

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the July 12th, 2022 Planning Board meeting

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

Planning Board members absent: Nancy Arsenault

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

Minutes

*Karen Kelleher moved to approve the minutes of June 7, 2022 as amended
John Colonna-Romano seconded*

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

Correspondence

Margaret Costello asked if the disagreement regarding the required amount for a fee-in-lieu of affordable unit construction at the Joanne Drive subdivision has been resolved. Town Planner Jesse Steadman said the Building Inspector has written a formal determination affirming the amount requested by the Planning Department, and that the applicant has limited time to appeal that determination. Jesse Steadman said that a check for the requested amount was received and deposited, and the Planning Department is assuming the matter is settled.

Planning Board Member Updates

Lori Clark updated that the search committee to replace Town Planner Jesse Steadman will begin interviews in coming days. Lori Clark said that some of the original applicants have withdrawn since submitting resumes. John Colonna-Romano asked how many applicants there were for the position. Lori Clark said she does not know, and that she has not received all resumes from the HR department.

John Colonna-Romano said that the Green Advisory Committee (GAC) has postponed their first meeting of the new fiscal year until other boards appoint their representatives to that committee. Karen Kelleher said the Zoning Board of Appeals appointed their representative the previous day.

Planner's Report

Town Planner Jesse Steadman reported that town staff attended a preliminary meeting with the applicants for the Cottages at Wandering Pond (aka "Athens Lane") development. Jesse Steadman said some initial feedback on the designs given by the Board's consulting engineer were passed along to the applicant. Jesse Steadman said the applicants were open to making revisions in line with the initial feedback, and clarified some aspects of the application. Jesse Steadman said the hearing for that application will open on August 2, and that a formal peer review from the Board's consulting engineer will be made available before the hearing opens.

Jesse Steadman said that the developer of the Joanne Drive subdivision has been asked to make an in-writing request for relief from some street tree planting requirements.

Jesse Steadman said the owners of 79 Edgehill Rd have provided a check for the full required Special Permit sidewalk fee and are working on preparing final as-built plans. Jesse Steadman said the Board will be asked to accept the as-built plans once they have been signed off on by the Board's consulting engineer.

Jesse Steadman said there will be a pre-proposal meeting with interested bidders for the Lower Village Water Feasibility Study the next day. Jesse Steadman said the meeting will allow potential bidders to ask clarifying questions about the Request for Proposals and will give the town an idea of who may submit proposals. Jesse Steadman said proposals are due by July 27.

17 Boxboro Rd - ANR Plan Endorsement

Lori Clark said staff provided a memo showing that all requirements for Approval not Required (ANR) plans have been met. Applicant Kathy Sferra said that lot lines will be adjusted so that the existing house is left with a conforming 1.5-acre lot, and she will keep the remaining unbuildable portion of the original property. Kathy Sferra said the existing house is a non-conforming structure because it does not comply with current front setback requirements. The Board noted that Parcel "A" on the plan noted that the lot is not considered buildable, as it does not meet area requirements under the zoning bylaw.

Karen Kelleher moved to endorse the plan, titled "Plan of Land in Stow, Massachusetts", prepared by Dillis & Roy Civil Design group for Kathleen Sferra and James Salvie and dated June 13, 2022, as "Approval not required under the Subdivision Control Law"
John Colonna-Romano seconded

Margaret Costello asked Kathy Sferra what her plans are for the newly created lots. Kathy Sferra said that the lot line adjustment prevents a large new house being built in the wooded areas along West Acton Road, while still allowing her to sell the lot with the existing dwelling. Kathy Sferra said that she intends to keep parcel "A".

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

Annual Board Reorganization

Karen Kelleher moved to nominate Lori Clark to serve as chair
John Colonna-Romano seconded

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

John Colonna-Romano moved to nominate Karen Kelleher to serve as vice chair
Margaret Costello seconded

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

The Board noted that it may take a while to hire a new planner after Jesse Steadman's departure and agreed to appoint Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan to Jesse Steadman's Board roles until a new senior planner has started.

Karen Kelleher moved to designate Malcolm Ragan and John Colonna-Romano to endorse ANR plans on behalf of the Board

John Colonna-Romano seconded

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

Margaret Costello moved to nominate John Colonna-Romano as the Planning Board's appointee to the Community Preservation Committee

Karen Kelleher seconded

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

Karen Kelleher moved to nominate Margaret Costello as the Planning Board's representative to the Gleasondale Steering Committee

John Colonna-Romano seconded

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

Karen Kelleher moved to nominate John Colonna-Romano as the Planning Board's appointee to the Green Advisory Committee

Margaret Costello seconded

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

Karen Kelleher moved to nominate Malcolm Ragan as the Planning Board's representative on the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC)

John Colonna-Romano seconded

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

Karen Kelleher moved to nominate Malcolm Ragan as the Planning Board's representative to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
John Colonna-Romano seconded

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

The Planning Board noted that a notice of vacancy was not posted, so they could not vote to appoint a voting associate member at this meeting. The Planning Board requested staff post the notice of vacancy as soon as possible so that the voting associate can be appointed before the Public Hearing for the Athens Lane project is opened.

Jesse Steadman said he has been reviewing the charge of the Lower Village Revitalization Subcommittee, which was revised following the release of their report in 2019. Jesse Steadman said the current charge of the subcommittee includes engaging Lower Village businesses on water supply issues and advocating for planned amendments to zoning. Jesse Steadman said the subcommittee could be a primary contact for Stow businesses while the Economic Development & Industrial Commission (EDIC) is in a Select Board mandated hiatus. The Board agreed that there will be a continuing need for the subcommittee as several Lower Village projects move forward. The Board floated the idea of amending the charge to remove the member appointment by the EDIC and allow more at-large members. The Board also noted that the terms of the subcommittee expire in August and discussed voting on appointments at a later date.

Jesse Steadman asked the Board to consider recommending the Lower Village Revitalization Committee become independent of the Planning Board. Jesse Steadman said resident interest in Lower Village planning issues is likely to increase as the water feasibility study moves forward, and the Planning Board may have a hard time devoting adequate time to other topics. Karen Kelleher said it should remain a subcommittee to maintain coordination with the Planning Board; other members agreed. Karen Kelleher said that once the results from the water feasibility study are known and decisions need to start being made, the Select Board should be more directly involved. Lori Clark said that water and zoning should be linked issues, and there is a risk of losing that connection if the subcommittee becomes independent of the Planning Board.

Karen Kelleher suggested that the Board consider appointing one or more non-voting associate members. Karen Kelleher said this would provide an opportunity for residents to get involved in Planning Board issues and create a pipeline for future Planning Board candidates. Lori Clark recalled that the Planning Board decided they did not need a non-voting associate several months ago, and that those discussions should be revisited. Karen Kelleher said the associate member should express general interest in learning the duties of the Board and should not be focused on one particular topic. The Board decided to discuss non-voting associate members at the following meeting.

Lower Village Zoning Amendment – Planning Board Review

The Board discussed possible adjustments to district boundaries in Lower Village. Lori Clark recalled that areas of discussion are lots along Samuel Prescott Drive, White Pond Road, and Great Road near Stow House of Pizza.

The Board reviewed boundaries in the southwest corner of the district. Karen Kelleher noted that most of the business zoned parcels with dwellings would be non-conforming if rezoned to the residential district. Jesse Steadman said that changes to the Business District boundary could have ramifications for screening requirements for businesses abutting residential lots. Karen Kelleher said that the Business District is already quite small, and that she is hesitant further shrink it. Karen Kelleher said the Board will be going to Town Meeting with what is already a major bylaw change, and that adding a map amendment on top could compromise the likelihood that the zoning changes are passed by Town Meeting. The Board decided to align district boundaries with lot lines on several parcels in the southwest corner of the district.

Jesse Steadman said he will only have one more meeting with the Board before his departure and asked if there are any big themes and topics that they can discuss with him at that last meeting. Lori Clark said her biggest fear is the unknown, of development types that the Board might not anticipate in Lower Village. Lori Clark said that is why she is in favor of conceptual visuals of what is possible within the district under the proposed changes. Margaret Costello said she is concerned about screening to abutting residential properties. Margaret Costello said she would like to err on the side of protecting existing residential uses against the potential noise and visual impacts of business uses. Margaret Costello said there should be firm requirements for buffers to residential properties and clear fencing requirements. John Colonna-Romano added that a simple distance requirement for buffers does not guarantee screening, especially in cases where there is limited undergrowth. Jesse Steadman said he can strengthen language that makes clear the intent of the screening to abutting dwelling units. Jesse Steadman suggested that linear distances should still be included to provide clarity and consistent explanations for applicants and abutters alike.

Jesse Steadman said he will likely do some per diem work after his formal last day to reach a resolution on some pending litigation, which will be discussed in executive session sometime in the near future. Jesse Steadman said he will attend the first Athens Lane public hearing on August 2. Jesse Steadman said the title search for the land behind several business parcels in Lower Village is nearly complete and the Town should take possession soon.

Margaret Costello moved to adjourn
John Colonna-Romano seconded

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan