

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the January 16, 2024 Planning Board Meeting

Planning Board members present: Lori Clark, Nancy Arsenault, John Colonna-Romano, Margaret Costello, Deb Woods (Voting Associate)

Absent: Karen Kelleher

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

Planning Director's Report

Stow Acres Comprehensive Permit - was submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals. The first public hearing is scheduled for January 25, 2024. She noted information was included in last week's packet, but suggested the Board schedule a time for discussion at an upcoming meeting, with the purpose of providing comments to the ZBA. In the meantime, any questions should be directed to Michael Slagle. Valerie Oorthuys also announced that Michael Slagle had secured a grant for the ZBA from MA Housing Partnership, for his work with them and for assistance to members.

Open House, January 17th - Comprehensive Plan – a flyer has gone out to invite residents and community members to this drop-in event being held at Pompo tomorrow night.

Spring Town Meeting - Saturday, May 11th – Select Board has opened the warrant, with a closing date of April 1st.

Gleasondale Local Historic District Study Committee – Members of the Committee opted over a year ago to not pursue a local district in favor of researching a National Register District. With the change in direction, the Committee should be dissolved. A vote to dissolve the Committee will be on an upcoming Select Board agenda.

Town Center Streetscape Project – A public meeting is planned for late February. The consultants have provided base maps and other data that will be presented publicly to gain feedback ahead of preparing concept plans.

Crescent Street Sidewalks – The consultants are advancing plans to the 100% of the design phase. The project will go out to bid late winter/early spring, and easement acceptance is anticipated to be considered at Annual Town Meeting.

Marlboro Road Intersection Re-Alignment Project – Prior to hosting another public forum on the project, the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee will have Places Associates review alternative concept plans to make sure that large trucks and emergency vehicles are able to access any impacted driveways.

Design Guidelines for Lower Village – this document will be a companion piece to the new zoning bylaw to offer clarity to developers by detailing architectural and streetscape design standards. One proposal had been received before the deadline and would be under review soon.

Deb Woods asked about sources of funding allowed for a more complete traffic study of Lower Village. The Planning Director provided some background. She said she would find out how requests could be made during her upcoming annual budget discussion with the Town Administrator.

Deliberation – 108-118 Great Road Special Permit and Site Plan Approval Modification Decision

Present: Brian Levey, Esq., Beveridge & Diamond

The Planning Board reviewed a draft decision for 108-118 Great Road.

Members discussed ongoing outdoor dining at Stow Café, located at 118 Great Road, and altered language in the decision to reflect the need for compliance. The intent is either they opt out of accessory dining, or they provide an application for site plan approval. The Chair stressed that special permits for existing properties call into question non-compliance, with the purpose of forcing them into compliance.

Members discussed the ownership structure which governs common infrastructure and clarified language within the decision. Brian Levey clarified that the building at 118 Great Road will be part of a condo, owned by an entity which is controlled by John Cramer. 108 Great Road will be owned by an entity controlled by Mark Pesce, and there will be a master deed over the entire condominium trust.

Members discussed stormwater management and drainage. John Colonna-Romano noted the requirement of an Operations & Maintenance Plan (O & M Plan) and questioned how the Board would determine that long-term needs were going to be met. Lori Clark also asked what would happen if the shared infrastructure was not maintained. Attorney Levey clarified that the legal organizational structure will be put in place and that O & M's are designed to be self-executing. It requires compliance and will presumably be reviewed by the firm's engineering department in all cases. He pointed out that standard O & M's have annual, semi-annual and/or bi-annual reporting requirements, so there is typically an enforcement mechanism within the four corners of the documents. Valerie Oorthuys noted that an O & M would be subject to the Board's review and subsequent approval.

John Colonna-Romano referenced correspondence that previously indicated non-compliance of the DEP water supply and asked if the Board could ensure compliance before an occupancy permit is granted. Valerie Oorthuys stated the intent of the language in the draft decision is to acknowledge the previously received DEP letter and indicate that the system must be in compliance with either DEP or the Board of Health. Valerie Oorthuys noted that the applicant may already be working toward compliance and that an occupancy permit would not be granted without this.

John Colonna-Romano asked about the timing of reviewing any revised architectural plans in case architectural characteristics are proposed that may not conform with the New England vernacular architectural style. Valerie Oorthuys agreed the draft decision does not specify a timeline in order to cover both initial construction and renovations later in time. She noted a comment from Karen Kelleher, who suggested that within this section there be a finding or condition to indicate that the exterior stairs shall be in keeping, or not detract from, the New England vernacular architectural style.

Members discussed the proposed freestanding signage and reviewed an image of a hanging sign at a Dunkin' along Route 117 in Concord, noting it is aligned with the vision for Lower Village. Lori Clark commended the Applicant's flexibility, but also thought it was important to let the Applicant know that

the proposed white pylon sign is neither in keeping with New England style architecture, nor scaled to the pedestrian. She added that it was more about height and massing than the design itself.

Members discussed the internally illuminated window sign. Brian Levey stated that the coffee cup is not the corporate logo of Dunkin Donuts. Members agreed that language in the decision should clarify that every business is limited to one internally illuminated window sign of a specified dimension.

Valerie Oorthuys shared a suggestion from Karen Kelleher to add a finding based on the public hearing that Bank of America was in the process of replacing the non-compliant sign and to add a condition that requires the non-compliant sign to be removed within one month of the issuance of the decision. Members agreed that the finding should be added with a modified condition providing a three-month timeline.

Members discussed exterior lighting. John Colonna-Romano asked if motion sensing lights could be considered by the Applicant as an option to promote added safety in the parking area at night. Margaret Costello asked for an additional condition to encourage tenants/owners to share light poles where possible. Members debated how it may be conditioned and agreed upon including a finding. Brian Levey reported that one of the light poles on the property is not available for private use. He confirmed plans to add one light pole in the parking lot, in the landscaped area, and on the opposite side of the building, but that is all.

Brian Levey expressed concern for the language used regarding underground utilities. The Board discussed their desire for all utilities to be located underground, noting that it is not required through the bylaw and expressing frustration over the lack of progress toward installing underground utilities. John Colonna-Romano recommended seeking advisement from Hudson Light and Power. The Board agreed to review the topic at large through an upcoming discussion of the work plan.

Board members discussed landscaped screening and agreed the proposed landscaping is sufficient.

The Board discussed traffic and transportation. Members agreed to amend the decision to reference plan modifications related to bike racks. Three existing two-way curb cuts were deemed as sufficient. Lori Clark suggested putting in a finding that states the Board's desire to encourage the number of "inter-lot" connections as sites in Lower Village continue to be re-developed. Language was added to the decision to give the Applicant flexibility to come up with a proposal for either providing vehicular signage or striping to indicate traffic flow and promote safety behind the building.

The Board discussed the amount of parking available on site and the categorization of both parcels as providing a shopping center use, impacting the required number of spaces. The Board agreed on language to be added to the decision to provide context to this interpretation regarding the site's location as a former restaurant and the existence of shared parking with multiple uses on site. The Board agreed the Town's parking bylaw should be reviewed in the future.

The Board discussed whether to condition the installation of street trees, as they were proposed in previous iterations of the project and would replace trees lost during the Lower Village streetscape project. The Board agreed to condition the decision so that trees are planted unless the Applicant can provide evidence that the plantings would impact sight distances. The Board agreed that a second round of revisions would be needed at their next meeting.

Review of Stow House of Pizza Mitigation Plan:

Present: Richard Harrington, Engineer for Dillis & Roy, representing Stow House of Pizza

Valerie Oorthuys referenced the memorandum included in the meeting packet, which was drafted to identify items addressed by the revised Plan and those that still need consideration. There are several items the Board should discuss. The first was whether the Plan should be reviewed by the Board's engineering peer review. Board members agreed that the Plan should be peer reviewed.

Valerie Oorthuys asked whether the Board would entertain the use of landscaping rather than fencing in some key areas. The Applicant's engineer, Rich Harrington, explained that the first part of the plan is to remediate, and the second is to plan for outdoor dining. He maintained that because outdoor dining is not being proposed at this time, the prior proposal for 8 foot height fencing is no longer appropriate or acceptable to the client. He said they will screen the drive-through for the bank, but the key concern is grading the site and installing berms and plantings, as a part of mitigating the site. He continued to discuss elements of slope and the details of an existing stockade fence.

Leigh Hilderbrandt, 196 Great Road, said there was a discrepancy in the description of the stockade fence, which ran only a small portion of her property line. She also expressed that some items were missing or inaccurately located on the Plan, namely a large ditch on the edge gravel lot and the location of a clothing drop-off bin. She also noted the need for trash removal and improved screening from headlights from cars and idling delivery trucks.

Rich Harrington requested the Board allow a phased approach to move forward. Lori Clark noted that any modification requests need to be considered within the context of the decision. Members agreed they would like to see progress made but agreed that Sue Carter should review the Plan for potential red flags first. Rich Harrington offered that his team could get started preparing an as-built plan and asked the Board to allow for remediation without addressing all conditions and plan modifications within the Special Permit, stressing that outdoor dining and related fencing and/or screening could be done after the landscaping.

Board members appeared open to a phased approach, beginning with landscaping, as long as more details are provided regarding fencing and dumpster screening. Rich Harrington stated he would recommend to the client that Dillis and Roy provide a full site plan update, based on current conditions and the new bylaw. Lori Clark noted that any deviation from what is conditioned within the Special Permit would require a modification.

Adjournment

Margaret Costello motioned to adjourn.

John Colonna -Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**, Deb Woods, Margaret Costello -**Yea**.

Respectfully Submitted,
Julie Windzio