

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the June 7th, 2022 Planning Board meeting

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

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

Correspondence

The Board addressed correspondence from Town counsel regarding a parcel of land in Lower Village donated to the town by Habitech, Inc. Town Planner Jesse Steadman reported that the Town is expected to take title of the property soon.

Karen Kelleher addressed an email regarding Stow House of Pizza and noted that the owner will be abroad for the next 3 months. Jesse Steadman said that he is hoping to work with the owner's engineer and children to move the site toward compliance with a previous Special Permit. Jesse Steadman said that the engineer is scheduled to appear before the Board on June 21. Lori Clark noted that contractor Ben Poulson is referenced in the email to assist with grading the parking lot and additional screening and asked if the Board has worked with him in the past. Jesse Steadman said he did some work on 79 Edgehill Road, as well as other Stow properties.

Karen Kelleher asked if the Certificates of Occupancy at the Joanne Drive subdivision are linked to the planting of street trees. Staff reported that some street tree planting was required before Building Permits were released but are not a requirement for Certificates of Occupancy. Staff also reported that the required fee-in-lieu of affordable unit construction was needed to release the fourth Building Permit at the development per the subdivision approval.

Nancy Arsenault requested an update on Lower Village following a joint boards meeting with members of the Planning Board, Economic Development & Industrial Commission (EDIC), and representatives of Linear Retail. Jesse Steadman said the EDIC resolved to write a letter in support of allowing drive-thru businesses in Lower Village to the Select Board. Nancy Arsenault said the Planning Board should discuss whether more regular joint-boards meetings with the EDIC could be productive and said the Select Board will likely want to hear the Planning Board's perspective on revising the Zoning Bylaw to allow drive-thru food service uses.

Public Input

Mark Forgues asked when the Planning Board will have a public hearing for the Lower Village zoning amendments. Town Planner Jesse Steadman said a date has not been scheduled, and the Planning Board is taking time to work and understand a complete draft of the proposed updates before beginning public hearings. Lori Clark said that the Planning Board may want to have opportunities for public input beyond the statutorily required Public Hearing.

Mark Forgues asked about the process for submitting a proposed zoning amendment to Town Meeting. Lori Clark suggested bringing a proposed zoning change directly to the Planning Board, who have a simpler process to place a zoning change article onto a Town Meeting warrant than members of the public. Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan said that a formal citizen's petition process can be initiated with assistance from the Town Clerk. Mark Jones noted that the Town Charter requires a 90-day advance notice to the Select Board for a citizen's petition article to be placed on a Town Meeting warrant.

Dorothy Granat asked when the last Special Permit was issued for Stow House of Pizza, which included conditions to remediate the site after fill was dumped in the parking lot without proper approvals. Malcolm Ragan reported that permit was issued in July of 2021. Karen Kelleher said that she shares frustrations about the delays in remediating the site and expressed an eagerness to get the owner in front of the Planning Board to finalize a site plan.

Dorothy Granat said she is irritated by construction noise on weekends near her property. Lori Clark said that the Planning Board places limits on weekend construction work in new Special Permits, but that such limits do not exist for projects not governed by a Special Permit.

Planning Board Member Updates

John Colonna-Romano said the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has a goal to plan projects more strategically rather than just react to project proposals as they are received. John Colonna-Romano reported that the CPC is reaching out to other committees to note any upcoming projects that may utilize Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds.

John Colonna-Romano said that the Green Advisory Committee (GAC) is meeting twice monthly, with a goal of developing a climate action plan for Stow. John Colonna-Romano said steady progress is being made and the GACs hope to have a draft available by early autumn. Jesse Steadman said the CPC has an opportunity to synchronize an updated Community Preservation Plan with upcoming Comprehensive Plan (aka Master Plan) updates.

Mark Jones said he has a few items he would like to see on summer agendas, and that he will write up a note listing topics he would be interested to discuss in detail with the Board.

Planner's Report

Town Planner Jesse Steadman announced that he will soon be resigning from his position after 10 years with the Stow Planning Department. Jesse Steadman said that he will be devoting more attention to his family and growing business. Jesse Steadman said his last day will be August 1, meaning he will have four more meetings with the Planning Board. Jesse Steadman said he is very proud of everything he and the Planning Board have accomplished over the course of his tenure.

Jesse Steadman said he has been working with the Town Administrator to update his job description before he departs. Jesse Steadman said his title will change from Town Planner to Planning Director, more accurately reflecting the responsibilities of the senior planner position. Jesse Steadman said he hopes the title adjustment will assist with a candidate search. Jesse Steadman said he updated the job description to include construction monitoring and management, as well as coordinating performance guarantees. Jesse Steadman said he will not have a role in the search committee for his replacement. Planning Board members Karen Kelleher and Lori Clark will be members on the search committee.

Jesse Steadman said he wants to prioritize review of the Lower Village Zoning amendments before his departure. Lori Clark reported that the Town Administrator would like to begin interviewing for the position in July. Jesse Steadman reported that the Board has more than \$30k in its Master Plan / consulting engineering account, which can be used to support outreach and review for the Lower Village updates.

Karen Kelleher said that she is very disappointed to hear that Jesse Steadman is leaving but is very glad for him and thankful for all the work he has put into the Town of Stow. Other Board members agreed and thanked Jesse Steadman for his dedication to the Town of Stow and the Planning Board. Jesse Steadman said he will be around town often to tend to his Christmas tree farm on Tuttle Lane.

Jesse Steadman reported that he has been discussing concept plans for a multi-use path on Track Road – which would extend the Assabet River Rail Trail from Maynard – with engineering firm Green International. Jesse Steadman said Green International completed cross section concepts for only one

portion of the path, and completion of the contract was delayed due to Covid. Jesse Steadman said Green International will be asked to provide complete concept plans and a design memo summarizing their recommendations. Jesse Steadman said completing the concept plans will allow the town to access federal funds earmarked for final designs.

Jesse Steadman said he submitted a MassWorks grant for the signalization of the Hudson Rd/Route 117 intersection. Jesse Steadman said the application included letters of support from the developers of the upcoming Stow Acres and Athens Lane projects, which are expected to impact the intersection. Jesse Steadman said Bruce Wheeler shared the traffic study he commissioned for the Athens Lane project in the recently issued Request for Proposals for the intersection design work. Jesse Steadman reported that 4 engineering firms attended the pre-proposal conference.

Jesse Steadman reported that the first set of pedestrian signals have been installed at a crosswalk in Lower Village. Jesse Steadman said staff decided to install another set of signals at the Bradley Lane crosswalk instead of near the intersection of Great Road and Pompositticut Street, which was made infeasible due to sidewalk conditions. Jesse Steadman said the last set will be installed at a relocated crosswalk between Town Building and Town Hall.

Karen Kelleher asked if the town has purchased speed feedback signs. Jesse Steadman said the Highway Department is in possession of those signs and will install them at locations on Gleasondale Rd and Wheeler Road. Jesse Steadman said finding a suitable location on Wheeler Rd is challenging due to lack of direct sunlight on the road edge, needed to power the sign.

Jesse Steadman reported that signs noting a town wide 25mph speed limit in thickly settled districts have been installed at town entrances. Jesse Steadman said the change will be noticed in the Stow Independent soon and thereby made official.

Jesse Steadman said that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is finishing their pre-design safety recommendations for the Town Center intersection. Jesse Steadman said he has rolled an RFP for sidewalks designs into a larger RFP for Town Center concept plans, funded at a previous Town Meeting. Jesse Steadman said a benefit of combining the two RFPs is making it simpler to apply Complete Streets implementation funds toward the sidewalk construction on Crescent St. Jesse Steadman said there are several transportation focused projects moving forward, and that it is important to have projects shovel ready for when federal infrastructure dollars become more readily available.

Jesse Steadman reported on meetings staff have had with members of the Nashoba Area Social Justice Alliance (NASJA) and a local diversity, equity, and inclusion working group. Jesse Steadman said those groups are providing input on a draft community engagement plan for a future Master Plan Committee to adhere to when organizing the Master Plan updates.

Jesse Steadman said there have been discussions between the developer of the Joanne Drive subdivision and the Conservation Commission regarding a location of a canoe landing. Jesse Steadman said the Planning Department has received a check for the required fee-in-lieu of affordable unit construction, along with a letter stating the applicant plans to appeal the required amount based on a differing interpretation of the subdivision decision and Zoning Bylaw. Jesse Steadman said that having the check in hand allows for the construction of the subdivision to move forward.

Chair Lori Clark said she noticed that the connection to Forest Drive is not restricted to traffic. Lori Clark asked if the Board had discussed installing a gate at that location to prohibit traffic from using the connection as a through route in the subdivision decision. Jesse Steadman said the Fire Department had objected to installing a gate, as it would limit their access to the newly installed cistern. Jesse Steadman said that a sign prohibiting through traffic will be installed as the subdivision nears completion.

Jesse Steadman reported that the contractor at the Spring Hill Estates subdivision has applied for the necessary EPA National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and will be submitting

required stormwater reports shortly. Jesse Steadman said that once he has confidence that erosion controls will be maintained in accordance with the NPDES permit, he will release any holds on Building Permits at the subdivision.

Jesse Steadman reported that there will be a public meeting on Thursday, June 16th at 7pm, to discuss initial concept plans for an access path to the Kane Land in Gleasondale. Jesse Steadman said the concepts will discuss alternatives for surface treatment of the access path.

Jesse Steadman reported that the Masters Academy is still in negotiations to purchase the Bose property, and that Bose did receive another bid. Jesse Steadman said he spoke to Bose's attorney to emphasize the degree of public support for the Masters Academy proposal.

Jesse Steadman said he spoke with the developer of the upcoming Athens Lane Active Adult Neighborhood project, and that the Board should receive a complete application by June 30. Jesse Steadman said the first public hearing will likely be in early August if that timeline bears out. Karen Kelleher said that the Board should allow time for a peer review of the site plans before the Public Hearing is opened.

Jesse Steadman said the Board will see a letter from Town Counsel at the next meeting regarding the terms of the settlement agreement for the Collings Foundation. Jesse Steadman the letter will become public record once discussed by the Board, and the discussion will not qualify for executive session.

Jesse Steadman said the June 21 meeting will include an informal discussion with representatives of Verizon regarding a proposal to install a new wireless tower in the parking lot of the Stow Acres Country Club, which would require changing the boundaries of the Wireless Service Facility overlay district. Jesse Steadman said the presentation will be limited to 15 minutes and serve as an introduction to the proposal.

Lower Village Zoning Amendment – Planning Board Review

The Planning Board reviewed the most recent draft of the Lower Village zoning amendments. Chair Lori Clark reminded attendees that the Board hopes to work through a complete draft themselves before seeking public input. Lori Clark said that additional forums besides that required by statute will allow time for revisions to the draft before it is placed onto a Town Meeting warrant.

Karen Kelleher asked about the craft brewery/microbrewery distinction in the definitions. Karen Kelleher noted that microbreweries tend to focus on wholesale rather than retail. Jesse Steadman reported that Medusa in Hudson would qualify as a microbrewery under this definition, which still maintains a retail storefront. Jesse Steadman said he will consider an amendment to require such a business include a retail operation.

The Board discussed permitting applicability, and which uses would require Site Plan Approval vs. Special Permit. John Colonna-Romano wondered if changes in use would require additional parking, and how the Planning Board could account for that. Jesse Steadman said that any change in use that raises the required parking triggers a requirement for a Special Permit.

Jesse Steadman said that some new uses have been allowed by Site Plan Approval in this draft. Jesse Steadman said he has been advocating for a town food truck policy that allows for site review for a semi-permanent location, therefore not requiring additional review for each new food truck.

The Board reviewed language covering pedestrian connectivity, internal access drives, and parking requirements. The Board resolved to strengthen the purpose statements on some of those sections to make the intent clear to future applicants.

Lori Clark asked for Planning Board initial reactions to allowing drive thru uses. Karen Kelleher said she is worried that allowing those uses in one part of town could create a slippery slope, with applications to locate them elsewhere. Nancy Arsenault said she is not familiar with any examples of drive-thru uses that

are unobtrusive to the neighborhoods around them. John Colonna-Romano said that drive-thru businesses would not support other nearby businesses, because people are not getting out of their cars. Lori Clark said that she read a Starbucks corporate strategy document about increasing utilization of drive-thrus, making clear they are looking to maximize revenues by not requiring customers to leave their cars. Lori Clark agreed that drive-thrus could create traffic hazards in Lower Village and would not be keeping in character with Stow.

Karen Kelleher motioned to adjourn

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan