

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, March 18, 2009 – 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: Jonathan O’Keeffe, Acting Chair; Bruce Carson, Denise Barberet, Stephen Schreiber, Eduardo Suarez (7:18 PM)

ABSENT: Ludmilla Pavlova-Gillham; Jonathan Shefftz, Susan Pynchon, Richard Howland

STAFF: Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director; Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner; Sue Krzanowski, Administrative Assistant

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, Mr. O’Keeffe, Clerk, served as Acting Chair and once a quorum was present opened the meeting at 7:20 PM.

II. PUBLIC HEARING – ZONING AMENDMENT

A-06-09, Municipal Parking District (MPD) Expansion (Planning Board)

Mr. O’Keeffe read the preamble and opened the public hearing for this request:

To amend the official Zoning Map to increase the boundary of the Municipal Parking District to include the entirety of the town center General Business (B-G) District and abutting Limited Business (B-L) districts north of Kellogg Avenue and Cowles Lane, along with the following properties in the General Residence (R-G) District:

- All of those properties north of Cowles Lane that are bounded on the west by North Prospect Street and on the north by Hallock Street
- On the north side of Kellogg Avenue, the following properties: Assessors Map 11C, Parcels 291, 292, 293, and 294
- All of the properties comprising Kendrick Park
- The northern portions of Assessors Map 11C, Parcels 265 and 322, and Map 11D, Parcel 42.

Mr. O’Keeffe gave a brief overview of the proposed amendment. Parking is required for all residential and commercial uses, except in the downtown area’s Municipal Parking District (MPD), where selected businesses and residences are not required to provide parking. The proposed amendment would extend the MPD with the intent to facilitate density.

Mr. Carson reported that the Zoning Subcommittee voted to recommend that the Planning Board recommend that Town Meeting adopt this amendment.

Mr. Tucker added that the amendment would only affect parking requirements. All other use and dimensional regulations would still need to be met. At the 2008 Annual Town Meeting, citizens had asked to extend the Municipal Parking District to the whole downtown. This proposal attempts to do that, he said.

Mr. Suarez expressed concern that a residential area east of North Prospect Street and south of Hallock Street was being included since, he said, there are mostly homes in that area.

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Mr. Tucker explained why the area had been included, noting that it made geographic sense. The current MPD includes densely-settled residential areas and, except for two single family dwellings, all of the residential properties in the area in question are two-family or more, he noted.

Mr. Suarez said that it would help if it was made clear that the properties on the west side of North Prospect Street are not included in the proposed rezoning.

Mr. Tucker noted that the affected area is depicted in the maps. It could be included in the Planning Board's Report to Town Meeting, he said, and noted that it would only apply to new uses.

Ms. Barberet said that she had no concerns extending the Municipal Parking District to the General Business and Limited Business zoning districts, but she didn't think it should be extended into the General Residence zone, particularly the Hallock/North Prospect Street area. North Prospect is a very narrow residential street, she said, and greater density would not be appropriate there. She was concerned that was already insufficient parking in this area, and the proposed rezoning could make things worse.

Mr. Suarez said that while he would rather not see more parking, he does support greater development density in and around the downtown.

Mr. Tucker responded that other regulations would still apply. This would simply allow for greater flexibility in the way that parking is dealt with.

Mark Connelly, Cohen Dorm, Amherst College, asked for clarification about parking requirements, the decision-making process, permitting, and levels of flexibility.

Mr. O'Keeffe responded that the same parking regulations currently apply everywhere. This may result in more parking than is necessary, he said, and having more flexibility could allow greater density of buildings (rather than surface parking) in those areas deemed appropriate.

Mr. Tucker noted that the appropriate number of parking spaces could be negotiated during the permit process. The current parking regulations are not flexible enough to encourage a densely developed downtown, he said.

Ms. Barberet said that she knew a number of people who were interested in coming to the public hearing, but had not been able to because tonight was Candidate's Night. She suggested that the Board continue the hearing so that more people could participate.

Ms. Barberet MOVED: to continue the public hearing to April 1.

Mr. Tucker told the Board that there are already three public hearings scheduled for the April 1st meeting. The next meeting would be April 29th and the Planning Board Report to Town Meeting on this article could end up being late because it could not be completed until the hearing is closed.

There was no second to the Motion.

Mr. Schreiber MOVED: to close the public hearing. Mr. Suarez seconded.

Mr. Suarez said that anyone who was interested and had concerns about the rezoning could have submitted a letter to the Board expressing their opinion. They also can talk to their Town Meeting representative, he said.

Mr. Tucker noted that the Planning Department had received one phone call inquiring about this proposal. The caller seemed satisfied with the information they received, he said.

The Motion passed 4-1-0 (Barberet opposed).

Mr. Schreiber MOVED: that the Board recommend that Town Meeting adopt A-06-09, Municipal Parking District (MPD) Expansion. Mr. Carson seconded, and the Motion passed 4-1-0 (Barberet opposed).

I. MINUTES – Meeting of March 4, 2009

Ms. Barberet said that she had already given Ms. Krzanowski some minor punctuation and formatting corrections. She also noted that the date on page 2 referring to the master plan map should be “2007”, not 2008.

Mr. Carson MOVED: to approve the Minutes of March 4, 2009 as corrected. Mr. Schreiber seconded, and the Motion passed 4-0-1 (Suarez abstained).

III. DRAFT MASTER PLAN

Mr. Tucker noted that the review is proceeding rapidly. Once the Master Plan Subcommittee completed its review of the text, it would be working on a land use map, and again, ask for input from the full Board.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Mullin Rule – Discussion

Mr. Tucker told the Board that the Conservation Commission wants to be included in this proposed home rule act adoption; the Board of Health does not. Staff will talk to the Historical Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals, he said. Mr. Tucker said that all of the potentially affected committees will be included in the warrant article language submitted the following Monday because, while it would be possible to move a revised article without them, they could not be added after the warrant has been approved.

B. Other – None

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Planning Board Membership List – Will be corrected and a new list distributed.

- B. **Other** – Mr. Suarez asked if there would be an issue if five or more members of the Board, which would constitute a quorum, were to attend activities sponsored by the Agricultural Commission. Mr. Tucker answered that since this would be a social event, there would not be a problem with the Open Meeting Law. Ms. Brestrup added a caution that members should avoid any deliberation on Planning Board matters.

VI. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS

Mr. O’Keeffe endorsed the following:

ANR2009-00006, Old Belchertown Road/Palley Village Place – Gordon Palley

VII. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS

The Board decided not to review the following:

ZBA2009-00029 - 199 Belchertown Road - John W. Kinchla

ZBA2009-00030 - 170 Pine Street - Jamie Bidwell

ZBA2009-00031 - 35 Potwine Lane - Integrity Development

VIII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS

Ms. Brestrup noted that a Site Plan Review Application had been filed for a request to convert a one-family house into a two-family and use an adjacent lot for additional parking at 197 College Street. The public hearing has been scheduled for April 1, 2009. The Board held a site visit today, she noted, and it will be reported at the public hearing.

IX. PLANNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. **Zoning** – Mr. O’Keeffe said that the Main/Dickinson/High rezoning proposal had been reviewed in detail by the Subcommittee. The proposed rezoning map has not changed since the last meeting, he noted. The Subcommittee had also reviewed B-G and B-VC frontage requirements and had discussed performance standards to replace the Phased Growth Bylaw.
- B. **Master Plan** – Mr. O’Keeffe said that Chapters 3 and 4 have been pretty much ironed out. Mr. Tucker noted that revisions to Chapters 5, 6, 7 and possibly 8 will be reviewed at the next meeting.

X. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. **Pioneer Valley Planning Commission** – No Report
- B. **Community Preservation Act Committee** – Ms. Barberet said that the Committee will recommend that Town Meeting appropriate funds for all of the requests. The state match for local CPA funding has been reduced to 29%, she said.
- C. **Agricultural Commission** – No Report

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XI. REPORT OF THE CHAIR – Mr. O’Keeffe noted that the Board had experienced difficulty in reaching a quorum recently. He stressed the importance of Planning Board members attending meetings. It impairs the ability to accomplish things, particularly with Town Meeting coming up, he said.

Ms. Brestrup asked which members present expected to be at the April 1 meeting. Eduardo Suarez, Bruce Carson, Jonathan O’Keeffe, Denise Barberet, and Stephen Schreiber said they would attend.

Mr. O’Keeffe noted that the Board will not meet on April 15 because it is the end of Passover, a religious holiday. The Board will meet April 29 instead. The May meeting schedule will be discussed at the next meeting.

XII. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – Mr. Tucker announced that April 6th is Tartan Day.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Barberet MOVED: to adjourn this meeting at 8:23 PM. Mr. Carson seconded, and the Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted:

Sue Krzanowski, Administrative Assistant

Approved:

Jonathan O’Keeffe, Acting Chair

DATE: _____