

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the September 7, 2022 Planning Board meeting

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

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

Minutes

Karen Kelleher moved to approve the minutes of August 9, 2022 as amended

John Colonna-Romano seconded

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

Correspondence

Nancy Arsenault said that she agreed with the recommendations of the Road Safety Audit report for the Great Road/Hudson Road intersection, and appreciated the several near-term recommendations.

Chair Lori Clark asked for Board reactions to the Acton/Maynard Powder Mill Rd corridor project. Nancy Arsenault said she appreciated the clear verbiage of the project's outreach documents and that the Board should seek to emulate that for upcoming outreach related to planned updates to zoning in Lower Village. Nancy Arsenault noted that many surrounding towns are adopting mixed-use zoning and that these examples should be recounted to Stow residents who may have questions about the proposed Lower Village zoning amendments.

Public Input

Katie Fisher said that she looked at other age 55+ housing developments, including one in Groton, in which it is not possible to install an electric vehicle charging station in garages. Katie Fisher asked if the Board will require implementation of infrastructure to enable electric charging and rooftop solar power at the proposed Cottages at Wandering Pond development off Hudson Road. Katie Fisher also asked that the Board pay special attention to the proposed groundwater draw at that development, including from non-potable irrigation wells which are not regulated by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

John Colonna-Romano said that updated zoning for the Active Adult Neighborhood overlay district, through which the Cottages at Wandering Pond project is being permitted, requires wiring that would allow later installation of a vehicle charging station. Adequate service and basic wiring will be installed, but residents would be responsible for purchasing and installing the actual chargers.

Planning Board Member Updates

Chair Lori Clark said the chair of the Select Board, Economic Development & Industrial Commission (EDIC), and herself will soon meet to discuss a revised mission statement for the EDIC.

John Colonna-Romano addressed previous comments made regarding utility connections at a new house at 38 Hiley Brook Road. John Colonna-Romano said he visited the site and was surprised at an additional service pole that has been installed in the interior of the lot, near the newly constructed dwelling. that he expected to be a pole near the driveway and was surprised at the second pole. Malcolm Ragan said he has confirmed with the Building Department that this pole is temporary and will be removed once the underground electric connection is completed. Margaret Costello asked John Colonna-Romano's thoughts about the chosen location of a new service pole along the streetline to serve the new dwelling. John Colonna-Romano said that new pole did not look to be located further away from the driveway entrance than it should be.

Planner's Report

Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan said the Zoning Board of Appeals will be having an informal discussion with the owner of an existing Dog Kennel business on Hudson Road. Malcolm Ragan said the discussion will include specific setback requirements for kennel uses and a proposal to allow such uses in the Business District.

Malcolm Ragan said staff spoke to Town Counsel regarding Stow House of Pizza, and counsel said that any letter from her would require escalation to the Select Board for enforcement. Malcolm Ragan said that the Town Administrator may recommend legal action be taken by the Select Board if a requested site plan is not received. Malcolm Ragan said the applicant's engineer asked for the Planning Board to visit the site and better understand the current status of noncompliance for parking lot screening. The Planning Board reiterated that they require a site plan to demonstrate Zoning Bylaw compliance at the site.

Malcolm Ragan recounted a meeting between Town staff and representatives of MassDOT regarding Track Road, which primarily focused on the proposed cross section of a shared use path and controlling access to Crow Island Airpark. Malcolm Ragan said MassDOT was quite clear that the path should be paved in order to receive federal highway funds for construction. Malcolm Ragan said that additional clarity is needed from MassDOT about limitations for funding what amounts to private access for the owner of Crow Island airpark.

Malcolm Ragan said a request for comments from other Board and Committees was made several weeks ago for the draft Community Engagement Plan, but that no responses have been received. Malcolm Ragan said some comments were received from the Conservation Director, which mirrored some concerns previously raised by the Planning Board.

Malcolm Ragan said that the developer of Joanne Drive is expected to come forward with a request to revise the planting plan at an upcoming meeting.

Malcolm Ragan said that MART received a grant through the MPO/MAPC Community Connections program to operate an on-demand microtransit service within Stow and some surrounding communities. Malcolm Ragan said that the grant award was very broad, and the service can be designed to serve the most acute transportation needs in Stow. Malcolm Ragan said that many details of how the program would work are yet to be finalized, but that the program is funded for at least 3 years and fares will be priced very affordably.

Lori Clark reminded the Board that they have upcoming meetings on Sept 27th and Oct 4th and 18th.

Workplan Discussion

Lori Clark said the Planning Board should have a clear idea of upcoming priorities ahead of the new Planning Director, Valerie Oorthuys, starting the next week. Lori Clark said the Board should review previous workplans and decide if goals are still relevant and should also consider what could be added.

The Board compiled a list of ongoing projects and priorities, including:

- Compliance with new multifamily zoning requirements for MBTA communities
- Revisions to Stow signage bylaws
- Complete and implement Lower Village Zoning amendments and Design Guidelines
- Study use of overlay district(s) to encourage development in Business Districts
- Initiate process for new Master/Comprehensive Plan
- Transportation improvements in Town Center and Gleasondale
- More vigilant enforcement of zoning bylaw and provisions of Special Permit decisions.
- Hudson Road/Route 117 intersection signalization
- Advance Track Road shared use path designs
- Minor amendments to Zoning Bylaw to correct errors or unclear provisions

Lori Clark said that this running list will be a good starting point for more detailed workplan discussions with the incoming Planning Director. Board members recalled that they promised Town Meeting voters more extensive revisions to the sign bylaw, but agreed that the goals of any revisions must be made very clear before any new language is proposed. John Colonna-Romano said the Planning Board should collect input from a diverse range of stakeholders.

Initiating the Master/Comprehensive Planning Process

Lori Clark said a “living plan” approach has been suggested, which will allow specific topic areas of the plan to be updated and reviewed regularly as needed. Lori Clark said that there would not need to be regular major updates, as that may limit building momentum on plan implementation progress, but that revisions to specific sections could be undertaken if a clear need arises.

Karen Kelleher said that the Master Plan should be action oriented, with expectations that goals be reviewed on a recurring basis. Lori Clark said that it should be possible to include additional topics outside of typical Master Plan chapters.

The Board discussed the role of the Planning Board in relation to the Master Plan committee. Lori Clark said that the Board should offer recommendations on the approach and composition of the Master Plan committee. Lori Clark said the composition could change over time as different topics are reviewed or revised. John Colonna-Romano said subcommittees of the Master Plan committee would likely be doing much of the actual work on specific chapters.

Margaret Costello said that a new Master Planning effort should include town wide discussions on different interpretations of the term “rural character”.

John Colonna-Romano said that the Master Plan committee should be tasked with establishing a guiding vision for the Master Plan and the processes that structure drafting of chapters. Lori Clark said that the Planning Board should come to agreement on how much guidance and opinion they want to put forward about their hopes for the Master Plan. Karen Kelleher said that there needs to be Planning Board oversight and continuous involvement in the Master Plan.

Lori Clark suggested that members come forward with suggestions for the operation and standards of the Master Plan. Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan asked Planning Board members to put their thoughts in writing so they can be collated and provided in a later memo to the Select Board.

Margaret Costello motioned to adjourn
John Colonna-Romano seconded

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan