

BEDFORD PLANNING BOARD
Town Hall—2nd Floor Conference Room
Regular Session Minutes
January 7, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: Shawn Hanegan Chair, Amy Lloyd, Clerk
Jeffrey Cohen, Sandra Hackman and Lisa Mustapich

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Glenn Garber, Planning Director; Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner

STAFF ABSENT: Cathy Silvestrone, Planning A.A.

OTHERS PRESENT: See Attached

Shawn Hanegan, Chair convened the Planning Board meeting at 7:30 PM

Emergency Evacuation notice read by Amy Lloyd, Clerk

Amy Lloyd, Clerk read a public notice sharing information about E-Subscribe on the town's website homepage, as the best way for residents and others to stay informed of town board & committee meetings, agendas, and minutes.

Note: All meeting submittals are available for review in the Planning Office.

OLD BUSINESS:

Coast Guard housing RFP letter

Jessica Porter, Assistant Town Manager, attended for this item.

Glenn Garber, Planning Director, said he was pleased that many of the Planning Board and staff's comments have been incorporated in the revised RFP. He had a few remaining suggestions:

- Reduce the maximum number of units a little so that it does not force too many attached units
- Keep the Planning Board's position more open in relation to zoning options
- Require more financial information from developers.

Ms. Porter mentioned that the graphics will be improved for the final version of the document. She provided a progress update: the Town's appraisal is expected this week, and the Coast Guard's in early February; also the RFP is being reviewed by Town Counsel.

The Board asked if any developers have shown interest and Ms. Porter confirmed that a few have inquired about the process for the site.

Jeff Cohen asked for clarification of the timeline intended under criterion IV. Ms. Porter said she would firm up the language. Mr. Cohen also asked about the intended timeframe for any zoning

change and noted that the earliest Town Meeting to aim for would be Fall, 2015. There was a brief discussion of the potential rezoning process.

Amy Lloyd commented that she was pleased with the text on parking. She asked if there could be firmer guidance on dwelling floor area; Ms. Porter responded that it was desirable to leave some flexibility on this matter since it inter-relates with other factors in site planning.

Board members offered a few minor edits to staff's draft letter to the Selectmen, and voted unanimously to authorize staff to make any final changes and send the letter.

Transportation Management Association (TMA) Resolution – Initial Discussion of Options

Glenn Garber reported that as agreed at the last meeting, he has worked to produce a first draft of a resolution on Transportation Demand Management (TDM). He noted that there may be a variety of regulatory options; a resolution carries least weight and other approaches to consider may be an interpretation of the zoning bylaw, a zoning regulation or a change to the zoning bylaw (through Town Meeting approval). Catherine Perry suggested that zoning regulations may be most appropriate when they nest within an existing zoning bylaw, providing more detail on its application. Currently the zoning bylaw links parking (above the norm) to TDM and mentions traffic impact issues.

Alyssa Sandoval, Economic Development Coordinator, mentioned that she has now met with Mass Commute/Mass RIDES which offers free services to facilitate van pools, ride matching, guaranteed ride home programs etc. and represents a further useful resource to those previously noted.

Board members noted that the thresholds (in terms of employees or floor area or trip generation) for TMA membership and other types of action such as shuttle bus sponsorship or employee incentive programs will need to be sorted out for the resolution to be operational. The two existing TMAs have different membership cost schedules. Ms. Sandoval agreed to check the cost of Middlesex 3 Coalition membership, referenced in one of the schedules.

Lisa Mustapich expressed some concerns about requiring, as opposed to requesting, TDM actions, because TDM failed Town Meeting twice. She urged that the Board find out what neighboring towns are doing, and consult with the Chamber of Commerce, Selectmen and general public (through publicized hearings). There was some discussion of when a requirement is a reasonable measure to offset impact and when it is an unauthorized tax. It was noted that the Town is unlikely to be able to offer tax incentives instead. Ms. Sandoval reported there is some interest in achieving consistency between communities. Burlington was reported to sometimes require TMA membership as a condition of a special permit. Sandra Hackman said that she can discuss the subject at the next meeting of the Middlesex 3 Coalition Transportation Committee.

Jeffrey Cohen asked if area businesses are looking for this type of lead to help with traffic problems. Andrew Gallinaro, representing business park owner National Development, said that congestion is an issue in the suburbs. His company is polling its tenants at Crosby Corporate Center and New England Executive Park. Mr. Gallinaro said that people are open to shuttle buses but such services need concentrated route demand to be viable. Businesses have individual

views: some see this type of system as onerous, especially if they are small, whereas others see it as a real benefit.

Several board members expressed support for the middle ground option of a regulation which would be more flexible than a zoning bylaw. Amy Lloyd further suggested marketing the benefits.

Industrial Zoning Discussion II

The Board continued the discussion, begun at the last meeting, of potential changes to the base zoning for the Industrial and Commercial districts (both short term and longer term). The same set of analysis documents from staff was used for reference.

Mr. Garber reported that the timeline for the lead up to the spring Annual Town Meeting has just been received and the timing is tight; any zoning bylaw changes that the Board wishes to present will need to be substantially framed by January 26. Some dimensional and use adjustments in the districts under study are the most suitable candidates, and consolidation of Industrial A and B districts could possibly be considered. Staff has begun to study parking but it is a complicated topic that would benefit from more time. Catherine Perry added that changing allowed building heights may or may not be a complicated step depending on whether it is linked to increased floor area and resulting parking. To consider it in depth, some alternative scenarios for typical sites would be worth exploring.

Amy Lloyd and Shawn Hanegan suggested deferring any height and parking changes for now. Ms. Lloyd also said that she would prefer to take a bird's eye view of all the relevant zoning first, rather than hastening to make some changes in the short term that might be superseded. She considers that the area east of Route 3 is different in character than other parts of town; also it may make sense to consolidate some of the zoning districts in the Wiggins Avenue/ Preston Court area. Lisa Mustapich supported a holistic approach while wanting to maintain progress with the studies.

Alyssa Sandoval provided an update on vacancy levels in different parts of town: low on Wiggins Ave, improved on Crosby Drive and higher on Oak Park Drive.

Andrew Gallinero of National Development offered some thoughts on zoning from the point of view of businesses' wants and needs. He welcomed the new Industrial Mixed Use zoning, commenting that it meets current trends and provides the aspects businesses are looking for, and it is more consistent with Burlington. He stated that there is a desire to reinvent and enrich suburban office parks, and flexibility helps. In the Industrial C zone, developers and businesses look at height, parking and other dimensions such as setbacks. Mr. Gallinero commented that height can create visibility, as a separate consideration from density. It can also allow better use of land, freeing up green space if parking is kept tight. The current demand is more for office buildings rather than 1-2 story flex buildings which were commoner in the past. Signage is also of interest to tenants, for promotional purposes.

Asked about parking, Mr. Gallinero said he was generally in favor of more; it can affect viability so flexibility is seen as a plus, rather than maximum limits. Employers are currently densifying, typically from 300 to 250 square feet per employee, which implies a greater demand for parking

in relation to building size. Mr. Gallinero added that he agrees that mixed use can allow some shared parking and save on costs.

Height was discussed. Amy Lloyd asked if an increase was seen as desirable adjacent to Route 3 or more broadly. Mr. Gallinero responded that both would be good but it could be stepped (higher near the highway) to be more sensitive, or different degrees of height could be based on development concepts. He observed that height was a selling point in Burlington. Catherine Perry noted that Burlington was the main example of a town with a zoning bylaw that related height limits to distance from certain highways. In terms of other matters affecting height preferences, Mr. Gallinero mentioned that the Building Code considers buildings over 70 feet to be high rise, with additional requirements. Jeffrey Cohen asked about story heights; these were said to be typically around 13 feet for offices, 10 feet for a hotel, and maybe 30 feet for industry; flex rehabilitation may be only 15-20 feet but is less common. Sandra Hackman commented that she would be nervous about a big height increase if it would produce a more urban appearance but was intrigued by the idea if it could allow more green space.

Jeffrey Cohen suggested some specific ideas for zoning changes that might be considered “low hanging fruit”: home occupations in the Commercial District; the definition of an above ground utility; and whether to allow banks in the Commercial District.

A majority of board members favored deferral of all zoning bylaw changes at this point (in view of timeframe, complexity, staffing and workload issues) and the other members accepted this position.

NEW BUSINESS:

Planning Board budget for FY16

Director Garber presented a draft budget and stated that although the timeframe is very tight, with a presentation to the Finance Committee scheduled for the following evening, it is not complicated. Salaries will be the same, subject to guideline merit increases, and a small increase of a few hundred dollars is proposed in the expenses budget. Mr. Garber also supplied a table analyzing the Planning Department’s work in FY15 to date.

MOTION: It was moved and seconded to approve the draft budget as presented.

VOTE: 5-0-0

STAFF REPORT:

Verbal updates were provided by Catherine Perry as follows:

Hartwell/Beacon cluster subdivision – an application has been received for a definitive subdivision plan approval and cluster development special permit; a public hearing is being advertised for January 20. The plan still shows a total of 5 lots, with slight adjustments from the preliminary version. No realistic conventional plan has been supplied for comparison, as was requested by the Board.

120 Great Road restaurant – the ZBA continued its hearing on the special permit for the use, to January 22. Code Enforcement Director Chris Laskey identified a list of questions to be answered by the applicant so that the proposal can be properly reviewed. An email was received from the applicant after close of business today, stating that the applicant is working with an architect to produce a footprint and sketch elevation, potentially based on a barn style concept, and has had a site survey of 110 and 120 Great Road done. The applicant requests a joint meeting of the Planning Board and HDC on February 4 to review the project.

Bill Moonan, HDC Chair, attended this portion of the Planning Board meeting and said that the Commission may send members to the February 4 Planning Board meeting to listen and potentially comment, but does not favor a joint hearing.

Crosby Corporate Center – no news on the potential renewal of the business park.

162 South Road – staff met with a potential developer to discuss options for a group of parcels, including an existing house, totaling approximately 4 acres. There may be potential for a small cluster development but a first step will be to delineate wetlands on the property.

MassDOT Maintenance Facility – MassDOT proposes to construct a new highway maintenance depot with an operations building, salt shed and liquid calcium storage tanks, off Route 62 at the Route 3 intersection, within the curve of the Route 3 southbound ramp. Planning staff were copied on a letter to the Town Manager asking for input to an Early Environmental Design Coordination. Ms. Perry drew the Town Manager’s attention to a likely connection with the proposed sale of the existing depot site on the other side of the intersection, at Crosby Road, to the Davis Companies (owners of Bedford Business Park), and provided information on the zoning. The Selectmen discussed the new depot on December 22 and January 5, and have written a letter to send to MassDOT, who have agreed to present their proposal at Town Hall on January 15.

100 Plank Street – Greylock Investments has been continuing its due diligence for purchase of the property, and seems to be having difficulty with one of the conditions of the special permit, related to confirmation of parking arrangements involving the adjacent Village at Taylor Pond. Ms. Perry has endeavored to be helpful in interpreting the various legal documents involved but drew short of endorsing a distorted account of the facts. A minor change to the special permit may be proposed to make the site more self-sufficient in an effort to resolve matters.

Other:

Bill Moonan reported on certain HDC and Selectmen’s items that may be of interest to the Planning Board: a teardown application on School Way near the Common, and applications for liquor licenses for a sports bar at Bedford Marketplace and for Ken’s NY Deli (there is only one full license available, from the Bedford Plaza Hotel).

Workload Discussion:

The Board discussed the workload in relation to the short term staff shortage. It agreed on the following priorities:

- Development permitting
- Staff’s professional development and vacation needs

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- Coast Guard housing input, and related zoning work if needed
- TDM/TMA (slowly)
- MAPC grant project supervision/support if bid is successful

MINUTES

Approval of the December 9, 2014 minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:30PM.

Minutes submitted by Catherine Perry
Approved as amended February 4, 2015