

four labor unions and Town Administrator have successfully negotiated every labor agreement without once reaching an impasse or filing for arbitration. This cooperative track record is a tribute to both our union employees and management.

In addition to the specific management responsibilities detailed above, the Town Administrator is generally engaged in regularly attending to matters critical to the day-to-day operations of the town. In performing these duties, the Town Administrator is regularly in direct contact with most departmental staff and many Town board and committee members. Finally, due diligence requires that the Town Administrator frequently work directly with local, state and federal agencies and officials, the public and various private groups and individuals.

Respectfully submitted,

William Wrigley
Town Administrator

Susan McLaughlin, Administrative Assistant
Phoebe Haberkorn, Office Assistant

PLANNING BOARD

A five-member elected board with one appointed associate voting member, the Planning Board has specific statutory requirements. The Board reviews and approves the division of land under the State Subdivision Control Law (MGL c. 41) and the Stow Subdivision Rules and Regulations; serves as a special permit-granting authority under the State Zoning Act and the Stow Zoning Bylaw; guides the process of Zoning Bylaw amendments under the State Zoning Act (MGL c. 40A); and adopts a Master Plan that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the town (MGL c.41).

By statute, the Board is charged with the responsibility of protecting the health, safety and welfare of Stow's residents. Guided by the Massachusetts General Laws, the Stow Zoning Bylaw, the 2010 Stow Master Plan, and citizens' comments and concerns, the Board strives to preserve and enhance the integrity of Stow's character through the use of these regulatory tools, while safeguarding property owners' rights. We recommend and specify changes to development proposals to achieve these goals. Board members and staff strive to work with both applicants and residents to help shape projects so as to positively affect the impact to the community.

The Planning Department also tracks building permits for affordable housing units and submits the necessary documents to the Department of Housing and Community Development for certification.

The Planning Department provides GIS mapping services to various town boards and committees.

Organization

At the annual election, Stephen Quinn was elected to a 5-year term. We were happy that voters chose to elect him for another 5-year term. In February, the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen voted to appoint Kathleen Sferra as an interim Planning Board Member, filling the

vacancy created by Kathleen Willis' resignation until the May 2012 Town Election. She was then elected to fill an unexpired term which expires in 2015.

Regretfully, Kathleen and Russ Willis decided to relocate to California. Both Kathleen and Russ donated many years of volunteer service to the Town. Kathleen was elected to the Planning Board in 2005 for a five-year term and again in 2010. She also was an active member of the Garden Club, personally spending many hours on gardens at the Town Building and Police Station. Russ Willis served many years on the Lower Village Sub-Committee and the Light Pollution Study Sub-Committee. Both Kathleen and Russ were members of the Medical Reserve Corps. We extend a special thanks to Kathleen and Russ, and best wishes on their future endeavors.

Following the election, the Board elected Lori Clark to serve as Chairman, and Stephen Quinn as Vice Chairman. Brian Martinson was appointed as the Voting Associate Member. The Associate Member's voting power is limited to Special Permit applications in the case of absence, inability to act, or conflict of interest on the part of any member of the Planning Board or in the event of a vacancy on the Board. Mark Jones was appointed as non-voting Associate Member. Stephen Quinn and Karen Kelleher were designated to endorse ANR Plans (Subdivision Approval Not Required). The Board appointed representatives to various Committees:

Community Preservation Committee: Kathleen Sferra
Elementary School Building Committee: Stephen Quinn
Liaison to Zoning Board of Appeals: Ernest Dodd
Liaison to the Board of Health: Brian Martinson
Liaison to Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC): Karen Kelleher
Representative to Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC): Karen Kelleher

The Planning Board dissolved the Light Pollution Study Sub-Committee and appointed Greg Troxel as an Association Member so that he may continue to offer advice to the Board on Lighting issues.

In 2012 we also saw a change in staff. Administrative Assistant Kristen Domurad took position with the Town of Acton as Assistant Town Planner. Kristen was a tremendous asset the Department and will be sorely missed.

We are pleased to welcome Assistant Planner Jesse Steadman to the Planning Department. Jesse brought outstanding skills to the Planning Department through the combination of earning an M.A in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, and experience gained in the Environmental Leadership Program and internships with the Brookline Planning Department and the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project. His planning, GIS, presentation, and communication skills have proven to be invaluable in the few short months since he joined the Planning Department.

Development Activity

The Board reviewed (6) Special Permits/Site Plans:

- 149 Whitman Street – Preservation of a Historic Structure – Special Permit **Granted**
- 433 Taylor Road – Accessory Apartment Site Plan Approval **Granted**
- Boxboro Road - Commercial Solar Photovoltaic Renewable Energy Installation – application **Withdrawn**
- Delaney Street - Commercial Solar Photovoltaic Renewable Energy Installation Special Permit **Granted**
- First Parish Church addition – Concept Plans Reviewed
- Walcott Street – Hammerhead Lot Special Permit **Granted**

The Board considered three (4) Special Permit Modifications:

- Ridgewood at Stow Active Adult Neighborhood – request to convert condominium exclusive use areas to fee simple lots - Application **Withdrawn**
- 501 Gleasondale Road – Special Permit Modification to upgrade Sprint equipment at the wireless service facility - **Granted**
- 353 Great Road – Special Permit Modification to upgrade Sprint equipment at the wireless service facility at First Parish Church - **Granted**
- Stow Shopping Plaza – Propane filling station at Ace Hardware - **Granted**

The Board reviewed 3 Subdivision Plans:

- 117 Walcott Street – Concept Plans reviewed
- Wedgewood Road – Concept Plan reviewed
- Walcott Street – Preliminary Plan **Approved**

The Board approved two (2) ANR Plan (Approval Not Required under the Subdivision Control Law) Plans:

- 38 Dunster Drive
- Dunster Drive and Derby Woods Open Land Parcel

With the assistance of the Board’s Consulting Engineer, Susan Carter, P. E., the Board reviewed plans, considered amendments and monitored ongoing construction of subdivisions and Special Permits:

- Linear Retail – Stow Shopping Center
- Derby Woods I & II (Sylvan Drive and Dunster Drive extension), a 33-lot subdivision, located off of Harvard Road
- Arbor Glen Active Adult Neighborhood
- RidgeWood at Stow Active Adult Neighborhood
- Taylor Road Planned Conservation Development
- Highgrove Estates Hammerhead Lot Development
- Riverhill Estates Subdivision
- Center School
- Orchard View (Brandymeade Circle)
- Crow Island Boat Rental Establishment

The Board reviewed plans and made a recommendation to Town Meeting to accept Sylvan Drive as a public way.

Fees Collected - Fees collected in 2012 in the amount of \$10,649.00 offset expenses incurred for processing applications and for miscellaneous copies. The Applicant is responsible for plan review and inspection fees.

Work Plan - The Board's work plan continues to include efforts to maintain Stow's rural character, and has taken large steps in its planning goals for Lower Village. The Board continues ongoing assessments of the Town's future land needs, updating Rules and Regulations and the Zoning Bylaw, and affordable housing and the creation of a Lower Village and Gleasondale Village Master Plan. The Board also continues to keep abreast of proposed changes to Massachusetts General Law such as proposed zoning reform proposals, as well as grants and technical assistance opportunities.

Priority Goals - The Planning Board adopted the following priority goals:

- Lower Village Planning Effort - **High Priority – Short Term**
- Foster Pedestrian Mobility –**High Priority – Short Term**
- Comprehensive Permit Policy – **High Priority – Short Term**
- Gleasondale Planning Effort– **High Priority – Short Term**
- Review and Evaluate Floodplain/Wetlands Overlay District –**High Priority - Short Term**
- Evaluate Wireless Service Overlay District – **High Priority - Medium Term**
- White Pond Road Planning Effort – **High Priority – Medium Term**
- Zoning Reform – **High Priority – Long Term**
- Golf Course Water Monitoring – **Medium Priority – Medium Term**

Comprehensive Permit Policy – Planning Board Members Kathleen Sferra and Ernie Dodd and Planning Coordinator Karen Kelleher worked with representatives of the Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust and the Zoning Board of Appeals in updating the Comprehensive Permit Policy. The Final Document is expected to be presented to the Board of Selectmen early 2013.

Rules and Regulations

The Board adopted Rules and Regulations for Solar Photovoltaic Renewable Energy Installations.

Golf Course Water Quality Monitoring – As recommended by the Board's Consultant, Northeast Geoscience, Inc. (NGI) in 2011, the Planning Board followed up with the Board of Health, urging that they adopt guidelines suggesting that the list of DEP Zone II banned chemicals not be used on golf courses in Stow.

FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps – FEMA is in the process of updating the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for the Town of Stow and will be contacting the Planning Department in the winter of 2013 to post notice for an official 90-day appeal period. Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) are available for review on the third floor of the Town Building or through

links on the Planning Board Web Page or on the Planning Board Blog. To help residents navigate the updated FIRMs, the Planning Department has created a list of documents that detail frequently asked questions, various definitions, the appeal process and more. Links to the various documents are located above and on the Planning Department Blog.

Pedestrian Walkway Planning Committee – The Pedestrian Walkway Planning Committee submitted its final report to the Planning Board. Thanks to the efforts of this committee, Stow now has a contiguous walkway network from the municipal buildings in the center of Stow to Old Bolton Road.

Wireless Service Overlay District – In response to an application, and subsequent denial, of a proposed Wireless Service Facility to be located outside the Wireless Service Overlay District, the Board retained the services of Isotope to evaluate wireless service coverage in Stow so the Town may determine if boundaries of the Wireless Service Overlay District are appropriate. The Planning Board continues to work with the Zoning Board of Appeals and Town Counsel on this issue.

Affordable Housing - In order to maintain the affordable status, the Town is required to provide documentation that building permits and occupancy permits have been issued. The Planning Department submitted the necessary documents to the Department of Housing and Community Development for certification of 5 affordable housing units to be counted towards Stow's Affordable Housing Inventory.

Planning Department Staff worked with the Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust on efforts to provide additional affordable units throughout Town. Specifically, staff worked with the Trust and their Housing Consultant in evaluating the potential for affordable housing units on town-owned parcels as well as another privately owned parcel of interest.

Economic Development – Planning Staff is in discussions with a representative of the Board of Selectmen and Stow business owners on the merits of establishing an Economic Development Committee. Several business owners attended the initial meeting, where we discussed business owners' issues and concerns; and the pros and cons of forming a group, its make-up in terms of membership, primary function/role and potential local government support role. It is our hope to meet again in early 2013 to further discuss and come to a consensus on a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

Lower Village Planning Effort - The Planning Board adopted the following overarching goals for its Lower Village Planning Effort:

- 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

We made great strides in our Lower Village Planning effort this year.

Working with Linear Retail (owners of the Stow Shopping Plaza), the Planning Board and owner came to an agreement as to the design and size of a pair of pylon signs to replace the old pylon sign that was in disrepair.

With funding assistance from the Stow Garden Club, a Lower Village Gateway Sign was installed. The sign will greet residents and commuters to Stow's historic Lower Village business district, as well as act as a cue for drivers to slow down as they enter a busy stretch of Town.

Based on an existing conditions survey plan, the Board began working with traffic consultants Coler & Colantonio, Inc. to determine the feasibility of the preferred alternatives identified in the 2006 Lower Village Traffic Study and to identify constraints and opportunities in the Lower Village. It was determined that the preferred alternative to construct a pair of modern roundabouts was not feasible. The Board is now working with Coler & Colantonio on an alternate plan with the goal of accommodating vehicular traffic in terms of through traffic and destination traffic to the extent practicable, as well as pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

The Planning Department, working with representatives of the Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission and Business owners, continued to work toward a solution to accommodate development/redevelopment of the business-zoned parcels on the south side of Lower Village. These properties are experiencing development constraints due to the limited lot size which cannot accommodate DEP regulations for a Public Water Supply. Our goal is to facilitate the development of a privately owned and operated public water supply by offering town-owned land to be leased for development of a well to serve the business-zoned properties, located on the south side of Lower Village.

Community members had a chance to learn about the Lower Village planning effort, including the status of past proposals, as well as current projects and plans for the future. The forum was proven to be a great opportunity for Stow residents and business owners to offer input to help guide us through the next step of the planning process.

Gleasondale Village Planning Effort – We are pleased to report that the University of Massachusetts Center for Economic Development has accepted our application to participate in a Studio Project for Graduate Students to create a Master Plan designed to assist the Town in its efforts to protect Gleasondale's character and stimulate economic activity. The Center for Economic Development will undertake the study in the spring semester of 2013.

Regional Planning - The Board also continues to keep abreast of regional activities. Board members and staff frequently attend meetings of the Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and Minute Man Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC), a sub-group of MAPC, serving the communities of Acton, Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow and Sudbury. A Public Forum is planned for the winter of 2013.

Planning Coordinator Karen Kelleher worked with MAGIC Communities on the Suburban Mobility Study Phase II. Phase II is a follow-up to the recommendations made under the first Transit Study. It provides additional research and analysis of the costs for public transportation

and human service transportation in each community. The report identifies opportunities and challenges to moving toward a shared-service model using Council on Aging vans and public school buses, which could reduce costs, provide more trips, and increase service areas. The study will also analyze the potential for creating a Transportation Management Association in the MAGIC Subregion and beyond to connect employers to transportation alternatives.

Assistant Planner Jesse Steadman is working with MAGIC Communities on a Sustainable Communities program, funded by MAPC, to develop a Comprehensive Agricultural Planning Program that will increase the economic viability of farming and protect sustainable “foodsheds” (farms and agricultural soils close to metropolitan markets) in the Subregion.

Planning Staff is working with MAGIC Communities and the Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust in exploring a regional housing services office (RHSO) for the seven MAGIC towns of Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Hudson, Littleton, Maynard and Stow. MAPC has made arrangements for MAGIC to have Beth Rust from the Sudbury RHSO help with the feasibility study.

Communications – We encourage residents to keep updated on the latest information on current developments and projects by visiting the Planning Board Web Page at http://www.stow-ma.gov/pages/StowMA_Planning/index, the Planning Department Blog at stowplanning.wordpress.com, the Planning Department Facebook Page, or stopping by the office on the third floor of the Town Building.

Thanks

None of the planning efforts would be possible without the enormous contributions by Stow residents, who serve as volunteers on the boards and committees and Town staff. It is a pleasure to continue working with all of you.

The Board extends a special thanks to our very capable professional consultants - Susan Carter of Places Associates, Inc. and Town Counsel, Jon Witten, of Huggins and Witten, LLC.

As can be seen by this report, the Board had another busy year, but this amount of work would never have been possible without the tireless and outstanding efforts of Karen Kelleher, and Jesse Steadman, who not only work diligently for the Board, but also for other Town Boards and Committees and the general public with whom they interact on a daily basis.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Clark, Chair
Stephen Quinn, Vice Chair
Leonard H. Golder
Ernest E. Dodd
Kathleen Sferra

Brian Martinson, Voting Associate
Greg Troxel, Non-Voting Associate

Karen Kelleher, Planning Coordinator
Jesse Steadman, Assistant Planner