

SOUTH HADLEY PLANNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES OF JULY 18, 2016

As Approved August 15, 2016

Present: Jeff Squire, Chair; Mark Cavanaugh, Vice-Chair (arrived at 6:21 p.m.); Brad Hutchison, Member; Joan Rosner, Member; Melissa O'Brien, Member; and Richard Harris, Town Planner

Mr. Squire called the meeting into session at 6:01 p.m.

1. Discussion of the South Hadley Urban Renewal Plan

Mr. Squire commented that there had been some communication with the Redevelopment Authority regarding the draft plan proposals. The Planning Board and the Redevelopment Authority need to work close together and members of the Authority are present tonight to discuss the draft plan.

Frank DeToma, Chair of the Redevelopment Authority thanked the Planning Board for having time on the agenda for this discussion. He introduced the members of the Redevelopment Authority who were present and commented that the Authority members had reviewed the comments the Planning Board offered regarding the plan. He distributed a written response to those comments and then reviewed the response.

Mr. Squire stated that he had reviewed other redevelopment plans and those appeared to be more focused geographically than the draft plan being proposed. He questioned whether limited resources are being spread too thin.

Frank DeToma responded that the Authority members had looked at that and discussed that issue early in the process. The Plan's main focus is on Main and Bridge Streets – primarily along Main Street. He added that the plan spells out priorities which will focus the plan implementation efforts.

Ms. O'Brien inquired if the public has seen the actual draft plan.

(Mr. Cavanaugh arrived.)

Frank DeToma indicated that the plan was just being finalized and would be sent out to the Advisory Committee members this evening or in the morning. There have been presentations to various groups and meetings including Know Your Town and the South Hadley Falls Neighborhood Association.

Mr. Harris also commented that Mr. DeToma indicates in his written response that the plan will be available after the Advisory Committee "approves" the plan. However, he noted that he could not vote Wednesday night to approve the plan – there is not enough time to review

the plan as he has yet to receive the draft document. He added that he will provide it to the Planning Board members as soon as he receives the document.

Tony Judge, Treasurer of the Redevelopment Authority, stated that the Authority owes it to the Advisory Committee members to provide the plan to them first. And, through the Planning Director, the draft plan will be provided to the Planning Board.

Frank DeToma reviewed the Authority's efforts in meeting with other municipalities and organizations such as Holyoke Community College to develop some collaborative relationships.

Mr. Squire offered his experience regarding roundabouts as several have been put forth as possible projects in this plan. From his observations and experiences roundabouts limit access to abutting properties. Thus, in Amherst, Atkins Farm had to develop another road to accommodate their expansion.

Mr. Harris noted that discussions with several area Planning Directors indicate mixed experiences. In Amherst, the roundabouts precluded development of the Village Center originally proposed for South Amherst. The roundabout originally proposed for North Amherst is being discarded as they determined it would adversely impact pedestrian and bike safety. There are other places where the roundabouts work but generally they have been viewed as not conducive to Village Center developments.

Ms. O'Brien provided the Bike/Walk Committee's perspective that roundabouts in the places being suggested are not good for pedestrian or bicyclist safety. She suggested that the Committee would like to see protected intersections similar to what the Town is pursuing at Route 33/202 intersection.

Mr. Harris stated that there are differences of opinions on the safety and impacts of roundabouts. It would appear best to have the Plan identify the issues with the intersections and propose a comprehensive assessment and plan for resolution of the problems keeping Village Center development and bike/ped safety as the primary considerations.

Tony Judge commented that the issue of roundabouts and the intersection needs to be put behind us; it is not the focus of the plan.

There was discussion regarding mixed use development and the need to develop more apartments.

Frank DeToma discussed the Authority's plans to promote the plan including having a booth at next year's Western Mass Developer's Conference.

Ms. Rosner commented that there needs to be more coordination with Holyoke. Frank DeToma related a meeting that he, Town Administrator Mike Sullivan, and Planning Director Richard Harris had with the Holyoke Planning & Economic Development Director.

This coordination with Holyoke was the focus of that meeting and a follow up email discussion.

Frank DeToma noted that the administrative structure involving redevelopment involves several boards and different individuals. Mr. Harris commented that, as he had noted in earlier meetings with several members of the Authority, in several communities including Holyoke, the Planning Director serves as the Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority which assures an efficient and effective coordination with other municipal officials. Mr. Harris stated that he has previously, and continues, to offer to attend meetings of the Authority and to serve as a conduit with other members of the Administration.

Mr. Harris stated he intends to put discussion of the Redevelopment Plan on the Planning Board's August 15th agenda and hopes the Authority members can attend.

Brad Hutchison inquired as to the planned submittal to DHCD for review.

Frank DeToma stated that DHCD likes to do a "preliminary review" of the plan before it goes into the public hearing process.

Mr. Squire thanked the members of the Authority for coming to the meeting and the Board looks forward to further discussions with the Authority.

Given that the persons invited for the next item were scheduled for 7:00 p.m. and it is only 6:45 p.m., Mr. Squire suggested proceeding with other agenda items beginning with the minutes.

4. Minutes

a. June 27, 2016 Planning Board meeting minutes

Mr. Harris referenced the draft minutes which he distributed. The Board members reviewed the draft minutes.

Motion - Ms. O'Brien moved and Ms. Rosner seconded the motion to approve the June 27, 2016 Planning Board Meeting minutes as submitted. The Board voted **Five (5)** out of **Five (5)** members present in favor of the motion.

b. June 27, 2016 Planning Board Public Hearing minutes (57 School Street)

Mr. Harris referenced the draft minutes which he distributed. The Board members reviewed the draft minutes.

Motion - Ms. O'Brien moved and Ms. Rosner seconded the motion to approve the June 27, 2016 Planning Board Public Hearing (57 School Street) minutes as submitted. The Board voted **Five (5)** out of **Five (5)** members present in favor of the motion.

5. Bills and Correspondence

Mr. Harris noted that he previously distributed a list of correspondence and referred to a list of Additional Correspondence. He also noted that there are no bills ready to be paid.

6. Development Update and Planner's Report

Mr. Harris reported on the following developments and activities:

a. Development Report

- One Canal Street – A revised preliminary schematic design has been submitted for departmental discussions. He noted that he has held another preliminary joint meeting with the various departments and the applicant. Generally, the concerns of the departments voiced at the previous meeting have been addressed. However, there is an issue regarding two utility poles owned by Verizon and used by SHELD which the developer will need to address. An application is anticipated to be submitted in August.
- Newton Street Duplex – Gerry Coderre is working to develop an additional duplex on his property at 383 Newton Street. He has prepared a preliminary plan which appears to meet all the Zoning Bylaw requirements. The property is zoned Business A which allows the proposed use by Special Permit. There is an existing building located thereon which currently has four apartments located within it. This duplex will be an additional two units in a detached building. This application is also anticipated to be submitted in August or late July for a September public hearing.
- Single-family Conversion on Brockway Lane – Mr. Harris and the Building Commissioner have had a preliminary meeting with the owners of a house who wish to convert a portion of their residence into an apartment. Apparently, this was anticipated when the house was constructed over 2 decades ago, but it did not occur. They are not certain if they will proceed; however, since the property is zoned Agricultural a conversion Special Permit may be possible.
- The Castle – Mr. Harris was notified that an application for a Flag Lot Special Permit is being prepared for submittal involving this property.
- Alvord Street Improvement Project – Mr. Harris was informed by the DPW Superintendent that the expansion of Alvord Street by 2 feet will require removal of some trees. Since Alvord Street is a designated scenic road, this action will require a public hearing and approval by the Planning Board in addition to the Tree Warden. This matter may be on the August 15th agenda.
- Mountainbrook Street Acceptances (no change)
- Rivercrest Condominiums (no change)
- Ethan Circle – Mr. Harris stated he was waiting for the developer to submit the required materials. A pdf of the “status as-built” plans was received shortly before tonight’s meeting. Mr. Harris suggested that the Board consider taking action to allow for a Release of the Covenant Agreement – subject to various conditions – under “Other Business” since he could not have anticipated receiving the email and the Board will not meet again for 4 weeks. If the required materials are submitted in a timely manner, this matter may be on the July 18th agenda.
- Orchard’s Golf Course and Club House. As mentioned at a previous meeting, the Town has been approached by the new operator of the course regarding the possibility of “non-seasonal” use of the Club House on a regular basis. However, no further discussion with the new operator has taken place. Annafield Estates (no change).
- Annafield Estates (no change)
- Western Mass Yacht Club (no change – no application has been received)

- Zoning for small domesticated pets – pot belly pigs, miniature goats, etc. – (no change)

b. Other Projects

- Urban Renewal Plan and Redevelopment Authority. (This matter was discussed under agenda item #1 above)
- Housing Studies. (This item is to be discussed under agenda item #3)
- Complete Streets Program Participation. The Town’s Complete Streets Policy has been approved by the State with a score of 100 points out of a possible 100 points (actually we received 101 due to bonus points but they don’t score above 100.) DPW Director Jim Reidy drafted the policy. Mr. Harris is working on submittal of the Town’s request for Complete Streets funding to develop the Town’s Prioritization Plan.
- MassWorks 2016 Application. Mr. Harris is working on filing the 2016 MassWorks Grant application which will, again, focus on improvements in the Falls supporting the Smart Growth District and Redevelopment Plan
- Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting Program. Mr. Harris stated he is working on the application and anticipates submitting the application to the State for approval shortly.
- Participating in the Regional Valley Bike Share planning process with the Town Administrator
- Participating with the Bike/Ped planning process.
- Mount Holyoke College Intern Opportunity
- Permitting Guide.
- General Code.
- Health Impact Assessment. PVPC staff are scheduled to meet with the Board on August 15th on this project.

c. Workshops/Training Opportunities

Mr. Harris stated he is planning to attend the following:

- “The “2016 Moving Together Conference - MassDOT’s Annual Statewide Healthy Transportation Conference” to be held September 29, 2016
- “2016 Southern New England American Planning Association Chapter Conference” scheduled for October 20-21, 2016.

Mr. Squire noted that the attendees for agenda item #2 are present so the Board resumed the agenda with Agenda Item #2.

2. Discussion of Design Review Bylaws in other communities

Mr. Squire provided some background on the Planning Board and Town’s interest and efforts regarding design review. He noted that the Town has a 40R district and the Board has adopted design guidelines for the district.

At Mr. Hutchison’s request, two professionals who have or did serve on design review bodies in Amherst and Northampton were present to discuss their experiences in those two communities.

- Jonathan Salvon served with the Amherst Design Review Board until about a week ago. Amherst's select board is enforcing term limits a little more stringently and just released two design professionals from the board whose terms were up.
- Aelan Tierney serves on the Northampton Central Business District Architecture Committee which administers Design Review provisions in the district.

Jonathan Salvon briefly reviewed the Amherst Design Review Board noting its scope and that it is advisory to permitting bodies.

Aelan Tierney described the Northampton CBDAC noting that Design Guidelines were established in 1999. The guidelines and the Committee recognizes that there are anomaly buildings which are out of character of the area and do not serve as a “benchmark” for applying the guidelines. The process in Northampton begins with a building permit where the Building Department flags an application as being subject to the Design Review. It can hold up a project. But, the City has a Technical Review process to assist applicants.

Ms. O’Brien inquired if the applicants/developers come in for the Technical Review. Aelan Tierney responded that the developers do participate in this Technical Review.

In response to a question from Mr. Squire as to the “advisory” nature of the Amherst process, Jonathan Salvon explained the process. He noted that how the process works depends on the project.

There was discussion as to how to best apply Design Review – townwide or by specific use districts. Aelan Tierney stated that Northampton’s has been expanded from its original scope but it is not townwide. However, she suggested that it may make sense to have a Design Review apply townwide – it depends on what the community wants to achieve.

Given the educational exemption regarding zoning regulations, there was discussion as to whether the bylaws should be Zoning or General Bylaws.

Mr. Squire asked if the Design Review had an impact on development. He noted South Hadley is trying to attract developers.

There was discussion as to whether Design Review helps or hinders development. It was suggested that the impact depends on the guidelines and the market.

Mr. Cavanaugh mentioned that he couldn’t see how Design Review would be a “boom” to development. It could be another layer of regulation.

Jonathan Salvon noted that 95% of the projects reviewed in Amherst are for small “mom/pop” operations. The Design Review Board serves as a resource for these businesses – provides “free” technical assistance in a way.

Aelan Tierney commented that it depends on the developer. She illustrated two different circumstances and responses by developers.

Mr. Squire commented that he is not overly concerned about the Design Guidelines impacting development. The intent is to have flexible guidelines and not prescriptive standards.

There was further discussion about crafting Design Guidelines which provide flexibility and address anomalies but don't require rigid or uniform designs.

Mr. Hutchison inquired if the two boards were appointed or elected or a mix.

Aelan Tierney and Jonathan Salvon indicated that their boards are appointed. They described the mix of the boards between professionals, residents, and business interests.

Shawn Rairigh, Senior Planner with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission asked how the guidelines get modified. Aelan Tierney noted that they are guidelines and not standards and the guidelines are modified the same way they are adopted.

Linda Young, 15 Westbrook Road inquired as to who wrote the guidelines. Aelan Tierney and Jonathan Salvon indicated that it was a committee similar to the make up of the Design Review body. They also suggested that there was likely a lot of Town staff input into the Guidelines.

Mr. Squire asked if there were any aspects of the guidelines which were frustrating to the members, things that they would want to change. Aelan Tierney stated that there are no requirements as to what needs to be included with a submittal for review.

Mr. Hutchison queried if there was difficulty finding qualified members. Aelan Tierney said they have not had a problem – there is no term limit on Northampton members. Jonathan Salvon responded that the term limits have been irregularly enforced until now and they have had trouble, at times, with a quorum. While residency is required of most members, the “business owners” need not reside in the community.

Ms. O'Brien inquired as to any “glaring omissions” in the Design Guidelines and other questions were raised as to the scope of the Design Guidelines and their applicability.

Aelan Tierney and Jonathan Salvon described the approach their respective guidelines take. They address the “typical” issues of massing, rhythm, etc. They do not prescribe what has to be built and the Design Review bodies do not function as a “design police”. The focus is on compatibility with the character of the area.

Mr. Hutchison inquired as to who appoints the members. Jonathan Salvon stated that the Selectboard appoints members in Amherst. Aelan Tierney stated that the Mayor appoints members with the Northampton City Council confirming the appointments.

Ms. O'Brien asked about circumstances where the applicant does not agree with the Design Review body decision. There was discussion about that rarely occurs. Permitting Authorities typically incorporate the recommendations/decisions.

Mr. Squire thanked Aelan Tierney and Jonathan Salvon for taking the time to share their experience with the Board.

3. Discussion of the Housing Production Plan and Multifamily Study with PVPC staff.

Shawn Rairigh, Senior Planner with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission was in attendance to discuss the two studies, primarily the Housing Production Plan. He stated he did not have a draft document for the Board yet, but he will have it by the end of July for the August 15th meeting. He reviewed that the PVPC has been contracted to do a multifamily development study as which would include identifying how multifamily should be permitted, where it should occur, and development of Design Guidelines.

Shawn Rairigh noted that his research on Design Guidelines for multifamily development generally found guidelines from the west – not many in the northeast other than for 40R districts. He inquired if the Town wants to allow multifamily by right or Special Permit. Mr. Harris noted that the 40R District allows the development by right but in other parts of the community it will likely need to be by Special Permit.

Shawn Rairigh noted the areas of more concentrated development – such as the Willimansett Street area, the Falls, Route 33/Route 116 area, and the Village Commons area – may be suitable for 40R type development. He asked about the Alvord Street corridor.

There was discussion noting that the Alvord Street corridor has sewer and quite a bit of development but still has a lot of open space. Mr. Harris noted that the Town made an implicit if not explicit decision decades ago that the Alvord Street area is suitable for development when it installed the Interceptor Sewer. This allowed Riverboat Village and other developments to take place. The question is “how” the development is to occur.

Flexible development and similar development techniques were discussed.

Linda Young, 15 Westbrook Road inquired as to how many additional affordable housing units are needed and how many units are allowed under the 40R District. Shawn Rairigh and Mr. Harris provided responses indicating that approximately 300 units are needed and, the 40R bonus units are approximately 320 – however, not all will be built.

Linda Young, 15 Westbrook Road stated that the entire focus of this discussion is on Alvord Street – trying to put dense multifamily development in that area.

Mr. Harris responded that Linda Young is incorrect. The primary focus for the denser development is in the areas Shawn Rairigh had noted earlier – Willimansett street, Village Commons, etc. However, the Alvord Street area is going to be developed.

Ms. O'Brien and other Board members stated that the discussion of Alvord Street is just trying to address the "elephant in the room". We are merely been trying to look at other options of how to maintain the Alvord Street corridor.

Linda Young, 15 Westbrook Road suggested that the Community Preservation Act adoption in November will allow the preservation of the land without development. Various persons questioned how does the corridor view get protected without acquisition – CPA may not pass, Town Meeting may not allow the money to go for that purpose, owners may not wish to sell, etc.

There was discussion as to how design guidelines for multifamily should be crafted – different corridors (particularly for the Alvord Street area), address typology, building materials, roof types, etc. Regarding the Alvord Street corridor, it was suggested that the building style isn't as critical as the corridor view – setbacks, effective screening, etc.

Shawn Rairigh suggested including some various architectural styles and building types in the Design Guidelines.

In terms of allowed uses, there was some discussion that some associated business uses might fit into a larger development – reducing the need for more vehicle travel.

Mr. Harris noted that there will be a need for some future meetings including the August 15th meeting for review of the Housing Production Plan.

7. Other New Business (topics which the Chair could not reasonably expect to be discussed/considered as of the date of this notice)

Ms. Rosner stated that she will not be able to attend the August 15th meeting.

Mr. Harris stated that he received a pdf of the "status" As-Built Plan for Ethan Circle as he noted earlier. Since there is a potential to get the first house under construction soon but the Covenant Agreement does not allow that and the Board does not meet again until August 15th, he suggested that the Board authorize Release of the Covenant Agreement subject to the following:

- 1) Submittal of the materials by the developer required by the Subdivision Regulations and the Board's decision on the Definitive Plan,
- 2) Approval of the "status" As Built Plan by the various departments required to review the plan,
- 3) The Financial Guarantee is set in an amount no less than 150% of the combined costs for completing the infrastructure using the figures provided by DPW, Fire District #2 Water, and SHELD,
- 4) Receipt of an acceptable Financial Guarantee instrument.

Motion - Ms. Rosner moved and Mr. Cavanaugh seconded the motion to authorize the Release of the Covenant Agreement subject to the following conditions being met:

- 1). Submittal of the materials by the developer required by the Subdivision Regulations and the Board’s decision on the Definitive Plan,
- 2). Approval of the “status” As Built Plan by the various departments required to review the plan,
- 3). The Financial Guarantee is set in an amount no less than 150% of the combined costs for completing the infrastructure using the figures provided by DPW, Fire District #2 Water, and SHELDT,
- 4). Receipt of an acceptable Financial Guarantee instrument.

The Board voted **Five (5)** out of **Five (5)** members present in favor of the motion.

8. Adjournment

Motion – Ms. O’Brien moved and Ms. Rosner seconded the motion to adjourn. The Board voted **Five (5)** out of **Five (5)** members present in favor of the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

AS APPROVED

Richard Harris, Recorder

Attachment A

List of Documents Reviewed in July 18, 2016 Planning Board Meeting

Document

Planning Board Meeting Agenda and
Background Information
Zoning Bylaw
South Hadley Master Plan
Hand out on Redevelopment Plan

Record Location

Planning Board Agenda Packet Files

Planning Board Files
Planning Board Files
Planning Board Files