

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the February 21, 2023 Planning Board meeting

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

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

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve

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 asked for clarification of a business' request to rezone 84 Walcott Street to allow marijuana cultivation. Valerie Oorthuys stated that recreational marijuana cultivation and retail are not currently allowed uses and 84 Walcott Street is not within the Overlay District. The request is to both amend the allowed uses in Stow and to include the parcel within the Overlay District.

John Colonna-Romano noted correspondence from the Select Board relative to Hudson Light & Power's request for locating a utility pole along Johnston Way to service Elizabeth Brook Apartments (formerly Plantation Apartments). Karen Kelleher recused herself from the discussion as a board member of Stow Elderly Housing Corp. John Colonna-Romano said that he does not believe one of the poles proposed on the corner is strictly necessary, and that a push pole will be unattractive on that street corner. John Colonna-Romano wondered if the requirement to run 3-phase wires creates a requirement for greater pole support. Lori Clark suggested that staff let the Select Board know about Planning Board goals regarding utility pole locations and overhead wires.

Board members expressed appreciation for a list of events anticipated at the Collings Foundation, and what to expect from each demonstration.

John Colonna-Romano addressed the letter from the Tree Warden regarding a dangerous tree on Hiley Brook Road, and wondered if the Board should put some additional language in decisions that trees may be removed from no-cut buffers where they pose an imminent safety hazard. Margaret Costello said she is happy that homeowners have to be cautious in removing trees from such buffers conditioned by the Planning Board. Lori Clark agreed that such conditions should have language in the future that allows for removal in cases of public safety hazard.

Public Input

Leigh Hilderbrandt, 196 Great Road, said she was looking at Lower Village Zoning Bylaw proposals and asked about dimensional requirements and whether buffers to businesses from loading areas should also be included in front of structures.

Dorothy Granat, 11 White Pond Road, reiterated her concerns about language in the proposed Lower Village Business District bylaw regarding buffers from business parcels to residential and conservation parcels. Dorothy Granat made comments about existing conditions at 84 Great Road.

Gleasondale School Lot Application to Community Preservation Committee – Discussion with Gleasondale Steering Committee

Maura Rousseau introduced the Gleasondale School Lot proposal as outlined in funding request to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). The quarter acre lot in Gleasondale is vacant and the neighborhood steering committee hopes to improve the lot to make it into a pocket park. After the school building on site burned down, the lot was transferred to the control of the Conservation Commission and is now under the care of the Recreation Department. The Town Administrator has stated that the Town will be responsible for long-term upkeep. The proposal includes the addition of seating, an updated fence, and historical markers to recall that the lot was once used for a school. Maura Rousseau emphasized that Gleasondale Village is currently lacking public open space.

John Colonna-Romano said that the CPC likes to see project sponsors get input from stakeholders in Town, and that he appreciates Maura taking that step. John Colonna-Romano said that he believes the CPC is favorable to the project but that he cannot say for sure how Town Meeting voters will react.

Margaret Costello suggested that the historical marker include information about the use of the school for millworkers. Bill Byron said he attended the school when he was young, when it served 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students in two rooms. Bill Byron said that the neighborhood has organized clean up days and that there have been neighborhood events in that lot in the past few years. Bill Byron said that there is some neighborhood strife, as a new resident has been using the lot as a personal parking space.

John Colonna-Romano said there was some discussion about parking with the CPC when the proposal was made, and that they recognize some parking spaces may be warranted given a current lack of sidewalks. John Colonna-Romano wondered if a no overnight parking sign might be warranted at the location.

Nancy Arsenault questioned whether dogs would be allowed, as the lot may be perceived by some residents to be attractive as a dog park. Laura Greenough, Stow Recreation Director, said that no parcels maintained by the Recreation Department allow dogs, except for the Pine Bluffs recreation area. Dogs would likely not be allowed at the School Lot, however a public forum will be held with the newest version of the proposal.

Mark Forgues, 9 White Pond Road, asked if there are buffer requirements between recreation land and adjacent residences and stated he is concerned with how scheduling of the space for events might work as the park may be a nuisance. Maura Rousseau said the park will be informal and not scheduled, operating as it currently does. Mark Forgues said there should be buffer requirements to abutting properties. Valerie Oorthuys noted the parcel is entirely in the residential district and no structures are proposed. Laura Greenough said that the parcel will be subject to all Recreation Department rules.

The Planning Board expressed their support for the Gleasondale School Lot project.

Subdivision Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan Review – 98 Old Bolton Road

The Board noted that the ANR plan is the same plan used for the corresponding modification of the Hammerhead Lot Special Permit request, which was approved at the Board's meeting of January 10, 2023. Valerie Oorthuys agreed, stating that the ANR is now in front of the Board as the appeal period on the Special Permit has passed with no appeals filed. Staff have reviewed the ANR and have no outstanding questions.

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the plan titled "Plan of Land in Stow, Massachusetts" dated September 26, 2022 and to authorize Malcolm Ragan or John Colonna-Romano to endorse the plan 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**; Nancy Arsenault- **Yea**.

Planning Director's Report

Valerie Oorthuys said that the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Annual Conference will be held in March and the Planning Department has funds to support Board members' attendance.

Valerie Oorthuys said that consultants working on the Hudson Road/ Great Road intersection improvements are coordinating with the Highway Department to permit test pits for the mast arm. Valerie Oorthuys said that she met with two nearby property owners to discuss the project and impacts to their properties. Valerie Oorthuys said the superintendent of Hudson Light & Power recently relayed that due to a supply chain issue, the wait time for transformers is almost four years long, impacting numerous projects across Town.

Vote to Appoint Planning Board Representative on Regional Committees

Valerie Oorthuys said that with Malcolm Ragan departing, the Town should ensure there is no gap in representation on regional committees and no gap in the ability for staff to endorse ANR plans on behalf of the Board.

Karen Kelleher motioned to appoint Valerie Oorthuys as the Planning Board's representative to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and MAGIC (Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination).

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

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

Vote to Authorize Planning Director to Endorse ANR Plans on Behalf of the Planning Board

Karen Kelleher motioned to authorize John Colonna-Romano or Valerie Oorthuys to endorse ANR plans on behalf of the Planning Board.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

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

Lower Village Zoning Amendments

Lori Clark noted that the Board's next meeting of February 28th will be the first public forum on the proposed amendments. Karen Kelleher said that the Board also needs to agree on a map for the district.

Valerie Oorthuys said that the presentation given to town employees and Board members will be the same one used next week. Valerie Oorthuys said that staff met with Peter Flinker to review the draft bylaw to test any issues that may have been overlooked or could be revised. One area that may need revision is language around architectural standards to ensure that the bylaw does not contradict itself. In addition, the draft includes a 20,000 square foot maximum for a single tenant, which may be a little large.

The Board discussed a draft letter in response to a resident's request to rezone property from Business to Residential in the Lower Village. John Colonna-Romano asked how the boundary of the business district was drawn, and noted that there was a 200' offset from the edge of the right of way of Bradley Lane eastwards. The Board approved the letter to be sent to the resident.

The Planning Board discussed public feedback related to buffers from residential uses. Malcolm Ragan noted that buffers are defined separately from setbacks in the current bylaw, and that parking/loading areas are allowed in setbacks, but not in undisturbed buffers to adjoining districts.

Margaret Costello asked if the bylaw could allow green roofs in the face of impending climate changes. John Colonna-Romano said that there may be structural issues with pitched roofs on larger buildings.

Lori Clark asked if the bylaw draft can be provided to developers. Valerie Oorthuys said it was provided to Linear Retail, and that the owner had independently arrived at some conceptual plans that mirrored much of the intent of the draft bylaw, such as a reduction in the amount of parking space and the inclusion of civic space and outdoor dining.

Mark Forgues, 9 White Pond Road, asked how many forums there will be. Lori Clark reiterated that the Board intends to hold a total of four forums in addition to the statutory public hearing before the article is brought to Town Meeting.

Mark Forgues, 9 White Pond Road, asked how the Town would regulate property buffers and whether buffers would be grandfathered into the district. Mark Forgues made complaints about a property at 92 Great Road.

Dorothy Granat, 11 White Pond Road, expressed frustration regarding enforcement of buffers at 92 Great Road and the fact that pre-existing uses and structures could remain. Karen Kelleher said the intent of the zoning bylaw revisions are to influence redevelopment and the Planning Board cannot act according to the actions of a single property owner in the district. John Colonna-Romano said there is a lot of confusion about the implementation of this zoning change, and that its passage doesn't necessitate change. Lori Clark reiterated that the intent of this bylaw is to encourage redevelopment. Board members agreed that zoning enforcement is an ongoing concern.

Leigh Hilderbrandt, 196 Great Road, asked for clarification about the term redevelopment. Lori Clark said it includes new development and any significant modifications to existing site plans. Debbie Woods said that it is clear that the Board will have to be careful to define its terms in these presentations.

Katie Fisher, 1 White Pond Road, asked if property owners have been made aware of proposed zoning amendments. Katie Fisher said that direct abutters should be notified about these proposed changes. Planning Board members agreed that outreach is a critical component of preparing for Town Meeting.

Lori Clark expressed her thanks to Assistant Planner Malcolm Ragan and wished him well in his new position with the MWRA. All members of the Planning Board and staff echoed appreciation for Malcolm Ragan and his many contributions.

Margaret Costello motioned to adjourn.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Valerie Oorthuys