

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the August 9th, 2022 Planning Board meeting

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

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

Correspondence

John Colonna-Romano noted that the Hudson Planning Board will be hosting a Public Hearing for a proposed distribution center at the site of the old Intel campus.

Planning Board Member Updates

Nancy Arsenault said the Kmart plaza in Acton is proposed for redevelopment into a series of cottage-style dwellings, to include some 1-bedroom units. John Colonna-Romano said that Stow and Acton face similar issues trying to encourage a balanced mix of residential and commercial uses near a busy intersection.

Margaret Costello commented that she finds the multi-family building at 42 Summer Street in Maynard aesthetically pleasing and an example of good design for apartment buildings.

Chair Lori Clark reminded the Board that she will step away to speak to the Select Board regarding the charge of the Economic Development & Industrial Commission (EDIC) at this meeting. Lori Clark said incoming Town Planner Valerie Oorthuys will join the Planning Board for their August 23 meeting.

Karen Kelleher said the Zoning Board of Appeals has been notified by an attorney representing the owner of 137 Harvard Rd of intent to file for a Special Permit to build a new house on the attached "lot 2".

Planner's Report

Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan said that the contractor at the Spring Hill Estates subdivision has begun submitting the required stormwater reports. Malcolm Ragan said that an abutter to the development had been inquiring about the possibility of adding an additional unit. Malcolm Ragan explained that it is technically possible but would require bringing the road up to full subdivision standards and submission of a new Definitive Subdivision Plan.

Malcolm Ragan said that there has been little movement to bring Stow House of Pizza into compliance with the Special Permit issued in 2021. Malcolm Ragan said that the applicant's engineer has been informed on multiple occasions that the Board will require a stamped site plan to consider a modification to that Special Permit. Malcolm Ragan said that the applicant's son and daughter, currently handling day-to-day operations of the business, have been informed by the Zoning Enforcement Officer that fines are continuing to accrue.

Malcolm Ragan said the developer of the Joanne Drive subdivision has been asked to provide the Board with a revised landscaping plan following their request for relief from planting some of the street trees shown on the Definitive Subdivision Plan. Malcolm Ragan said that will be a topic for a later agenda once a planting plan is received. Mark Jones recalled a condition of the subdivision approval was removing

some trash from the open space areas prior to final occupancy. Malcolm Ragan said that the trash was required to be removed before the Conservation Commission took possession of the open space, and that it has all been removed at this point.

Malcolm Ragan said the survey work needed to begin designs of a traffic signal at the Hudson Rd/Route 117 intersection will be beginning the week of August 22, and that the Planning Department will notify abutters of that work. Malcolm Ragan recalled that the previous Town Planner had applied for \$1 million in MassWorks grant funding for construction, and that a firm construction estimate should be provided as part of the design process. Malcolm Ragan said there is a possibility for federal highway funds to be applied toward the project via the Boston Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) if the MassWorks grant is not approved.

Malcolm Ragan reported that the bid period for the Lower Village Water Feasibility Study has closed and the Town received four bids. Malcolm Ragan said that a bid award should be made by September 1.

Malcolm Ragan said there are still funds available from Shared Streets grant that funded the new pedestrian signals along Great Road. A portion of those funds will be used to finish installing new school zone 20mph signs near the Center School, and any remaining funds will be allocated by the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee.

Malcolm Ragan said that the GO Stow free taxi program may be expanded to allow Stow residents to have qualifying Uber rides paid for directly from the app.

Malcolm Ragan said that Brandymeade Circle, Dunster Drive, and Lane's End were all accepted as Public Ways by Town Meeting but not properly recorded at the Registry of Deeds. Once that paperwork is properly filed, the Highway Department should have access to additional chapter 90 funds.

Malcolm Ragan reported that final designs for the Kane Land Access path should be completed shortly.

Malcolm Ragan said that the Town Center concept plans, which were funded by a Town Meeting vote in 2021, should be able to finally move forward once the new Town Planner starts. The Planning Department is still waiting on a final report with traffic counts and short-term safety interventions from the MPO. Design for a small section of sidewalk between Hale Middle School and Pilot Grove Apartments is also expected to be included in the project, to be separately funded with Complete Street funds.

Selection of Traffic Study Peer Reviewer for Cottages at Wandering Pond Project

The Board reviewed the submitted proposals from Ron Müller and Associates and Green International for peer review of the traffic study completed for the development proposal. John Colonna-Romano said that Green is also working on the design for the Hudson Rd/ Route 117 intersection and wondered if that was an advantage or a disadvantage for their proposal. John Colonna-Romano expressed concern that Green's other work could influence their review.

Margaret Costello wondered if a smaller firm like Ron Müller and Associates may have more resources to devote to this particular project. Margaret Costello said that familiarity with the area is not as important as creativity in approach for this kind of work.

The Board continued to discuss the two proposals and discussed asking clarifying questions of each of the bidders. Karen Kelleher said she prefers the Green International proposal, and that the Board should stick with a firm who they know has capacity and know-how to complete the requested review in a timely fashion.

Malcolm Ragan said that the Board was not obligated to accept the lowest bid for these kinds of services, which are funded by the applicant and not subject to strict public procurement rules. Contracting for permitting review services is authorized under Mass. General Laws c. 44 §53G.

Karen Kelleher motioned to contract with Green International for Traffic Study Peer Review Services related to the Cottages at Wandering Pond Active Adult Neighborhood proposal

John Colonna-Romano seconded

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

Chair's Update on Meeting with Select Board

Chair Lori Clark said that members of the Economic Development & Industrial Commission (EDIC) were not receptive to the idea of their charge including development of an economic development plan. Lori Clark said the EDIC wished they had a chance to review the Planning Board's written thoughts before the meeting.

Lori Clark said the EDIC will be meeting soon to further discuss revising their charge, and there will be further discussions between the chairs of the Planning Board, EDIC, and Select Board. Lori Clark said that the current mission statement of the EDIC is somewhat nonspecific, and the language she offered for the meeting is intended to link their activities to broader economic development planning and goals.

Lori Clark said the EDIC is appointed by the Select Board and reports to them, not the Planning Board. Karen Kelleher said it seems like the Planning Board offered the most serious thought into a revised charge for the EDIC. The Board discussed the need for EDIC members to be clear about the extent of their authority with members of the Stow business community and broader public.

Lower Village Zoning Amendments – Public Outreach Planning

The Board discussed their approach for resident outreach and engagement prior to bringing proposed zoning amendments for Lower Village to a Town Meeting. Karen Kelleher said that there should be multiple public forums and multiple avenues of outreach. Karen Kelleher said that the Planning Board should reach out to the Lower Village Revitalization Subcommittee ("Subcommittee") and ask that group to begin meeting again. Lori Clark said the Board should agree on the overall goals of the zoning changes and be prepared to explain how the changes further those goals. Lori Clark suggested specific outreach to the Select Board to keep them informed about the status of proposed zoning changes. Lori Clark said that other boards and committees should also be asked for comments.

The Board discussed obtaining some conceptual site renderings to assist with outreach. The Board discussed how this would translate regulatory language into tangible potential outcomes. Karen Kelleher suggested that outreach be split across multiple events with focus on different dimensions of the bylaw. Karen Kelleher said that there should be public forums on different aspects of the bylaw.

Lori Clark said that resident outreach should begin well before the statutory public hearing required to bring the proposed amendments to Town Meeting. The Board discussed the need to make the goals of the amendments abundantly clear so that the intent of specific provisions can be understood.

Lori Clark suggested the Board begin compiling a stakeholder list with specific interests and participation preferences. Karen Kelleher said that members of the Select Board should be encouraged to attend any public forums or other outreach run by the Planning Board.

Lori Clark summarized that the Planning Board will have one more discussion to talk about goals and begin to map out stakeholders, meet with the Select Board to present the proposed changes, and begin the outreach process from there. Karen Kelleher said that events should be recorded and made available by Stow TV. John Colonna-Romano said that targeted focus groups should include a clear appeal to participants' interests advanced by the proposed zoning changes.

Nancy Arsenault expressed concern that some people may feel that the process outcome is predetermined if there is too much reference to past planning and outreach efforts for Lower Village. Nancy Arsenault said that the Board could ask current property owners to explain the limitations they currently face and how the Zoning changes might help them realize a more positive vision for Lower Village properties. Nancy Arsenault suggested working with citizen advocates for the proposed changes. John Colonna-Romano said that interest groups should express to the Board what is in it for them on the zoning changes.

Review draft Community Engagement Plan for Upcoming Master Plan Updates

Margaret Costello said she appreciated the comment suggesting a change of name from "Master Plan" to "Comprehensive Plan", and that this document is successful in explaining how people should be thinking about common language and their relationship to fellow residents.

John Colonna-Romano said the document as drafted overemphasizes terms and concepts related to diversity and inclusion, which could potentially discourage some people from engaging. The Board discussed moving language around baseline expectations for public outreach to the front of the plan. Karen Kelleher and Nancy Arsenault said the draft plan seems to imply some deliberate exclusions during past efforts. Lori Clark agreed that typical methods of collecting input means some populations have not been heard, so the Community Engagement Plan should have a stronger focus on suggesting methods to bring new stakeholders into the process.

Margaret Costello said discussions of core values and goals for the future are necessary at this juncture where Stow seems to be changing rapidly.

Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan explained that metrics for evaluating engagement have been removed in the latest draft of the plan and Boards and Committees are now asked to establish their own criteria, to be justified to the future Master (Comprehensive) Plan Committee. Board members expressed approval of that approach.

Margaret Costello said that getting residents involved in the historical memory of the Town will assist with building interest and buy in for the comprehensive planning efforts.

Lori Clark summarized that the document could be shortened, primary content regarding outreach expectations could be brought forward. Nancy Arsenault worried that this engagement process could be

too extensive for some committees who don't have staff resources. Lori Clark said clarification is needed regarding how prescriptive this plan is versus offering possible tools for engagement.

The Board agreed that terms regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, while important to motivate broad and responsive outreach, can be alienating to some residents.

Zoning Districts around Hudson Rd/Route 117 Intersection

Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan said that the Board has not yet reviewed the boundaries of the portion of the Business District near the intersection of Hudson Rd/Route 117. The Board viewed a zoning map, and agreed that zoning districts could be redrawn to more closely align with parcel boundaries at a future date.

Karen Kelleher motioned to adjourn

John Colonna-Romano seconded

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan