

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the April 11, 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

Correspondence

The Board reviewed correspondence between the Building Inspector and the owner of Stow House of Pizza. The Board expressed frustration with the continued nonaction of the property owner. Staff noted that the Special Permit expires in June of this year. The Board agreed that the consideration of whether to reopen the public hearing to provide a reissuance of the Special Permit should be included on an upcoming agenda.

Planning Board Member Updates

John Colonna-Romano said that the Community Preservation Committee has one project for consideration at Annual Town Meeting, which is the Gleasondale School Lot improvements. The Historic Commission has put their application to renovate the West School on hold to gather more information.

Planner's Report

Kane Land

Valerie Oorthuys said that bids for the construction of the access path to the Kane Land in Gleasondale are due on April 11. A pre-proposal conference was held on site April 5th.

Crescent Street Sidewalks

Valerie Oorthuys said consultants at GCG Associates have provided concept plans for the construction of sidewalks along the northern side of Crescent Street. The intent is to apply for a Complete Streets grant by May 1, 2023.

Debrief of Request to Amend Registered Marijuana Establishment Overlay District

The Planning Board discussed the conversation from their meeting of February 28, 2023 that was held with representatives of 84 Walcott Street. The representatives asked that the Board consider marijuana cultivation as an allowed use within the Overlay District and to include 84 Walcott Street within the Overlay District. Members agreed that the Board does not typically review zoning on specific parcels and would rather review the Overlay District as a whole to see if it is meeting the needs of the Town or the intent of the bylaw.

The Board agreed to continue the conversation at a future meeting once additional background information is gathered, including information from the 2018 planning process such as public comments received, the Board's recommendations, and results of the special election held in 2018.

Joint Boards Meeting with Select Board: Zoning Articles on Town Meeting Warrant

The Planning Board left the zoom session for their regularly scheduled meeting and joined the Select Board's zoom session.

Lori Clark provided a review of the zoning articles the Planning Board is bringing to Annual Town Meeting. Lori Clark noted that the Board does not intend to bring forward amendments to the Wireless Service Facility Overlay District at this Town Meeting as had been previously communicated, however staff continue to review the requirements in the existing bylaw and the location of the Overlay District to understand if the bylaw could be improved to better meet the needs of the Town.

Megan Birch-McMichael asked for further clarification of the Registered Marijuana Establishment Overlay District amendments, as that was not previously communicated. Lori Clark explained the proposed changes are non-substantive and provide alignment with the State's numbering and language around Recreational Marijuana.

Also discussed was the proposed Lower Village Business District bylaw, the proposed deletion of the Phasing of Growth bylaw, and the proposed amendments to the Active Adult Neighborhood Overlay bylaw.

Lower Village Business District Zoning Amendments: Discuss Public Outreach

Members spent the remainder of the meeting reviewing a draft Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, paying attention to the description of the special permit process, in which feedback from a public hearing can have direct impact on development.

Mark Jones commented on the need to be transparent about what kind of housing will be allowed in the business district. Members agreed it should be clear that it will be residential units as a secondary use, with retail space in the same building.

The discussion moved on to the topic of the availability of water infrastructure and the need to note that development aligned with the vision of Lower Village is feasible without modification of existing water supplies so long as proposed uses are those that require less water capacity.

Thoughts on how to best highlight the Board's collaboration with consultants and positive business feedback were discussed. Members suggested that staff research the topics and dates of past public forums to indicate how current public opinion remains consistent with the vision.

The drive-thru petition was talked about at length, with members agreeing further conversation between the Planning Director, Town Counsel, and the Town Moderator was needed.

Members reviewed a draft Letter to the Editor to better complement the FAQ document. Members also debated strategies for education of the bylaw, promotion of the public hearing, preparation of the Q&A zoom session, and continued public outreach on social media.

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,
Julie Windzio