

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the August 24, 2021 Planning Board meeting

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

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

Minutes

*Karen Kelleher moved to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2021 meeting as amended
Margaret Costello seconded*

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

Correspondence

Karen Kelleher said that Jordan Mackey's modification plan was unclear about the amount of seating that would be provided. The Board discussed the cut sheets for the picnic tables, and Nancy Arsenault said that they appear to be suitable for 4 patrons, 6 at most. The Board noted that total seating distributed around the property in the plan remains below the 35 total allowed for in the Special Permit Decision. Margaret Costello expressed concern that Adirondack chairs shown on parts of the plan would encroach upon a 30 ft setback conditioned in the decision for any outdoor seating. Town Planner Jesse Steadman said that he is in contact with the applicant and has informed them about additional plan modifications required. Jesse Steadman said the applicant would bring forward a complete set of plan modifications for the September 14 meeting for the Board to review.

Karen Kelleher asked if funds are available to repair fenceposts in Lower Village as proposed in correspondence from Phil Moseley. Jesse Steadman said he had walked the site with the Highway Superintendent and Phil Moseley to observe areas in need of repair. Jesse Steadman said that the Highway Superintendent had expressed skepticism about the sorts of materials required for the work but that the Town Administrator has requested the posts be restored as they were prior to major roadwork in Lower Village. John Colonna-Romano asked if the fence posts are historically significant, and therefore eligible for restoration through Community Preservation Act funds. Board members noted that the posts were installed less than 15 years ago.

Planning Board Member Updates

John Colonna-Romano said that previous Community Preservation Committee (CPC) chairs had written a letter to the editor, appearing in the Stow Independent, which highlighted the accomplishments of that committee since its creation. Board members expressed appreciation for the letter.

Planner's Report

Town Planner Jesse Steadman said that an upcoming forum on zoning amendments for Lower Village would have representation from the Planning Board, Lower Village Revitalization Subcommittee, and the Economic Development & Industrial Commission (EDIC). Jesse Steadman said that consultant for the project Dodson & Flinker will hear feedback from Boards and later submit a set of final recommendations. Jesse Steadman said staff will draft zoning amendments based on those final recommendations. Karen Kelleher suggested that the Select Board be involved in that public forum and later amendment process.

Nancy Arsenault said that enforcement of the prohibition of internally illuminated signs still appeared highly uneven and selective. Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan said that the Building Commissioner has catalogued all internally illuminated signs in Stow and has sent zoning enforcement notices to all those businesses, and that the bylaw is now being enforced town wide. Jesse Steadman said that the EDIC is preparing a zoning amendment to provide some short-term relief to affected businesses before a more comprehensive sign bylaw rewrite can be undertaken. Jesse Steadman said the Planning Board should expect to see that proposed amendment in September.

Jesse Steadman said that any Planning Board meetings without public hearings should dedicate some time to reviewing proposed zoning amendments ahead of a presumed fall Special Town Meeting.

Jesse Steadman updated the Board on a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Town Center transportation improvement concept plans. Jesse Steadman said he will share the latest draft of the RFP with the Complete Streets Committee later in the week and will seek Planning Board comment at their next meeting. Jesse Steadman said that the project is legally exempt from a competitive bid process but that the Town would seek multiple bids for the concept plans regardless.

Jesse Steadman said the developer of a future Active Adult Neighborhood (AAN) at Athens Lane had seen a presentation given by Sustainable Stow about energy efficient home construction and would be following up with that group for further information.

Jesse Steadman said he is working on a letter to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to request upcoming regulations to allow Stow some flexibility in implementing the requirements of recent Housing Choice legislation. Jesse Steadman said that Stow is making significant efforts to increase its affordable housing stock, and that he hopes the Town is not excluded from important sources of state grant funding because that housing is not being developed through the exact tools called for in the Housing Choice legislation.

Jesse Steadman said that Bose is continuing to move forward on a Purchase and Sale agreement with the Masters Academy for their disused site. Jesse Steadman said it is unclear if the school would operate as a for-profit or non-profit institution, and that the answer could have implications for zoning status. Karen Kelleher noted that a private school would require a zoning amendment, since that is not currently an allowed use in the industrial district. Board members noted that consultants affiliated with the IMG Academy in Florida are part of the project.

Hallocks Point Subdivision Rescission

John Colonna-Romano asked if the two new houses created on Hallocks Point Road would be serviced by underground utilities. Karen Kelleher said that because these lots were created by an ANR process and not as part of a subdivision, that the Board does not have a mechanism to require certain utility connections. Jesse Steadman said that he would discuss the location of utilities with site owner Chuck Black and the Conservation Director. Jesse Steadman noted that few houses are built with above-ground utilities.

Karen Kelleher moved to approve the rescission of the Hallocks Point Definitive Subdivision Plan, Erosion Control Special Permit, Inclusion of Affordable Housing Special Permit, and Site Plan Approval as drafted and amended, and to release associated restrictive covenants
Margaret Costello seconded

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

AAN Rules & Regulations Updates

The Planning Board continued their review of drafted amendments to the Active Adult Neighborhood Overlay District Rules and Regulations.

The Board Discussed the Cottage Dwelling design standards. The Board deliberated on the minimum parking schedule for the Cottage Dwellings. The Board suggested staff review similar developments in the area to get an idea for a feasible range of parking minimums. Jesse Steadman said that a proposed 15% of total parking to be set aside for guests came from regulations in Littleton.

Board members discussed the need for 2 car garages for cottage dwellings. Margaret Costello said she does not believe 2 car garages are necessary to market such housing.

The Board discussed how to properly size the community function and gathering space and wondered if that occupancy capacity should be a function of the total number of units in the development. Jesse Steadman suggested that the rules and regulations afford flexibility to allow the developer to bring forward a design for the Planning Board to review at time of permitting. The Board noted that the rules and regulations as drafted would require 74 parking spaces at the gathering space, and requested staff revise calculations to reduce this number.

Associate member Mark Jones suggested including language requiring any Homeowners Association (HOA) to afford representation to purchasers while construction completed. Mark Jones suggested homeowners at least be allowed non-voting representation in the HOA while the developer was setting it up. Mark Jones suggested that the HOA include homeowners at a 25% move in threshold.

The Board discussed inclusion of architectural standards. Lori Clark requested language about entrance signage, noting that some developments in the region have employed large landscaped entrance signs, which she considers inappropriate for Stow.

Lori Clark requested language requiring an energy efficiency plan as an application requirement. Lori Clark said that such language should be more specific than the requirement to demonstrate energy efficiency in section 5.4.17(k) of the recently revised Active Adult Neighborhood bylaw.

Mark Jones suggested requiring all new garages be equipped for later installation of electric vehicle charging stations. Mark Jones said that such a requirement would be appropriate to include in the bylaw language itself, rather than Rules and Regulations.

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan