

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, August 19, 2015 – 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: David Webber, Chair, Stephen Schreiber, Rob Crowner, Bruce Carson, Greg Stutsman and Pari Riahi

ABSENT: Richard Roznoy

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

Mr. Webber opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

I. MINUTES

Mr. Schreiber MOVED to approve the Minutes of July 29, 2015. Mr. Carson seconded and the vote was 6-0-0.

Mr. Schreiber MOVED to approve the Minutes of August 6, 2014. Mr. Carson seconded and the vote was 5-0-1 (Riahi abstained).

II. ZONING

- A.** Zoning Subcommittee Report – Mr. Crowner reported that the “pre-Town Meeting” schedule is rapidly shrinking. There are only two Planning Board meetings before the Warrant language is due. The ZSC is working on a number of zoning amendments including parking-related articles, an article related to apartments and amendments for a multi-family overlay district and mixed-use buildings.

It is likely that only two articles will be complete enough to go to Fall Town Meeting. One article would change the use category for parking facilities. It describes parking lots and structures and would make it easier to use private parking lots for public purposes. Mr. Crowner explained the existing Zoning Bylaw [Section 3.384] with respect to parking facilities. It describes commercial parking lots and structures and public parking lots and structures. He noted that any new article related to parking lots would need design standards. The ZSC is working on a second parking-related article that would augment the current design standards related to parking lots. There would also be design standards related to parking structures, but these will not be ready for fall. The ZSC would like to change how parking lots and parking structures are permitted. The ZSC does not have any knowledge of zoning petition articles that might be submitted.

Mr. Crowner explained the current draft of the article on parking facilities and asked for advice from the Planning Board on how to proceed. The ZSC would like a streamlined Zoning Bylaw, but would also like an article that will pass Town Meeting. One approach would focus on parking lots. The other approach would not make a distinction between commercial and private parking facilities or between parking lots and parking structures. He noted that this approach would “collapse” parking lots and structures into one use category and to “collapse” public and private facilities into one. This seems to be the consensus of the ZSC.

Ms. Brestrup explained that in order to have Warrant language ready for the due date it would be necessary to hold a public hearing on September 16th. The Board agreed to

schedule a public hearing on September 16th for the two articles related to parking facilities. Mr. Webber recommended scheduling a public hearing for the 16th. It can be cancelled if the zoning amendments are not ready to be considered. After further discussion, he recommended hold the public hearing on the 16th and deciding at that time whether the article was ready to be placed on the Town Meeting Warrant.

Ms. Riahi and Mr. Roznoy will not be able to attend the meeting on September 16th, but five members of the Board will be able to attend the meeting.

Mr. Webber asked if there had been interest expressed by private parties regarding constructing private lots or structures. Mr. Tucker stated that there had not been any interest expressed by private parties to date. The intent of the amendment is to encourage the more flexible use of private lots by allowing them by Site Plan Review rather than Special Permit.

Mr. Webber noted that both the First Baptist Church and the Lutheran Church currently rent parking spaces to students who attend UMass.

Mr. Tucker noted that the Bank of America has an arrangement with the Amherst Cinema allowing patrons of the Cinema to use the bank's parking lot during non-business hours. There is no pay for this use.

Mr. Webber noted that large property owners often issue stickers to tenants. He also noted that the Montessori School has an arrangement with local property owners allowing the teachers and administrative staff to park on property across the street. Ms. Brestrup noted that Bill Gillen also has an arrangement with local businesses adjacent to his property on Main Street allowing patrons to park in his parking lot in the evening. These arrangements are acknowledged by the permits for the local businesses.

Mr. Webber suggested that the Board consider new parking regulations that would apply only to the downtown area to start with. We may not wish to change regulations outside of the downtown at this time.

Mr. Tucker stated that the ZSC is trying to change the Bylaw to allow existing parking to be used more efficiently. The issue is what happens if someone has a separate parking lot that exists as a principal use and the property owner wants to use it to allow parking by others, either for pay or not for pay.

Mr. Schreiber stated that the Municipal Parking District is the area of most interest to the ZSC. By definition, almost all of the parking in the MPD is not technically required. Outside of the MPD some of the spaces may be required for uses already exist on the site. There was discussion about vetting any parking-related articles thoroughly before Town Meeting and crafting zoning amendments that were simple and clear for Town Meeting.

B. Public Comment

Vince O'Connor of Precinct 1 made several comments as follows:

- Disagrees with allowing commercial parking lots in B-N or B-VC zoning districts;
- Has concerns about parking lots abutting residential properties because of lighting that may shine into people's windows;
- Directed the Board's attention to the existing section of the Bylaw that deals with lighting of parking lots [Section 7.105];

- Has concerns about changing the permitting requirement for private parking lots or garages from “No” to “Special Permit” in the B-N zoning district;
- Believes that parking structures should never be exempted from the requirement for a Traffic Impact Statement.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A.** PA 85-6 – Newmarket Center – University Drive – review and approval of new sign for The Hangar on directory sign in accordance with conditions of PA 85-6

Harold Tramazzo of The Hangar presented a new sign for the directory sign at the Newmarket Center on University Drive. Ms. Brestrup explained that a condition of PA85-6 requires that new signs be presented to the Planning Board for review and approval. However, the signs on the building were already approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals under the permit for the Class II restaurant. Therefore the Planning Board is only being asked to review the directory sign.

Mr. Schreiber MOVED to approve the directory sign for The Hangar. Mr. Stutsman seconded and the vote was 6-0-0.

- B.** MassWorks Grant – update on work planned for Triangle and East Pleasant Street intersection

Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works, presented an update on the work associated with the MassWorks Grant and other infrastructure work at the intersection of Triangle and East Pleasant Street. He stated that the plan for the intersection is not set. There are still two options being considered. These options will be discussed by the Public Works Committee and a recommendation will be made to the Select Board. The two options are:

- Leave the intersection essentially as it is and upgrade the traffic lights and signaling;
- Construct a roundabout.

The roundabout option would be a good choice. It would gain some space on the park side, while taking some land from the Bank of America property and a small piece from the corner of the park. There is no definitive plan now. Utilities will be installed below ground in the proposed tree belt along Triangle Street. The main power line work in Triangle Street will likely occur in September and October and will be done before the work on East Pleasant Street. He explained the plan to provide redundant power to the uses around the intersection. One pole will come out and two will stay on the Kendrick Park side. Ms. Brestrup noted that because of uncertainty about the work in the intersection the edges of the roadway and the curb lines have not been determined.

Mr. Webber thanked Mr. Mooring for his presentation.

- C.** SPR2014-00004 – Archipelago Investments – Kendrick Place – 57 East Pleasant Street – update on sidewalk and streetscape improvements

Kyle Wilson and Dave Williams of Archipelago Investments presented an update on sidewalk and streetscape improvements surrounding the new building at 57 East Pleasant Street known as Kendrick Place. Mr. Wilson stated that the building is about to open in about 1 ½ weeks. The town and the developer were interested in potential improvements to the utilities in the area. The town procured a MassWorks Grant to place the overhead utilities underground. Mr. Wilson addressed issues related to the

streetscape and street tree improvements surrounding the new building. He has spoken with Mr. Mooring about scheduling. Eversource [formerly WMECO], Verizon and Comcast are all involved in putting the utilities underground. There is work that the developers are able to do prior to the utilities being buried.

Mr. Wilson presented a plan and photographs showing the site and showing the landscape plan that was reviewed by the Planning Board at the time of the Site Plan Review public hearing. Mr. Wilson had marked up the landscape plan to show the area of concrete sidewalk that can be built now, including the handicapped ramp/curb cut leading to the crosswalk at the intersection. The area outside of the concrete sidewalk will be loamed and seeded. Once the power lines come down the developer will be able to proceed with planting of street trees and installation of streetlights and other streetscape elements. Spacing and height need to be considered for both street trees and streetlights. The developers will come back with a final landscape plan once the utility poles have come down.

Mr. Webber asked who would decide which street lights are used. Mr. Williams stated that the developers would like to see a style and type of lighting that is consistent with a new look for the north end of downtown. Ms. Brestrup explained the paving pattern that had been presented to the Planning Board during Site Plan Review. It is similar to the paving pattern at Boltwood Place and consists of concrete panels with a rectilinear scoring pattern along the places where people will walk and concrete block pavers in a gray tone in the tree belt.

Mr. Tucker stated that the pattern chosen for the area around Kendrick Place could be different from the pattern in the historic portion of the downtown. The area that is being considered for a new streetscape pattern lies north of the driveway to West Cemetery and north of Hallock Street.

Ms. Brestrup explained that there has been discussion about changing the streetlights from the traditional lights that are in place downtown to something different.

Mr. Webber stated that the streetlights around the property are critical. The choice of streetlights should focus on the elimination of glare and the illumination of areas where pedestrians and bicyclists travel. Mr. Webber was interested in considering a streetlight that would be different from the one used in downtown Amherst.

Mr. Tucker stated that the Select Board would make the final decision on which streetlight would be used, but the Planning Board would be asked for its recommendation.

Vince O'Connor of Precinct 1 made the following comments on the streetscape issues:

- The sidewalk scoring pattern was altered to a diagonal pattern to accommodate the needs of people in wheelchairs and who use walkers so that they do not have to cross a joint with two wheels at the same time; he has concerns about returning to the previous pattern;
- The Disability Access Advisory Committee should be consulted regarding any change to the paving pattern;
- In terms of streetlights, the potential residents of Kendrick Place should be considered; streetlights should be chosen that will not shine into people's windows.

Mr. Mooring stated that the MassWorks Grant application was submitted with the current downtown streetlight style as part of the package. If the Board wishes to consider an alternative to the current streetlight, he encouraged the Board members to

look at the streetlights that are being used at the Atkins Corner roundabouts. A combination of LED cobra heads and black downcast lighting is being used at Atkins Corner.

Mr. Webber would like the Planning Board to be part of the continuing discussion about streetlights.

Mr. Tucker noted that the Downtown Streetscape Guidelines had been developed by the Design Review Board, in concert with the Disability Access Advisory Committee and the Historical Commission.

There was further discussion about streetlights in the northern end of downtown.

Mr. Mooring stated that there is time to consider which lights will be used in the northern end of downtown. In the interim, the standard streetlights can be installed and replaced later.

Mr. Mooring agreed to provide catalog cuts on the lighting used at Atkins Corner and the ones used in the downtown area.

Mr. Wilson noted that the existing lights on the power poles in the vicinity of Kendrick Place will stay until the power poles are removed. The streetlights may be removed in mid-December. Mr. Mooring stated that the town can purchase the typical streetlights and install them until new ones are obtained. The typical streetlights can then be used as replacements in the downtown as needed.

There are different options for streetlights to illuminate the street and streetlights to illuminate the sidewalks and crosswalks.

There was discussion about how the streetlight choice would be made. Mr. Tucker stated that the various boards and committees can meet first and decide on recommendations and then the Select Board could hold a meeting at which the other Boards could attend to present their recommendations. The Select Board would make the final decision.

- D. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – Ms. Brestrup noted that the Planning Board members had received a letter from PVPC (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission) announcing the release of the Sustainability Toolkit that presents information on many topics that would be of interest to the Planning Board. The Board members will review the letter and the Toolkit on the PVPC website and determine if Board members would like to schedule a discussion on these topics at a future meeting.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Atkins Corner – New street names – After a brief presentation by Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works the Planning Board considered proposed names for the new roadways surrounding Atkins Farms Market. The proposed names are Gould Way for the shorter road to the west of the Market and Lannon Lane or Way for the longer road to the south of the Market.

The Select Board has already approved the layout of the streets. The Planning Board has approved the altered layouts and Town Meeting has accepted the altered layouts as Town Ways. These actions all occurred in 2013. Mr. Tucker noted that the proposed names are family names associated with Atkins Farms.

Mr. Stutsman MOVED to recommend to the Select Board that these names be adopted. Mr. Carson seconded and the vote was 6-0-0.

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

V. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS – none

VI. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS – The Board declined to review the following ZBA applications:

ZBA FY2016-00002 –Eagle Crest Property Management – For a Special Permit to alter and expand a parking area from four to six spaces associated with a pre-existing non-conforming two family dwelling, under Section 9.22 of the Zoning Bylaw, at 196 Triangle Street (Map 11D, Parcel 85, R-G Zoning District)

ZBA FY2016-00003 – Hess Retail Operations, LLC – For a Special Permit for a new owner, Speedway, LLC, to continue operations of an existing gasoline station and convenience store with changes to exterior signs and building facades, pursuant to Condition # 15 of ZBA FY2005-00007, under Sections 3.381, 3.350.1, and 10.33 of the Zoning Bylaw, at 468 West Street (Map 20C, Parcel 10, B-VC Zoning District)

VII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS – Ms. Brestrup reported that the Town of Amherst would be submitting a Site Plan Review application for improvements to the two baseball fields at the Mill Rive Recreation Area.

VIII. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS – no reports

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – Bruce Carson
Community Preservation Act Committee – Pari Riahi
Agricultural Commission – Stephen Schreiber
Transportation Plan Task Force – Richard Roznoy and Rob Crowner
Amherst Redevelopment Authority – vacant
Design Review Board – vacant
Housing and Sheltering Committee – Greg Stutsman
Zoning Subcommittee – Rob Crowner, Bruce Carson, Greg Stutsman and Stephen Schreiber

IX. REPORT OF THE CHAIR – no report

X. REPORT OF STAFF – no report

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted: Approved:

Christine M. Brestrup
Senior Planner

David Webber, Chair

DATE: _____