 4-0-0

Adjourned 8:50 P.M.