



Town of Swampscott

OFFICE OF THE PLANNING BOARD

22 Monument Avenue, Swampscott, MA 01907

Planning Board Members

Patrick Jones, Chair
Angela Ippolito, Vice Chair
Sylvia Belkin
Jeffrey Blonder
George Potts

Planning Board Secretary

Helen Kennedy

Town Planner/Energy Efficiency Manager

S. Peter Kane

February 6, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Time: 7:05 – 9:15 pm

Location: Swampscott Senior Center

Members Present: P. Jones, A. Ippolito, J. Blonder, G. Potts

Others Present: Town Planner Pete Kane, S. Regional Planner Sam Cleaves (MAPC), Selectman Barry Greenfield, Reporter Cyrus Moulton

J. Blonder moved to approve Planning Board minutes for March, May, August, November, December 2011 and January 2012; seconded by A. Ippolito and unanimously approved.

Metro Boston North Shore Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

MAPC Senior Regional Planner Sam Cleaves distributed a handout "Metro Boston North Shore Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan" and reviewed the contents with the Board. The major focus is based on FEMA's tracking of how towns handle flooding/wind/winter storm damage events.

This enables the Town, once the plan is approved, to pursue grants to upgrade drainage, sidewalks, and capital projects but does not cover capital equipment. He is working with several other communities where FEMA contracts with Planning Boards to develop updates aimed at preventing damage from natural hazards. The focus is to prevent loss of life by developing long-term strategies. Also looking at inter-community issues like snow removal and storm damage as well as developing list of critical sites within Town, including police, fire, elderly housing and manufacturing facilities. The Town is required to complete these plans to apply for federal grants. FEMA is anxious to get public

input. On the North Shore, the focus is primarily on storm surge and flooding and sites like the seawall along Atlantic Avenue near the Marblehead line.

The Planning Board and Board of Selectmen review plan before it goes to FEMA for conditional approval. Once the Town receives the approved plan it is good for another five years. Public comment period is open for ten days and will be posted on the Town website. Mr. Cleaves will forward samples of successful grants to Chairman Jones. Town applies for grant, if FEMA approves, FEMA provides the funds and the Town does the project. Town Planner Kane will work with the Planning Board and Mr. Cleaves of MAPC on developing Swampscott's presentation.

Zoning - Commuter Rail Station Area

Swampscott Board of Selectman Barry Greenfield discussed some initial zoning options around the MBTA commuter rail station. The consensus was that the station structure, which is currently in need of total renovation, has the potential to be a magnet to improve the adjacent land value if high-density housing could be located in that area. Located within walking distance to the beach, a vibrant train station could draw visitor from other communities and high-density housing would attract more residents to Swampscott. Lynn, Salem and Beverly have all developed the areas around their respective commuter rail stations. Swampscott needs to have people move in who are going to provide vibrancy to the community. Board member Ippolito mentioned the multi-unit project that had been approved opposite the train station and that everything goes hand in hand, improving train station would encourage ventures like bicycle rentals to visitors who come for the day. Chairman Jones said it would take an overlay district on top of what is there now. Board member Blonder cautioned the Board about what is proposed. There are many small businesses on Burrill. A. Ippolito: looking at 40R as a tool to create the possibility of increasing density and said that a developer would be eligible for tax credit since the train station is on the historic places register. Town would have to issue an RFP to be able to sublet the station building. She said the MBTA wants to work with the Town on upgrading the station and they would be amenable to negotiating.

Town Planner Kane told the Board that he has spoken with Marblehead Town Planner Rebecca Curran. During that discussion, Curran noted that Marblehead had recently done a Smart Growth Plan. She would like to work with Swampscott on building off of that plan – which will work well in relation to the smart growth discussion for the train station area.

Master Plan

MAPC'S Cleaves said there are some discretionary funds available from MAPC for areas around transit; that making the focus downtown redevelopment plan is preferable to a master plan which generalized and non-specific. A really good master plan would run \$150,000. A. Ippolito prefers developing various areas in stages to demonstrate success to community. Chairman Jones said zoning is just one area which the Town might possibly fund; A. Ippolito suggested a project that would have big impact immediately. S. Cleaves said doing a master plan successfully requires the Planning

Board and the community to have good communication and mentioned Marblehead and Ipswich as good examples.

Mr. Cleaves suggested reviewing the current survey results before moving ahead. In this economy, it is good to develop a plan and have a one-day workshop (possibly a Saturday) at which residents could preview the plan. Do this a small piece at a time, determine what needs to be done and in what order. Applications for funding are due by February 29, 2012 for grant of about \$25,000.

J. Blonder moved to add a warrant article for up to \$25,000 to be used for community vision planning for the Town of Swampscott. The Board will also apply to MAPC for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding for this effort. If the Board is successful in receiving the DLTA grant, the money provided by the Town can be used to expand on the DLTA-funded vision planning or provide funding for a second phase planning study (in the process to developing a master plan). If the Board is unsuccessful in receiving the DLTA grant, the money provided by the Town will be used toward a community vision planning project. The DLTA grant does not require any town matching funds, however, it is highly encouraged to provide some funding or in-kind donations such as through staff or board volunteer time toward the visioning project.

In response to a question from the audience about damaged sidewalk in a school area, Planner Kane said the Town website has a button on the home page "SeeClickFix" which residents can use to report problems to the Town Hall staff. These reports are directed to the appropriate department in Town Hall.

Town Planner Peter Kane told the Board surveys will be accepted until 2/17/2012 by which time he will have results and analysis of the survey completed. To date, in excess of 1,500 responses to the Town survey have been received.

Planning Board Authority Update

Board member Angela Ippolito met with Acting Town Administrator Dave Castellarin to reserve a slot on the warrant for an article to amend 5.4.3.0 of the Zoning Bylaws. The Board discussed the changes made to this section of the bylaws in 2009. Those changes were made to streamline the process by which Planning Board and Zoning Board reached decisions on site plan reviews which had become onerous for applicants and respective Boards. As a result of the 2009 changes, Planning Board only reviews site plan special permit applications which site plan review is the only permit sought; which have decreased in number. Sense of the Planning Board is that site plan review does not happen to the extent that it should happen. The question is what is it the Planning Board really needs to look at and how to bring the Planning Board back into the process. With diminished Planning Board oversight, Ms. Ippolito thinks abutters lost many things.

Chairman Jones said the Planning Board would have to see these even if it had to go to ZBA afterward to determine if a proposed project fits within the fabric of the neighborhood. Planning Board can grant site plan special permit without approval of the Zoning Board. If you don't get ZBA

approval, then you have to go back to Planning Board. Mr. Jones said there needs to be clarification between residential and commercial requirements and signage is not in the bylaw language regarding site plan special permit review. Recommended Zoning bylaw changes would have to be presented at a public meeting and have to be advertised two weeks in advance by publishing legal notice in newspaper. The proposed changes in wording should be done in April for the changes which also have to be approved by Town Meeting. Ms. Ippolito will draft language for warrant and circulate to Planning Board members and Town Planner for review. While anyone can propose a bylaw change, the Planning Board is responsible for changes to the Zoning bylaws.

Motion to adjourn made and passed unanimously at 9:15 pm.