

**BEDFORD PLANNING BOARD**  
**Zoom Remote Meeting**  
**Minutes**  
**April 11, 2023**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Christopher Gittins, Chair; Todd Crowley, Clerk; Steven Hagan, Amy Lloyd and Jacinda Barbehenn

**STAFF PRESENT:** Tony Fields, Planning Director; Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Pamela Brown, Cynthia First, Ali Khaledi, Mark Vaughan, Sue Baldauf, Larry Croes, Michelle Puntillo, Steven Andress, Johanna Schneider, Patricia Lennon, Don Kennedy, Paul Schuman, Zach Richards, Heather Wellington, Kristine Hung, Bob Holmes, Joseph White

Chair Gittins called the remote meeting to order at 7:03 pm, called the Roll of Board Members in attendance, cited the Remote Meeting Guidelines, and stated that Bedford TV is recording.

Chair Gittins summarized the agenda.

**DEVELOPMENT SESSION**

**Public Hearing: 229, 251A and 251F old Billerica Road – PRD Special Permit  
(continuation)**

Planning Director Fields reported he has received confirmation that the applicant wishes to continue without testimony to the next meeting.

**MOTION:** Member Hagan proposed, and Member Lloyd seconded, to continue the public hearing to the Board’s scheduled meeting on April 25.

**VOTE:** By roll call:

Jacinda Barbehenn	Aye
Amy Lloyd	Aye
Todd Crowley	Aye
Steven Hagan	Aye
Christopher Gittins	Aye

**BUSINESS SESSION**

**Planning Board Priorities and Goals for FY24**

The Chair reported that he received from Shawn Hanegan a template used for the Select Board's pair-wise ranking of goals. He will circulate this to the Planning Board members.

He asked for initial comments on the spreadsheet of past priority rankings with a few suggested updates that was included in Board packets.

Member Lloyd commented that pair-wise ranking would need a neutral moderator.

Member Lloyd asked if the new Specialized Energy Code covers solar panels and electric vehicle charging. Staff responded that there are some provisions for those elements in it. Member Lloyd stated that she would like to get the Code up and running as soon as possible and not pursue those items separately through zoning. Also, she would demote some of the residential zoning ideas, as the Board will have a lot of work on.

Member Gittins agreed.

Member Barbehenn suggested bringing a zoning proposal to the fall Special Town Meeting, such as 'fixes' to non-conforming lots. She commented that other items such as MBTA zoning are good. She suggested adding community engagement – spending the money that was obtained in the budget, while defining its use better.

Member Barbehenn referred to a parcel cleared for development at the corner of The Great Road and Walsh Road and commented that there may be potential for small-scale multifamily housing in such locations.

Member Crowley stated that he likes the idea of raising the height limit in the Industrial districts.

Director Fields suggests there is a need to consider height in relation to two things. The first is multifamily or mixed-use construction where 48 feet may be tight for a four-story building that is deep through with a pitched roof, although a mansard roof might be feasible. Staff is discussing dimensions with developers when opportunities occur. Second is heights for commercial development along Route 3, where the question was raised of whether we lose some competitiveness by having a lower height limit than neighboring towns.

Planning Board Minutes  
041123

Member Hagan noted that we have several high priority items that will consume us. Therefore he proposed that any pair-wise ranking should concentrate on the former medium and low priority items.

Member Lloyd asked about the process for pursuing adoption of the Specialized Energy Code. Chair Gittins responded that the language for the general bylaw is fixed, so the question is mainly who spearheads the proposal and conducts outreach. Member Lloyd said she sees it as a very high priority, more than building height. She noted that two-family dwellings and the Planning Board handbook can be taken off the list now.

Member Barbehenn stated she supports the Specialized Code, and asked if it could be put on an agenda to ensure we understand it. She suggested that since the Board may be able to take some items off its list by progressing this, it may make room for other ideas such as zoning initiatives.

Assistant Planner Perry commented that further zoning initiatives are not ready to go and would be difficult to make time for between now and the Special Town Meeting. She noted that the Administrative Assistant position is still vacant and therefore she is devoting much of her time to administrative matters such as the website and minutes, while endeavoring to continue the MBTA zoning analysis. She encouraged Board members to be thinking about creative zoning ideas in relation to the MBTA communities requirement, noting that the residential portions of The Great Road might be something to look at in that context.

Member Lloyd asked if the Select Board might take the lead on the Specialized Code, and the Planning Board simply support it. Chair Gittins undertook to discuss it with Paul Mortenson.

The Chair said he would like a volunteer to help organize a pair-wise ranking exercise for the next meeting, and for all members to pick one high priority item from the list and prepare a short summary of it with time estimates etc. The aim would be to plan the calendar and list for the coming year.

The Board looked at the Select Board's ranking system which begins with 'buckets' of items relating to different topics. It was agreed that the buckets may not be needed for the Planning Board due to its narrower domain and less of a financial orientation.

It was also agreed that several Planning Board work items are necessary in some way: the MBTA zoning is a requirement; a Comprehensive Plan is expected approximately every 10 years and can affect grant applications; and the Zoning Bylaw Reorganization is under contract with the consultants.

Member Crowley suggested putting estimates on those items as a start and choosing amongst others. Member Lloyd suggested that staff may be the best people to estimate time and effort needed. Staff said they would be happy to contribute.

Ms. Perry commented that for some items, the Board may need to ‘feel its way’, for example the review of the Zoning Bylaw may identify some rearrangements and corrections that can be implemented in the short term but also some more complicated potential improvements that could form a subsequent phase of work. However, the consultant contract will need to come to a clear end. Mr. Fields noted that we will need to provide for public and stakeholder review of the Zoning Bylaw changes, and similarly the MBTA zoning will need public discussion on the geographies when we are ready.

Member Barbehenn commented that a new Comprehensive Plan will provide an opportunity to engage the public in a broad way, and technology can expand the Board’s outreach.

Chair Gittins called for a leader/ advocate for each of the main topics and further explained the aspects he would like to see characterized: the targeted result, responsible parties, level of effort, meetings and staff time, tasks or stages involved, people involved etc. He agreed to circulate a list, and also copies of the Select Board’s matrix and his presentation on the Specialized Code as given to Mothers Out Front.

Topic advocates were agreed as follows:

- Amy Lloyd – Zoning Bylaw reorganization
- Jacinda Barbehenn – Preparation for Comprehensive Plan
  - Non-conforming Residence C District lots
- Steve Hagan – MBTA communities zoning
- Chris Gittins – Specialized energy code
- Todd Crowley – Building height in commercial districts

Member Lloyd agreed to assist the Chair with the logistics of a ranking system.

### **Committee Liaison Assignments**

Board members discussed trading some assignments. It was agreed that Member Crowley will take Healthy Bedford from Member Barbehenn, Member Gittins will take the Housing Trust from Member Barbehenn and Member Barbehenn will be the primary liaison for Middlesex 3.

Member Barbehenn asked if Member Hagan attends Hanscom Area Towns Selectmen (HATS) meetings. Member Hagan reported that it hasn’t met for a couple of years. Ms. Perry noted that HATS is intended to be a forum for the four towns that surround Hanscom. It is constituted to

review developments of regional significance, and sometimes when airfield matters have been quiet, it has been used as a discussion group on wider land use or local government topics. Member Hagan said he will attend if it is active.

### **Liaison Reports**

Member Lloyd reported that the MAGIC subregional meeting discussed sustainability and climate change. Some member towns have set carbon emissions goals for earlier dates than 2050, and some want to be part of the 10-town pilot of requiring new development to be fossil fuel-free. The Specialized Code was discussed; one recommendation is a delay period between its passing and implementation.

Member Barbehenn reported that the Housing Partnership met last week. It wants to create some rules for developers coming to it.

As reported earlier, Member Gittins presented to Mothers Out Front on the Specialized Energy Code and will share his slide deck. They were very engaged and will help with his committee's effort.

### **Staff Reports**

Director Fields reported that recruiting a new Administrative Assistant is proving harder than hoped, but efforts are being made to interview a new set of applicants.

Chair Gittins asked about the Page Hill subdivision. Director Fields responded that town counsel is assisting DPW staff but he hasn't discussed progress yet.

Assistant Planner Perry reported that she attended a meeting of key staff from land use related departments, on improving coordination. Ideas that received support were: meeting monthly; expanding access to the existing modules of Permit Eyes; seeking to accelerate its roll out to further departments/permit types; using Microsoft Teams to share information on projects and inquiries; and creating rules for the early stages of 40B proposals.

### **Other business- Board questions**

Member Barbehenn asked about the new system being used for packets (Sync). Director Fields explained that we exceeded the capacity of Dropbox and it is not functioning. Establishing more capacity would need a budget. He explored other free options and we are testing Sync. We can simply email most documents, but some plan files are too large. Member Barbehenn suggested that Civic Clerk plus People Speak, or possibly just Civic Clerk, could provide a solution if the Town buys it.

Member Barbehenn referred to the search process for a new Town Manager, mentioned at the previous evening's Select Board meeting. She asked about the process to nominate people for the search committee. Select Board member Paul Mortenson advised that the Volunteer Coordinating Committee is collecting names.

Member Barbehenn stated that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council position will be open as a result of the Town Manager leaving, and asked if "we can get a Planning Board person on it again", referring to ex-Planning Board member Sandra Hackman having filled the role for a period. Member Lloyd responded that she believes the position is normally filled by a Select Board member or Town Manager.

### **Minutes**

The Board reviewed draft minutes from March 20, 2023.

MOTION: Proposed by Member Hagan, seconded by Member Lloyd, to approve the minutes of March 20.

VOTE: by roll call:

Amy Lloyd	Aye
Todd Crowley	Aye
Steven Hagan	Aye
Christopher Gittins	Aye
Jacinda Barbehenn	Abstained due to not being present for the relevant meeting

The Board reviewed the minutes from March 27, 2023.

MOTION: Proposed by Member Hagan, seconded by Member Barbehenn, to approve the minutes of March 27.

VOTE: by roll call:

Amy Lloyd	Aye
Todd Crowley	Aye
Steven Hagan	Aye
Christopher Gittins	Aye

Jacinda Barbehenn Aye

### **Adjournment**

MOTION: Member Hagan moved, and Member Barbehenn seconded, to adjourn at 8:30 pm.

VOTE: by Roll Call:

Jacinda Barbehenn	Aye
Amy Lloyd	Aye
Todd Crowley	Aye
Steven Hagan	Aye
Christopher Gittins	Aye

Minutes prepared by Catherine Perry

Approved April 25, 2023

### **DOCUMENT LIST**

#### Agenda

Memo from Planning Director Fields to Planning Board, dated April 7, 2023 with respect to matters to be taken up at the April 11, 2023 Planning Board Meeting.

Spreadsheet of Planning Board Initiatives as of June 2022 with some updates marked.

Extract from Planning Board Annual Report, 2022: FY23 Projections

2022 Planning Board Members' Committee Assignments

Draft Minutes of Planning Board meeting on March 20, 2023

Draft Minutes of Planning Board meeting on March 27, 2023

Press Release dated March 29, 2023 from Ali DeMatteo, MMA Legislative Analyst, "Governor signs supplemental budget with pandemic-era extensions, key investments"

Planning Board Minutes  
041123

Article from *Wall Street Journal* dated March 27, 2023 by Nicole Friedman, “A Tale of Two Housing Markets: Prices Fall in the West While the East Booms”

Article from *Boston Globe* dated March 29, 2023 by Andrew Brinkler and Ryan Huddle, “Five charts that show where the housing market’s heading this spring”

Article from *Triangle Blog Blog* dated March 22, 2023 by Melody Kramer, “Jenny Schuetz on the IPCC report and the true climate impacts of urban growth”

Article from *Boston Globe* dated March 31, 2023 by Sonel Cutler and Tonya Alanez, “Pedestrian deaths are up sharply in Mass. Here are five ways to reduce them”

Article from *Planning Magazine* dated March 23, 2023 by Jennifer Fierman, Kristof Devastey and Lindsay Welsch, “Equitable Community Engagement Requires Learning, Self-Reflection and Transparency”