

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the February 6, 2024, Planning Board Meeting

Planning Board members present: Lori Clark, Karen Kelleher, Nancy Arsenault, John Colonna-Romano, Margaret Costello

Absent: Deb Woods (Voting Associate)

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

Review of Minutes

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the minutes of January 9, 2024 as amended.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

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

Planning Board Member Updates

Margaret Costello, as a member of the Open Space Committee, shared that the Town received a donation of land that connects Flagg Hill in Boxborough and Acton, adding an important wildlife corridor connection.

Planning Director's Report

Upcoming Meetings

- Mon, February 12th Drop in from 2-8PM - Open House for the Stow Acres North Couse Climate Resiliency Master Plan
- Tues, February 27th (Time TBD) - Planning Board will join the Select Board's meeting for a consultant presentation with base maps and initial findings for the Concept Plan of the Town Center Streetscape Improvements.
- Mon, March 18th 6:30 PM - Comprehensive Plan Committee Hybrid Meeting for a Consultant Presentation of Existing Conditions Analysis, which ends the first phase of project. Updates will given in March, as Community Engagement gets underway.

Housing Production Plan - is still on schedule to finish around early May. Housing goals and strategies are being drafted, with public feedback incorporated from several focus groups and survey results. Another forum will be held in late March.

Firearms Business Bylaw Draft – staff met with the Police Chief and the Building Commissioner to talk about the administrative process included in the draft bylaw. The draft was also sent to Town Counsel for additional feedback. Valerie Oorthuys stated that the intent is to bring the bylaw before Town Meeting in May 2024, allowing time for a public forum to be held in March or April and the required hearing to be held ahead of Town Meeting.

Pennie Lane, Lot C -Staff have received several calls regarding this parcel, which was a part of the Springhill Estates subdivision off Walcott Street and is on the market. The parcel has frontage on Pennie Lane and Walcott Street. The property is largely wetlands and the Decision states that any further use of the road requires it to be brought up to subdivision standards.

Scheduling - Valerie Oorthuys confirmed two public hearings are set for March 12th, Gleasondale Mill

at 7:15pm, and Bransfield's at 8:15pm. Members discussed potential scheduling conflicts. April 16th was picked as an alternative date for the public hearing for Cottages at Wandering Pond on April 2nd. The Planning Director said she would reach out to the Applicant.

Stow House of Pizza Mitigation Plan Update -Valerie Oorthuys confirmed a deposit for peer review had been received from the Applicant, as well as a new plan from the Applicant's Engineer. Preliminary comments from the peer reviewer are included in the meeting packet. In reference to Leigh Hilderbrandt's memo, Lori Clark clarified that none of the Planning Board members have been in direct contact with the Town's Engineer, only Town Staff.

Public Input

Dorothy Granat, 11 White Pond Road, asked a question about buffers to residential properties within the Lower Village Business District.

Katie Fisher, 1 White Pond Road, asked a question about the properties on Samuel Prescott Drive. Valerie Oorthuys noted that these properties are within the Lower Village Business District and had experienced a change in zoning.

Joanne Drive Subdivision: Street Acceptance Process, Bond Reduction & As-Built Plans

Present: Daniel J. Burger, Esq, Connolly Burger, P.C.

The Chair noted a few new documents included in the packet, including a memo from the Board's consulting engineer. Members discussed the requested bond reduction for the Joanne Drive subdivision and expressed concern that the Applicant's engineer had not proposed bond reduction amounts but instead had their attorney use figures from the Board's consulting engineer. Members stressed the importance of having the Applicant's Engineer provide comment on existing conditions on site. The Board agreed there is a need for a new list of remaining items for the entire subdivision, prepared by the Applicant's Engineer. The Town's consulting engineer, Sue Carter, would then review it. The Applicant's attorney agreed that a letter from the Applicant's Engineer would be provided in advance of the Board's next meeting.

Deliberation – Wedgewood Pines Country Club Minor Modification

Members reviewed a draft decision for the addition of driving range netting proposed at Wedgewood Pines Golf Course. Members agreed that the exact location of the netting is still unknown. Karen Kelleher proposed using a sketch plan to indicate the proposed location.

Valerie Oorthuys noted that the Applicant had provided a proposed document regarding the handling of any entangled raptors. The Board agreed the document should include language about the potential of mammals becoming entangled in the net as well. Lori Clark brought up the need for communicating to golf course staff when the netting has been scanned for wildlife, possibly by using a monitoring log to be maintained during routine procedures at the driving range. Members agreed on the suggestion of a twelve-month plan to track the performance of the net. This would ensure the Applicant's responsibility in the off-season, in times of poor weather, or when the course is closed.

There was a concern raised about the cost of dealing with animal control officer visits, should a situation arise of a repetitive nature. The Chair noted this is the adoption of existing protocols from another golf course and that the animal control officer has been active in the protocol already. She said if costs prove to be a problem, the Board would re-open the decision and make an amendment. Members discussed the responsibilities and payment procedures of the animal control officer.

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the special permit decision for Wedgewood Pines Golf Course minor modification #7, as drafted and amended as discussed.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

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

Draft Climate Action Plan from Green Advisory Committee

John Colonna-Romano discussed the Green Advisory Committee's (GAC) work on a climate change plan, which has the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions town-wide. He emphasized the main contributors to greenhouse gases in town, such as buildings using fossil fuels for heating, and passenger cars. The primary strategy is to address this is through electrification. It was noted that Stow is fortunate to have Hudson Light & Power as a provider. He highlighted the need to shift the economics of environmentally friendly actions and to make them financially beneficial to the individual.

Karen Kelleher pointed to the lack of a unified approach when it comes to waste management, as each household contracts with a trash hauler, individually. John Colonna-Romano said the GAC talked about this issue, but without coming to consensus. Board members agreed that investigating an option for a municipal waste hauling service should be addressed in the Plan.

Members debated the role of the GAC after the plan's completion, with John Colonna-Romano suggesting a reconstitution of the committee to monitor and promote the actions outlined in the plan. He did not think every initiative would be enacted, but hoped to see other community groups/individuals come forward in an attempt to make some progress. He added that the committee would be meeting with the Town Administrator about how to move forward.

Karen Kelleher suggested referencing the Active Adult Neighborhood (AAN) bylaw in the Plan. She also brought up a concern about potential electrical rate increases, due to added costs and demand with power. John Colonna-Romano noted that Hudson Light & Power has long-term contracts to limit rate fluctuations and that increased demand could lead to more revenue. Margaret Costello asked about the impact of solar panels on the supply of electricity. This led to a discussion about the financial dynamics of solar farms and their impact on Hudson Light and Power's business model. The Board acknowledged the uncertainty of future energy prices.

Valerie Oorthuys said that she would add the Board's comments to the letter, as well as comments from the Zoning Board of Appeals that Michael Slagle compiled.

Karen Kelleher motioned to endorse the memo regarding the Green Advisory Committee's Climate Action Plan.

Margaret Costello seconded.

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

Approve Annual Report

The Planning Board reviewed a draft Annual Report for the 2023 calendar year. The Board reviewed the time frame and status of several projects, and asked that all projects include these details. Members expressed their appreciation for the work of Mark Jones, past voting associate member, and Deb Woods, who had transitioned from non-voting to voting associate member. The need for a non-voting associate member was also referenced. The Board agreed to support an amended report. Lori Clark agreed to send a paragraph about the expanded role of Staff and submit it to the Planning Director by February 14th.

*Karen Kelleher motioned to Approve the 2023 Annual Report, as amended.
John Colonna-Romano seconded.*

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

Review of Work Plan

Lori Clark discussed the need to prioritize projects. The Planning Director noted the potential for the Housing Production Plan to revive activity on the MBTA bylaw, specifically with regard to public engagement opportunities. In response, members moved drafting a response to the MBTA Communities Act to a higher priority.

Next highlighted was the need to review the lighting bylaw due to changes in technology and resident concerns. The Board decided to move lighting to the top of the medium priority list, starting with their review of the lighting bylaw.

Next, Members agreed to move the review of the Wireless Service Facility Overlay bylaw to the bottom of the list. They also discussed the feasibility of underground utility lines in the Lower Village area and decided to initiate a conversation with Hudson Light & Power in the future.

The parking by-law was given a medium priority with further discussion.

Members discussed the issue of traffic in various areas of town, specifically the Lower Village, Center Intersection, and Hudson Road Intersection. Lori Clark raised concerns about the town's policy on conducting traffic studies and the potential outcomes. Members agreed not to include traffic studies in their plan unless there's a specific concern to address. They highlighted the role of the Traffic Advisory Committee in responding to individual complaints and suggested publicizing this service to increase awareness.

Lori Clark emphasized that new projects should take a back seat until those in progress are completed.

Adjournment

*Margaret Costello motioned to adjourn.
John Colonna -Romano seconded.*

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Julie Windzio