

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, May 23, 2012 – 7:00 PM
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: David Webber, Chair; Jonathan O’Keeffe, Rob Crowner, Connie Kruger, Sandra Anderson, Stephen Schreiber (8:00 PM), Richard Roznoy and Kathleen Ford

ABSENT: Bruce Carson

STAFF: Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner

Mr. Webber opened the meeting at 7:05 PM. He announced that the meeting was being recorded by town staff.

I. MINUTES May 2, 2012

Ms. Anderson MOVED to approve the Minutes of May 2, 2012. Mr. Roznoy seconded and the vote was 7-0.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

SUB 2012-01, 149 & 125 Sunderland Road, 92, 96, 116 & 134 Montague Road and 55 & 113 Cows Road – W.D. Cows, Inc.

Request for approval for a 5 lot Preliminary Subdivision Plan (Map 5A-29; Map 5A-139; Map 5A-110; Map 5A-42, COM & RN zoning districts)

Mr. Webber read the preamble and opened the public hearing. He read a letter from Cinda Jones, dated May 16, 2012, requesting withdrawal without prejudice of the Preliminary Subdivision applications SUB2012-01, SUB2012-02 and SUB 2012-03. Ms. Jones reiterated her request to withdraw the application without prejudice.

Mr. O’Keeffe MOVED to close the public hearing. Mr. Crowner seconded and the vote was 7-0.

Mr. Roznoy MOVED to approve the withdrawal without prejudice. Ms. Ford seconded and the vote was 7-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Signing of Decision – SPR2012-00004/M12888 – 96 Northampton Road – Amherst College – The Board signed the decision.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Lot Release Request – Lots 2, 45, 46, 52 and 65 – Tofino Associates – Amherst Hills Subdivision – SUB89-13

Ms. Brestrup explained that Tofino Associates had asked for release of five lots in the Amherst Hills Subdivision. Traditionally when the number of lots released reaches 50% the Planning Board has asked that a cost estimate be developed for finishing the infrastructure of the subdivision. In this case, with these five lots, the number of lots released will be over 50%. Planning staff has asked the Town Engineer to develop a cost estimate for finishing the infrastructure. The estimate should be available by the next Planning Board meeting on June 6th. At that time the Board can determine if it wishes to require that money be put in escrow to cover the cost of completing the infrastructure and determine whether it will release the lots.

Ms. Kruger stated that while she understands the reason for requesting that money be put in escrow, in this case there is a large number of lots remaining and the lots have a high value. She is open to discussing whether holding a certain number of lots or

requiring an escrow amount is preferable.

Mr. Tucker explained that for all subdivisions it has been the town's practice to find out the value of completing the infrastructure when we reach the point of 50% of the lots having been released. Then the Planning Board can vote on whether to ask for a bond or escrow amount.

Mr. Webber recommended that the discussion be tabled until the next Planning Board meeting.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

SUB 2012-02, Sunderland Road - W.D. Cows, Inc.

Request approval for a 3 lot Preliminary Subdivision Plan (Map 5A-1, COM, FPC & RN zoning districts)

Mr. Webber read the preamble and opened the public hearing. Ms. Jones requested withdrawal of the application without prejudice.

Mr. O'Keefe MOVED to close the public hearing. Ms. Anderson seconded and the vote was 7-0.

Mr. Roznoy MOVED to approve the withdrawal without prejudice. Ms. Ford seconded and the vote was 7-0.

V. NEW BUSINESS

B. Letter from Steven Spiegel re: ZBA FY2012-00022 – GP Amherst, LLC

Mr. Webber read the letter from Steven Spiegel, dated May 4, 2012, regarding a property on Lincoln Avenue.

Ms. Brestrup explained that this letter was written in regard to a Zoning Board of Appeals application. An individual wishes to purchase a property on Lincoln Avenue. The property has a Special Permit allowing it to be a two-family house, but there is a condition that requires that the house be owner-occupied. The prospective new owner wants to have that condition removed so that he can rent out both units. The Planning Board may wish to offer comments or recommendations to the ZBA on this matter.

There was discussion about the location of the property. There were conflicting comments about whether this is a neighborhood in transition or whether it is a stable neighborhood.

Page Wilder of Fearing Street noted that the new owner of this property owns another property in town which has had 8 to 10 police violations during the month of May.

Ms. Anderson observed that this house was created as a two-family dwelling not that long ago and at that time an agreement was made that it would be owner-occupied. Unless there is a compelling reason to change this requirement she would recommend that the condition remain, in order to keep the neighborhood from deteriorating.

Mr. O'Keefe agreed with Ms. Anderson's sentiment but was reluctant to make a formal recommendation. This is a ZBA case, he said.

Ms. Kruger noted that the Planning Board has made a commitment to talk about housing issues and land use issues in town. This case is germane to these topics. However, the Planning Board does not have enough information about this case to make a recommendation to the ZBA at this time.

Board members reached a consensus that they would not make a recommendation to the ZBA at this time. Mr. Roznoy expressed confidence that the ZBA would take the appropriate action.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

SUB 2012-03, 24, 28, 30, 32 & 56 Cows Road – W.D. Cows, Inc.

Request approval for a 4 lot Preliminary Subdivision Plan (Map 2C-16; Map 5A-130; Map 5A-44; Map 5A-45; Map 5A-46; Map 5A-108, COM zoning district)

Mr. Webber read the preamble and opened the public hearing. Ms. Jones requested withdrawal of the application without prejudice. She expressed appreciation for the staff and Board members' time that was required to deal with the Preliminary Subdivision applications.

Ms. Kruger explained, for the benefit of the public, that there had been a proposed zoning change at Town Meeting that would have changed the zoning of the land that was the subject of the three Preliminary Subdivision Plan applications. The applications were filed prior to the vote on the proposed zoning change. It is typical for landowners to file subdivision plans before a proposed zoning change to protect their property rights under the "old zoning". This protection lasts for a period of eight years, providing that a Definitive Subdivision Plan is filed within a specified period of time and eventually approved. In this case the proposed zoning change did not pass at Town Meeting. Therefore the applicant wishes to withdraw the applications. Going forward with the applications would have required significant engineering costs and time on the part of the applicant as well as time on the part of the Board.

Valerie Cooley of Precinct 1 asked what information would have been available on these applications if citizens had wished to come and review it. Ms. Brestrup explained that there were plans available for review in the Planning Department office, but no other paperwork except one Development Application Report. Ms. Brestrup also explained one Report had been prepared by staff for one of the Preliminary Subdivision Plans, prior to the receipt of Ms. Jones letter requesting withdrawal of the applications. Normally a Development Application Report would have been written for each of the three applications. Development Application Reports and plans are available for the public to come and review in Town Hall. Citizens can also request information and have the information emailed to them by Planning Department staff, if the information is available in electronic format.

Mr. Tucker explained that a Preliminary Subdivision Plan had been filed, but a Definitive Subdivision Plan would need to be filed within seven months of the Preliminary in order to freeze the zoning. He further noted that state law does not require the holding of a public hearing for Preliminary Subdivision Plan applications. However Amherst has been in the practice of holding a public hearing when it receives a Preliminary Subdivision Plan application.

Mr. O'Keefe MOVED to close the public hearing. Ms. Kruger seconded and the vote was 7-0.

Mr. Roznoy MOVED to approve the withdrawal without prejudice. Ms. Ford seconded and the vote was 7-0.

Ms. Jones thanked the Board.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

B. SPR2012-00004/M12888 – 96 Northampton Road – Amherst College
Review of Screening and Lighting Plan in accordance with Condition #1 of decision.

Tom Hartman of Coldham and Hartman presented the screening and lighting plan. Mr. Webber observed that it appears to comply with the conditions of the permit.

Mr. Hartman explained that he had presented various options for lighting and screening to his client, Amherst College. The client had chosen the option depicted on the plan for reasons having to do with complexity, cost and effectiveness.

Mr. Hartman explained that the existing floodlight will be replaced with a new fixture and there will be a new floodlight added at the corner of the garage to illuminate the pathway. There are also existing lights on the building. Mr. Hartman submitted catalog cuts on the proposed lights, including a shield for the floodlights. He stated that there would be rows of Hemlocks, about 20 feet long, to screen two sides of the parking area.

There was discussion about whether the new lights would be sufficiently shielded and whether they would be dark-sky compliant. After reviewing the catalog cuts and discussing this topic with Mr. Hartman, the Board asked staff to include reference in the letter of approval that these lights should be installed with shields. Mr. Webber asked that in the future submittals for lighting contain the information that the lights and shields are dark-sky compliant.

Ms. Kruger MOVED to accept the Screening and Lighting Plan for 96 Northampton Road. Mr. O’Keeffe seconded and the vote was 7-0.

C. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting

Mr. Roznoy noted that he had received from Ms. Kruger a list of books that would be of interest to planners. He passed around the list, published by the APA (American Planning Association). Ms. Kruger observed that a recent edition of *Planning* magazine had focused on issues related to transportation. Mr. Tucker noted that the Planning Department has a library, including *Planning* magazine and other magazines and books about planning, and Planning Board members are welcome to come in and read the publications in the library.

III. TOWN MEETING

A. Debriefing the 2012 Annual Town Meeting

Mr. Webber began the discussion by noting that the Planning Board had presented three articles to Town Meeting – two separate rezoning articles for Atkins Corners and North Amherst Village Centers and an article having to do with residential parking. The votes were close to the 2/3 needed to pass on the rezoning articles, but the rezoning articles did not pass, so the existing zoning remains in place at Atkins Corners and North Amherst Village Center. The residential parking article did pass.

Mr. O’Keeffe expressed appreciation for the whole Board’s participation in the discussion about all three articles at Town Meeting. The process felt different this time with the whole Board, and not just the Zoning Subcommittee members, participating. Mr. Webber thanked the Zoning Subcommittee for its work. He invited the Board to discuss “where we go from here”.

Mr. Tucker noted that, in the last few years, following each Town Meeting the Zoning Subcommittee has held a Zoning Forum to obtain input from the public about zoning issues. The ZSC deliberates about the various issues and reports to the Planning Board. The Planning Board then decides how to proceed. That has been the Board’s zoning amendment process for the last few years.

Ms. Kruger expressed her concern that the rezoning proposals for the village centers were too big for the current process. The Planning Board needs to take ownership of these zoning articles, she said.

Mr. Roznoy observed that in the past the Zoning Forums have become a retrospective

on what happened at the previous Town Meeting rather than providing a way to move forward. The ZSC then has to figure out its priorities for moving forward after the Forum.

Mr. O'Keefe stated that the Zoning Forum is an important part of the process, but he would like the Planning Board to drive the process of zoning amendments. He would like the Planning Board to give the ZSC a direction rather than having zoning articles be initiated by the ZSC.

There was discussion about how the Zoning Forum is moderated. Ms. Ford suggested that there be more formality and control, and perhaps a limitation on the amount of time that individuals can spend talking about the previous Town Meeting.

Mr. Crowner noted that last fall the Planning Board met right before Town Meeting sessions to discuss potential amendments or arguments that might come up. This prepared the Board to react to amendments that might be made. In the spring the Board did not hold such meetings. He suggested that having the Board hold a meeting right before Town Meeting sessions would be a good thing to do again.

Ms. Kruger would like to do more work on the Village Center rezoning articles and not try to rush them for the fall Town Meeting. Regarding Atkins Corners, it would have been helpful if the Board had known about the amendments proposed by Town Meeting members in advance. It might make sense to allow time for completion of the roadway improvements and have it up and running before the Atkins Corners zoning amendment is reconsidered. Town Meeting did not have enough information about how the roadway will function and how pedestrian safety issues will work. The Planning Board members need to be able to talk about these issues in a more informed way.

Ms. Kruger noted that there was some misinformation about Applewood among Town Meeting members. She and others thought that the deeding away of the 5 or 6 acres to the town had penalized Applewood's expansion plans. However, she now believes that a number of Applewood residents had pooled their money to purchase the land in order to keep Applewood from getting bigger. Ms. Kruger would like to discuss whether Applewood should be included in the rezoning proposal at this time. She suggested that there be more outreach to Applewood residents and that a meeting be held at Applewood for the residents. Ms. Kruger felt that she and other Town Meeting members did not understand Applewood's position well enough.

Ms. Brestrup made the following observations about Applewood. Planning staff is often not at liberty to talk in specifics about concepts that landowners have in mind. Many landowners come in to talk about possibilities with Planning staff, but until the landowner submits an application the information is not considered to be public. Applewood is in that position. They haven't presented an application for expansion. But they have come in to discuss various possibilities with Planning staff. The potential changes they have discussed with staff are all consolidated around the existing building. There are no plans to do anything with the outlying land. Nothing can be done with the orchard that was purchased and donated to the town since it is now Town conservation land. This is a possible misperception on the part of some Applewood residents. They didn't understand the nature and modest extent of possible additions that might be attached to the existing building. Ms. Brestrup surmised that Applewood residents raised the money to give the land to the town because they wanted to have a large open space nearby. The open space will remain permanently undeveloped because it is conservation land. To change the status of this land would require an act of the state legislature, and therefore it remains protected and undevelopable. She noted that the Planning Department staff could

possibly do a better job of explaining what might be able to be developed at Applewood under various zoning scenarios, including the existing zoning and the proposed zoning.

Ms. Brestrup further noted that Applewood is a non-profit organization and is not trying to make a profit. It is trying to make better accommodations for its existing residents, to make Applewood comfortable for the people who live there now and for future residents. Applewood would like to add to the common areas in the building. In order to add to the common areas there is a need to build a few new dwelling units to have enough money to construct the improvements to the common areas. There is no large expansion being planned of which staff is aware.

Mr. Schreiber arrived (8:00 PM).

Mr. Roznoy noted that there had been many comments on the Amherst Town Meeting Listserv that were critical of the Planning Board. The Planning Board is made up of citizen volunteers and they have the best interests of the town at heart. Some Town Meeting members seem to lack confidence in the decision-making process. Because of the vituperative nature of some of the comments, he is on the verge of recommending that the Zoning Subcommittee should not come forward with any proposals to change zoning unless the proposals are initiated by citizens. Every major zoning amendment since he has been on the Board has been defeated, he asserted. There is a negative attitude on the part of some citizens and a lack of belief in the process. The zoning amendments make sense to the Zoning Subcommittee and the Planning Board but do not seem to make sense to citizens.

Mr. Roznoy observed that the Planning Board has somehow become identified with W.D. Cows and that some citizens believe that the Planning Board is a “spokesperson” for W.D. Cows. He noted that every landowner has the responsibility to come to the Planning Department and Planning Board when a project is being planned, if it is under Planning Board jurisdiction. The Planning Board is not tied in with any particular landowner. “How is it that the Planning Board has become the enemy?” he asked.

Janet Keller of 120 Pulpit Hill Road expressed her respect for the work of the Planning Board. She has been working on the rezoning effort herself and realizes how hard the Board has been working. She has always assumed good will on the part of the Board members and she believes that the Board has the town’s best interests at heart. She noted that there seems to be a lack of correct tools with which to do the big job that needs to be done. Ms. Keller noted that in the spring of 2011 a group of residents of North Amherst had come forth with a list of things they wanted to have done in North Amherst, such as the redevelopment of the civic core, new uses for the North Church, shared parking and traffic circulation improvements. The residents were open to some rezoning as a part of the larger effort to improve North Amherst Village Center. They felt that there was a consensus coming out of the charrette. They didn’t know that the only topic that would be worked on by the Planning Board would be rezoning. They wanted to preserve historic resources and wetland resources. Ms. Keller noted that the proposed rezoning of the area west of Sunderland Road had been altered to better protect the wetlands and flood plains. She encouraged the town to pursue flood plain mapping and studies of the hydrologic systems in North Amherst and asserted that there is a mid-yield aquifer in the North Amherst Village Center area. Housing studies and studies of the flood plain are important she concluded.

Valerie Cooley, a resident of North Amherst, noted that she had worked with another Town Meeting member to put forward a compromise amendment to Article 25. This

compromise could have been achieved sooner if the residents of North Amherst had been listened to at various meetings that had occurred over the past three years. The process felt “top down”. Residents did not feel that their concerns were being heard. There seemed to be a preconceived idea of the outcome on the part of some participants going into the process, she asserted. The Cecil Group should have held a “stakeholders” meeting with the residents of North Amherst as they did with the bigger landowners. Ms. Cooley was also disturbed by the apparent lack of input from residents of Applewood during the process. They, like residents of North Amherst, may have been invited to a meeting but there should have been a meeting held at Applewood specifically for the residents of Applewood, she said.

Mr. Roznoy noted that there is a discrepancy between the democratic process and constitutional property rights. He further noted that sometimes the Planning Board hears what citizens are saying but does not agree with the citizens’ point of view. In some cases, there is a discrepancy between the needs of the town as a whole and the needs of residents of a particular area. He suggested that the Planning Board should have confronted this issue at Town Meeting by saying that residents of the area were heard during the process of developing the zoning amendments but the Planning Board was acting in the best interests of the town as a whole and disagreed with some of the comments of the local residents. He also recommended that the Planning Board acknowledge that there will be some students living in the new housing, but that the zoning changes will make the housing and the situation better than it is now.

Mr. O’Keeffe observed that the planning process was not, in his view, a case of coming up with something that was good for the town as a whole but bad for the residents of North and South Amherst. The Planning Board and Zoning Subcommittee were truly trying to create better Village Centers in North Amherst and South Amherst. He expressed appreciation for the respectful tone of engagement that he experienced, particularly with Ms. Keller and Ms. Cooley. He felt that the phrase “The charrette was a charade” was not at all accurate. The ZSC members thought they had come up with something that represented, as well as they could, the diversity of opinion that was presented in the charrette. He attended the charrette, saw the output of the charrette and understood the final zoning proposal and felt that the final proposal synthesized what came out of the charrette process.

Mr. Schreiber commented that he was baffled and bothered by the petition entitled “Save Our Neighborhoods”. He stated that the intent of Articles 24 and 25 was exactly to save the neighborhoods. He felt that people didn’t understand what can be built under current by-right zoning and that the Planning Board could have done a better job of explaining what could be built under current zoning regulations versus what could be built under the proposed zoning.

Ms. Ford noted that there was a different feeling in the Town Meeting session on North Amherst versus the one on South Amherst. There was confusion about Atkins Corner, partially because of the roundabouts and the roadway. The complexity of issues there might warrant letting that one sit for a while. In the case of North Amherst there was a much more positive, proactive consensus and momentum. North Amherst rezoning is an article that the Planning Board should continue to work on and put forward for fall Town Meeting. She recommended that the Planning Board directly address the issue of student housing. Although the town can’t mandate that no students live in the new housing, the Planning Board can make a clear and positive case that the situation will be better than it is now if the rezoning is passed. She also recommended that the Planning Board clarify what types of information the public is seeking with regard to housing. There were many references to market study information. She suggested that the citizens might be

looking for information on how the new developments will affect the economy of the town. They may wish to know how it will generate income for the town.

Ms. Kruger observed that, while the Planning Board hasn't done anything wrong, it needs to repair its credibility with some members of the public. The zoning amendments need to pass by more than a 2/3 majority in order for people to feel that there is a consensus. The Planning Board needs to be able to speak with credibility to citizens about the issue of student housing.

Mr. Crouner said that the blame for the situation regarding student housing and behaviors should not be placed just on the Planning Board. It is shared by the Town Hall administration, the Select Board, the University, and property owners. It is a bigger problem than the Planning Board by itself can solve. The Planning Board can only work on its part of the problem [namely zoning]. There are various initiatives going on simultaneously and different groups are doing different things to solve the problem. It is part of a process and the Planning Board should not carry a sense of blame.

Paola Di Stefano of Precinct 1 acknowledged that student housing has become a big part of the discussion. It is a "touchy" issue in North Amherst, which has a denser student population than other parts of town. She noted changes in the neighborhood that she has witnessed over the past few decades, including families moving out and students moving in. Mistruths have been leveled against neighbors saying that they don't want any change.

Ms. Di Stefano described the North Congregational Church as being at the heart of the North Amherst Village Center. People at the charrette had discussed how to revitalize the Village Center. The Cowls property is not the center of the Village Center, she asserted. There are issues related to traffic and the impact of the whole neighborhood turning over to student housing. Eighteen years ago there were a lot more stores than there are now. Neighbors were excited about the prospects of revitalizing the Village Center. Ms. Di Stefano asserted that the proposal to rezone was opposed in a petition by all of the residents of Montague Road.

Mr. Webber stated that he is a resident of Montague Road and he did not sign the petition. Rezoning is a difficult process and there is a reason why it requires a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting. People buy property expecting that the existing zoning will remain in place.

Mr. Roznoy suggested that ideas for improving the streets and infrastructure be more integrated with the North Amherst rezoning effort. This should have been a component of the rezoning package. Road design should be part of the proposal.

Mr. Tucker explained that there could be parallel efforts to tackle infrastructure, historic preservation and zoning. The Planning Board could ask the Historical Commission to consider establishing a Local Historic District in North Amherst. The existing streets and infrastructure are under the jurisdiction of the Select Board. The Planning Board only has control over new roadways. The town has put items in the capital budget to redesign roadways and infrastructure. The Board can also look at the preservation of other critical resources.

Mr. O'Keefe recommended that the Planning Board work on helping people to understand what we can accomplish through zoning. There are other critical issues that need attention and that can't be directly affected by zoning. The Planning Board cannot make a plan to adaptively reuse the church, he said. The Planning Board can only create opportunities for others to develop property through amendments to zoning.

Mr. Webber asked the Board members whether they would like to pursue these zoning changes for fall or wait until spring. He reminded Board members that the housing study and the North Amherst roadway study will provide more data about conditions in town.

Ms. Ford suggested that there be a local historic district effort in North Amherst.

Cinda Jones remarked on how much the rezoning proposal had changed between the fall and spring amendments. She noted that some of the things that citizens had asked for were not included in the new amendment and some of the things that were included citizens had not asked for. She had heard from residents that the size and scope of the proposal were problems. She proposed to follow up on an idea of holding meetings between citizens and major stakeholders. She asked for one month to see if a compromise could be reached. The compromise might include a smaller area but with the density proposed at last fall's Town Meeting.

Mr. Roznoy agreed with the idea of allowing time to let the residents and businesses get together to discuss a compromise. He agreed that it would be good to have more data to proceed. He suggested that the Planning Board could meet with the Select Board regarding potential roadway redesign. He suggested coming back to Town Meeting with both the zoning amendments and potential roadway improvements. Roadway design and zoning should go hand in glove, he said. We need more than 66% to support the rezoning. We need the whole town, he said.

Mr. Webber expressed support for the idea of citizens and landowners working together with staff to work out a compromise. However, there seem to be two approaches that are at opposite ends of the spectrum. One is to work on a small piece of the rezoning proposal and the other is to expand the scope and include more [roadways and infrastructure and preservation of resources].

Mr. O'Keeffe disagreed that the Planning Board should let the rezoning efforts be completely driven by citizen preferences and petitions. Citizens have a right to petition for zoning changes. But the Planning Board was responsible for working on zoning issues which represented the interests of the entire community. He expressed concern that Town Meeting would suffer from "zoning fatigue" if the same zoning amendments were brought back to Town Meeting this fall without changes to the underlying structure. He would prefer to spend time working on the zoning amendments, looking at the housing study and roadway issues and working towards next spring with a fully developed set of proposals. He acknowledged that Cinda Jones could prepare a petition article to be ready for fall or that she and the residents could bring a compromise proposal to the Planning Board for its consideration.

Matt Corcoran, owner of Watroba's, expressed disappointment in the lack of Town investment in infrastructure in North Amherst. The issues of infrastructure improvement and rezoning go together. Work on the infrastructure is more important than zoning, he said.

Ms. Kruger recommended an incremental rather than global approach to rezoning, perhaps starting with the triangular piece of land between Sunderland and Montague Roads. Think smaller, she suggested. If Ms. Jones comes forward with a compromise, the Board can react to the compromise in July. The Board can also decide in July on the timing of the zoning amendments for fall or spring.

Mr. Schreiber was inclined to press on with the rezoning effort because there was a lot of excitement about it this spring. The many reasons for opposition are addressable. "The iron is hot", he said. This is critically important. The housing study was not designed around this zoning article and the study will not produce data

that will be a game changer for this Village Center. The membership in Town Meeting will be the same this fall, which may make the discussion easier.

Ms. Anderson noted that many of the citizen comments about the North Amherst Village Center had to do with revitalization. “Who is in charge of revitalization in Amherst?” she asked. Zoning is not the same as answering the questions of what to do with historic buildings, how to manage traffic and how to deal with student housing issues.

Ms. Anderson noted that the Transportation Plan Task Force is working on hiring a consultant to prepare a Transportation Plan for the town, which will be ready early next year. She recommended keeping the energy going and preparing the Atkins Corners Village Center rezoning amendment for the fall Town Meeting, since it appeared to have fewer stumbling blocks than North Amherst. She recommended talking to the residents of Applewood and abutters of the Village Center.

Ms. Brestrup reminded Planning Board members of the Open Meeting Law restrictions and stated that it would be fine for Ms. Jones and the residents of North Amherst to meet and to consult with staff, but that Planning Board members should refrain from meeting with any group outside of a public meeting.

Janet Keller encouraged Planning Board members to seek information on build-out scenarios and the fiscal impact on the town of these build-out scenarios. She also encouraged the town to proceed with flood plain delineation and mapping.

Mr. Webber observed that it was premature for the Planning Board to make a decision on how to proceed with these zoning amendments. He recommended that the Zoning Subcommittee proceed with the Zoning Forum and report back to the Planning Board after the Forum.

Mr. O’Keeffe requested that there be an agenda item for the Board meeting at the end of June to discuss the Zoning Forum, the zoning amendments and come up with an action plan.

- B. Fall 2012 Town Meeting – Next Steps? – No decision was made on next steps; see discussion above.
- C. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none
- IV. OLD BUSINESS**
- C. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none
- V. NEW BUSINESS**
- C. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting
- VI. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS – none**
- VII. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS – none**
- VIII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS – none**
- IX. PLANNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

Zoning – Mr. O’Keeffe announced that he will step down from the Zoning Subcommittee on June 30th. He has served for five years and he will look forward to participating as a Planning Board member in discussions about zoning issues.

Board members thanked Mr. O’Keeffe for his service on the Zoning Subcommittee.

Mr. Webber observed that it is useful to have the whole Board involved in addressing zoning issues. He would like to see a shift in responsibility for zoning amendments, moving it

towards the Planning Board.

There was discussion about disbanding the Zoning Subcommittee and tackling zoning issues at Planning Board meetings. Mr. O’Keeffe and Mr. Crowner cautioned that this would place a heavy burden on Planning Board members. The ZSC usually meets for two hours before every Planning Board meeting to discuss zoning issues. Even that is not enough time. It would be difficult to incorporate these discussions into Planning Board meetings.

Ms. Ford asked for a synopsis of how zoning issues are tackled and suggested that the Board consider a different structure for dealing with zoning amendments.

Mr. Webber, while acknowledging the very good work and efforts of the ZSC, would like to discuss how to make the process of creating zoning amendments more responsive to the pressures of Town Meeting and would like to make the public feel as if they were heard during the process. He asked that a discussion of the structure of the Zoning Subcommittee be put on the Planning Board agenda for an upcoming meeting.

Mr. Webber noted that there is a place on every Planning Board agenda for the ZSC under Planning Board Subcommittee Reports. He would like the scope of the ZSC report to provide an opportunity for Planning Board members to discuss issues related to the Zoning Subcommittee and zoning amendments.

Mr. O’Keeffe noted that the Zoning Forum is scheduled for June 20th.

Ms. Kruger noted that the Planning Board had agreed to talk about housing and student housing over the summer.

Ms. Ford asked what the focus and intent of this discussion about housing would be. Would it be to affect policy or would it be for the purposes of having an opinion? Why is it important for the Planning Board to have this discussion?

Ms. Kruger noted that housing comes up in other work that the Planning Board is doing. She would like to see a new round of conversations started. She referred to a 1996 town/gown conference. Housing was a topic at that conference. Where should housing be located? For whom is the housing to be built? Who should participate in the discussion? Is the topic of housing solely related to UMass or other colleges and residents as well? Are there other housing alternatives that have not yet been explored?

X. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – no report

Community Preservation Act Committee – Ms. Anderson reported that Article 21, dealing with CPAC recommendations, had passed Town Meeting. It was strongly supported by Town Meeting members and there had been little discussion about individual items.

Agricultural Commission – no report

Transportation Plan Task Force – Mr. Roznoy reported that the TPTF would be meeting on Friday, May 25th, to discuss the receipt of proposals in response to the RFP. The town had received at least one response to the RFP, he said.

Amherst Redevelopment Authority – no report

Design Review Board – Ms. Ford reported that she had attended the first part of the DRB meeting on May 15th. The topic was 79 South Pleasant Street, the former Baptist Church, now owned by Amherst College. The College plans to renovate the building, build an addition and use the building for offices. The renovation and addition will be lovely, she said. The College is planning to restore the whole front of the building and install landscaping. The proposal will come before the Planning Board as a Site Plan Review

application.

Other Boards and Committees – none

XI. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Mr. Webber asked that a discussion of the Planning Board summer schedule be put on the agenda for the next meeting. Board members will send information on their availability for Wednesdays in July and August to Ms. Brestrup who will incorporate them into a chart. Ms. Brestrup noted that the first and third Wednesdays are those for which the Town Room has been scheduled. If the Board decides to meet on an alternate Wednesday, the Town Room is unlikely to be available.

Ms. Kruger will not be available on July 25th.

Ms. Ford will not be available on August 1st and August 15th.

XII. REPORT OF STAFF – none

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Approved:

Christine M. Brestrup,
Senior Planner

David Webber, Chair

DATE: _____