



TOWN OF WEST BOYLSTON PLANNING BOARD planningboard@westboylston-ma.gov
140 Worcester Street ** West Boylston MA 01583 ** Telephone 774.261.4073 ** Fax 508.835.3807

**MEETING MINUTES
INITIAL WALKING TOUR FOR VILLAGE DISTRICT EVALUATION
OCTOBER 3, 2015**

Began at Beaman Library, 8 Newton Street, West Boylston, MA

Members Present: Marc Frieden, Christopher Olson, Barur Rajeshkumar, Vincent Vignaly

Members Absent: Cheryl Carlson

Others Present: Eric Smith-Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission; Maddie Olson, Sylvia Brown-64 Newton St.; Richard Footner-52 Newton St.; and Linda Isgro-58 Scarlett St.

All documents referenced in these Minutes are stored and available for public inspection in the Planning Board Office located at 140 Worcester Street.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Frieden at 5:03 p.m.

Eric Smith of CMRPC distributed the two handouts when we gathered for the site walk: a) Map of 2005 Land Use and b) Map of existing zoning, including the boundary of our study area of the West Boylston Town Center on each map. Mr. Smith explained that this is the first step in the local application phase of a project begun by CMRPC. Over the last year, CMRPC completed development of a general Model Village District Zoning Bylaw that could be used as a starting point for any of the communities within their region as Phase 1. At the request from the Planning Board, this walk begins the second phase of CMRPC's work to provide guidance to the local Planning Board relative to the specific local characteristics, desires, and needs. Recommendations will be made to craft bylaws that will assist consideration of implementation for the Town.

Mr. Vignaly recounted that the Town's current Master Plan includes an action item to create a Village District in the older, more historic areas of town where businesses and residential uses both exist. The Master Plan was written from 2002 to 2005, when it was formally accepted by the Town. The Planning Board has discussed creation of a Village District on a few occasions over the last 10 years. The assistance offered from CMRPC will allow this item to be fully vetted. The Board is just beginning to consider options to proceed with a zoning change or use this review to make other changes to the zoning bylaws, and may decide to make no changes.

The group reviewed the existing conditions and proposed intent of the Village District as they walked Central Street to Goodale, then to Crescent, then Prospect, and back to the library along Newton. We then traveled to the Town Hall at 140 Worcester Street and walked Temple Street to the railroad track and back.

Mr. Footner questioned why we were considering Village Zoning at all. Back in the 70's he studied the demise of village centers in France because people no longer needed to shop daily

shopping due to improved food storage/refrigeration, mall development, and ease of travel. Why is the town considering this when it isn't working in other places? Mr. Smith responded that he will provide regional examples of Village Districts that are believed to be working. Specific mention that Fitchburg is an example of what we don't want was made.

Ms. Brown was concerned with the uses that were not in compliance with current zoning. Why can these continue within 'residential' districts? Also, the proposed Model Bylaw prohibits single residence uses, which does not make sense.

Ms. Isgro highlighted the many existing properties along the walk that had business vacancy signs. She noted that there is ample space for business uses already. Mr. Smith said he will do some research into the vacancy rates and will assess/identify specific "mismatch" issues occurring between existing land use of properties in the area and the current zoning. She also had concerns with the Model Bylaw that allowed 4.5 story structures and does not allow single-story structures. Mr. Smith replied that this was a regional model and it includes a caveat that it is not the specific wording for any of the smaller towns in the region, including West Boylston. This has also been updated and he will send a link to version 2 to the board.

All those in attendance agreed that the uses specified in the CMRPC Model Bylaw are inconsistent with the desires of the Town. Mr. Olson explained that the Planning Board was aware of this, but knew that this is only the beginning of the process and changes will be made. The input provided by citizens at this meeting will be incorporated into proposals that the Board considers.

Mr. Frieden commented that determining the most desirable uses and writing the bylaw to encourage implementation will be the work needed as we move forward.

Mr. Rajeshkumar reminded the public that there will be at least one public hearing and any changes will have to be passed by a 2/3 majority at Town Meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Vignaly to adjourn. Mr. Olson seconded the motion; all voted in favor; motion approved. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Date Accepted: _____

By: _____
Christopher E. Olson, Clerk

Submitted by: _____
Vincent Vignaly