

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the February 7, 2023 Planning Board meeting

Planning Board members present: Lori Clark, Karen Kelleher, John Colonna-Romano, Margaret Costello, Nancy Arsenault, Mark Jones (voting associate), Deb Woods (non-voting associate)

Lori Clark called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the minutes of January 10th, 2023 as amended.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark – **Yea**; Karen Kelleher- **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano- **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault- **Yea**. Margaret Costello abstained.

Correspondence

Nancy Arsenault commented on the letter regarding Nan's Market's use of Grubhub. Nancy Arsenault said that Grubhub is simply a delivery service, that those drivers are spending less time in the business or parking lot than the usual customers, and she does not think use of Grubhub is something the Planning Board should have to react to. John Colonna-Romano said that it could result in small increases to traffic, but that he does not consider it any kind of meaningful expansion of the restaurant use. Lori Clark noted that staff have already responded to the complainant and that she does not consider this a matter for the Special Permit or an expansion of the existing restaurant use.

Lori Clark noted that the fitness center will remain open on a month-to-month lease, but that Loyal Companion is filing for bankruptcy and closing all locations. Nancy Arsenault said that business closures in Lower Village are largely owed to broader market forces and issues experienced by many communities like Stow. Nancy Arsenault said that she feels the Town should move forward with zoning amendments so that the same failing model is not simply reproduced in Lower Village.

Nancy Arsenault said she has heard that the Verizon storefront may also be moving to Maynard later in the year. Nancy Arsenault said she hopes that this recent raft of closures inspires Linear Retail to embrace the Planning Board's proposals for mixed use in Lower Village.

John Colonna-Romano asked what the Planning Board must do in response to a citizen's petition to allow drive thrus. Valerie Oorthuys said that the Planning Board will need to host a Public Hearing and make a recommendation at Town Meeting in May. Karen Kelleher asked who will be the proponent of the petition, Valerie Oorthuys said it is not yet clear who the proponent of the article is.

Valerie Oorthuys said she would let the Board know when registration is open for the annual CPTC conference in March.

Public Input

Leigh Hilderbrandt, 196 Great Road, commented on her request to rezone her property in Lower Village from Business District to residential District, referencing a land court decision. Leigh Hilderbrandt said that a buffer to her property has not been maintained and that she is trying to rezone her property to

residential to require a buffer to nearby business uses. Lori Clark said staff will review the land court decision to understand if there is some inconsistency in Planning Board actions and the Zoning Bylaw. Lori Clark restated the process a property owner may go through to request rezoning property for inclusion on the Town Meeting warrant.

Dorothy Granat, 11 White Pond Road, asked if there is a timeline for a decision on amending the Business District lot lines. Lori Clark said that any district amendments will come forward with other zoning amendments.

Planning Board member updates

John Colonna-Romano said that he visited the Athens Lane site with staff today and cautioned that the site access is quite rough and advised other members bring good hiking shoes.

Nancy Arsenault noted that the Select Board is intending to put all remaining ARPA funds toward the library renovation, and suggested that staff highlight Planning's intent to request ARPA funds for provision of a consultant for the Comprehensive Plan effort.

Meg Costello said the pilot intersection realignment in Gleasondale at Marlboro Road has been effective and residents have noticed fewer large trucks moving through the neighborhood. Meg Costello said that residents are in favor of closing the other lane of the intersection segment to complete the intersection realignment.

Planner's Report

Valerie Oorthuys said that last week staff met with MassDOT to discuss takings around the Boxmill Bridge replacement and that the Town has received final right of way plans. The Conservation and Planning Departments are working to ensure that warrant articles are prepared for Annual Town Meeting to address all permanent and temporary takings associated with this project.

Valerie Oorthuys said that the bid to construct the Kane Land access will be put out in March, which will give enough time to hold a price quote and for the Board to request any additional funds that may be needed from Town Meeting.

Valerie Oorthuys said she has a meeting with Capital Planning Committee later in the week to review 5-year outlays, which will center around a potential \$450,000 request to advance Town Center streetscape improvements to 25% design.

Valerie Oorthuys said last week staff submitted expressions of interest for two State grants, one for Hudson Road construction funds and one for consultant assistance with Comprehensive Planning efforts.

Lower Village Zoning Amendments

Valerie Oorthuys said she provided the Board with the questions staff received from the two presentations given to Town employees and Board and Committee members regarding Lower Village Zoning amendments. Valerie Oorthuys said many of the questions were anticipated and included items such as the feasibility of the vision laid out and how much water and sewer infrastructure limitations will weigh on this.

Lori Clark said that big topics like that should be addressed directly. Lori Clark said that it will be important to have zoning changes in place before infrastructure improvements are made so that the town can get out in front of any redevelopment proposals in the future.

Lori Clark said she was surprised at the question that implied the proposed changes are catered to young families. Meg Costello said that many of the things that make the district attractive to younger families would also make the proposals attractive to older adults. Board members agreed that the proposed changes would be attractive to older adults, and agreed to emphasize that in future presentations.

Valerie Oorthuys said she was surprised by a question about whether there may be more impervious areas resulting from the proposal. Valerie Oorthuys said that staff will be investigating that question and looking at ways to connect to stormwater management goals in the bylaw draft. Valerie Oorthuys said she will also ask for some input from a consultant who is otherwise reviewing the district. Lori Clark commented that there is very little green space on the lots currently.

Valerie Oorthuys said there was a request to better connect Lower Village to nearby recreation amenities. Lori Clark noted that there is a path connecting 118 Great Road to Town Forest, but that it is not maintained or identified. Malcolm Ragan noted that there is a pedestrian easement over the “fish lot”, and there may be opportunities to create better connections there now that the Town owns that parcel.

The Board agreed that there should be multiple forums regarding the proposed zoning amendments in the lead up to Town Meeting, with several times of day and days of the week represented to make sure that as many residents as possible can attend.

The Board discussed whether it could be useful to ask business owners to speak about the proposed changes at one of these forums. Valerie Oorthuys said she will begin reaching out to businesses and commercial property owners about the proposed bylaw amendments. Lori Clark said she is a little hesitant to ask existing business owners so as not to focus too much on them particularly, and that instead the Board needs a general business perspective on the proposed bylaws.

Meg Costello said it is interesting in downtown Hudson how there is lots of turnover but the units are always filled again. Meg Costello said that having a plan of action in Hudson looks to be actively attracting businesses. Nancy Arsenault said that Hudson was awarded all kinds of business development grants. Valerie Oorthuys said that it is through the Business Improvement District, which is self-organized by the business owners.

The Planning Board rescheduled a February meeting to the 28th. In addition, the Board scheduled their regular meetings through to Town Meeting. Nancy Arsenault said she will not be available for the April 11 meeting.

Lori Clark said she is still concerned about presenting a comparison table showing proposed changes to dimensional requirements, as much of the public may not be aware of any of the zoning that is in place today. Lori Clark said that more visual explanations of typical dimensional standards may be helpful, and other Board members suggested that a specific link between new dimensional standards and examples of the sort of development that is sought might drive home the purpose.

Planning Board Annual Report

DRAFT

The Board reviewed the draft annual report and made non-substantive edits.

Karen Kelleher motioned to accept the 2022 Annual Report as Amended.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark – **Yea**; Karen Kelleher- **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano- **Yea**; Margaret Costello- **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault- **Yea**.

Meg Costello motioned to adjourn.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark – **Yea**; Karen Kelleher- **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano- **Yea**; Margaret Costello- **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault- **Yea**.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Oorthuys