

**AMHERST PLANNING BOARD**  
**Wednesday, September 2, 2015 – 7:00 PM**  
**Town Room, Town Hall**  
**MINUTES**

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

**ABSENT:** Richard Roznoy and Pari Riahi

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

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Mr. Webber opened the meeting at 7:05 PM.

**I. MINUTES**

Mr. Carson MOVED to approve the Minutes of August 19, 2015. Mr. Stutsman seconded and the vote was 5-0-0.

Mr. Carson MOVED to approve the Minutes of September 3, 2014. Mr. Stutsman seconded and the vote was 5-0-0.

**II. ZONING**

- A.** Zoning Subcommittee Report – Mr. Crowner reported that the ZSC and the Planning Board had received a letter from Richard Roznoy about the proposed parking lot and parking structure zoning amendment. Mr. Roznoy's letter advised against pursuing the amendment. The amendment deals with parking lots as a principle use. The effect would be to promote parking lots where we don't want them. The goal of the Planning Board is to promote the more efficient use of existing parking [in the downtown] rather than to create more surface parking lots. It may be better to pursue changes to regulations regarding accessory parking and shared parking to make these more flexible. The ZSC recommended not to pursue the parking-related zoning amendments at this time. The ZSC will continue to work on zoning amendments related to parking but will propose no zoning amendments for Fall Town Meeting. It will continue to work on mixed-use buildings. The ZSC proposes to offer a report to Fall Town Meeting under Article 1 on the status of work on downtown parking and mixed-use buildings.

Mr. Webber thanked the members of the Zoning Subcommittee. He agreed with Mr. Roznoy and the ZSC that it is premature to put forth a zoning amendment related to parking at this time. The proposed amendments will not solve existing problems.

Citizen petition zoning amendments are due on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

- B.** Public Comment Period – no public comment

**III. OLD BUSINESS**

- A.** North Downtown Streetscape Design Elements – Sidewalk paving, lighting, and other features – continuing discussion

Mr. Webber explained that the issue had been raised about the existing downtown lights and whether they should be used in the North Downtown area. They shine in all directions and glare in drivers' eyes rather than down lighting the street and the sidewalk.

This causes problems for pedestrians and drivers. Unless the glare problem can be solved there may be a particular problem if these lights are installed at the intersection of Triangle Street and East Pleasant Street because this is a very busy intersection.

The Planning Board had asked Guilford Mooring to come up with alternatives for the Planning Board to consider, which has been done. The Board members received a packet of information prepared by Mr. Mooring.

In this instance, the Planning Board's role is advisory. The Select Board has jurisdiction. But it is the Planning Board's duty to come up with some ideas for the Select Board to consider with respect to lighting in the North Downtown area. Mr. Mooring provided cut sheets on three different lights, one of which is the streetlight used at the Atkins Corner roundabout. Mr. Mooring did not put forward a lighting plan for the intersection. The town uses the lighting manufacturer Holophane.

The glass top, acorn light that is used downtown can be shielded. There is also a type of teardrop light called Ludlow Mills, as manufactured by Holophane. It can be mounted on a similar post and base and is a downlight that can be shielded for dark sky compliance. Secondary lighting can be mounted on the poles.

Ms. Brestrup reported that Mr. Mooring felt that any of the lights presented (the acorn light used downtown, the Atkins Corner light and the teardrop light) would be workable for the DPW to install. They already have experience with the Atkins Corner light and the Acorn light. Mr. Mooring suggested the teardrop light as an alternative that would provide Amherst with the traditional look that Amherst likes but would provide the shielding for downcast light and dark sky compliance and also shield the windows of Kendrick Place. The catalog cuts represent Mr. Mooring's suggestion for the Planning Board's consideration. The Design Review Board will be reviewing this package on September 8<sup>th</sup>. They will be providing recommendations. Ms. Brestrup noted that a member of the Public Works Committee, Christine Gray-Mullen, was in attendance at tonight's meeting and may have comments to offer on the street lights. Ms. Gray-Mullen is a traffic engineer and has a lot of experience with lighting as a result of her experience living and working in California.

Ms. Riahi who attended the last meeting at which lighting had been discussed had requested specifications on the existing and proposed lights. The Board was encouraged to review the material and wait until a future meeting to give a recommendation.

There are two architects on the Design Review Board who may also have knowledge about street lighting that may be helpful.

The Planning Board might wish to make a recommendation on lighting to the Select Board by sometime later this fall.

Mr. Tucker stated that the Atkins Corner light, while appropriate for that location, is really a highway fixture meant to light the roadway. The current acorn light may have a cap added to direct the light downward. The teardrop Ludlow Mills design has character that is absent from the Atkins Corner light.

Part of the larger concept is that there would be a transition, in the vicinity of the West Cemetery entrance driveway, from the more traditional look of the historic downtown, to a more contemporary look for the north downtown area which is a new

district, is changing more rapidly and will have a different architectural character. Holophane also has other lighting styles that are available. These are representative of what Holophane has to offer.

Mr. Carson suggested that the Board look at the street lights at the South West complex at UMass. They are very beautiful and modern. He would like to see something more contemporary in the North Downtown area and something that is lower to the street than the Atkins light or the Ludlow Mills light.

Mr. Schreiber stated that this is a corridor problem rather than an issue only for the area around Kendrick Place. It is an issue of “look and feel” of the streetscape. It’s not just about the lights, but it is more about the street trees, the lights and the buildings taken all together. Atkins is more of a suburban development. Here we are talking about a pedestrian scale.

Mr. Stutsman noted that the teardrop lights are really related to the street. There is the potential for pedestrian scale lights to be added to the poles. He passed around a picture of a Holophane light with a street light mounted on one side and a pedestrian scale light mounted on the other side of the pole.

Mr. Carson asked to see lights of a lower level that might suit both the street and the sidewalk rather than having a double light.

Mr. Webber asked if someone on the Planning staff could put together a lighting plan for the area of the intersection, including location of poles. While the configuration of the intersection is unknown as of this date, Mr. Tucker stated that staff could create a sample streetscape showing patterns of different kinds of lights and staff can find more examples of Holophane lights.

Mr. Tucker noted that part of the problem with the downtown acorn light is that it is exclusively focused on the pedestrian experience and does not provide a lot of illumination for the streets. We need to have both sufficient illumination for pedestrians that is welcoming and safe and illumination for drivers to see where they are going. We need to have either a combination pole or two systems that are related to each other.

Mr. Schreiber stated that the fact that downtown is underdeveloped contributes to the problem. Ambient light from buildings helps to illuminate the streetscape. A more developed downtown would have light from the mixed use buildings that would help to illuminate the area.

Mr. Webber noted that this area provides challenges because Kendrick Park is unlit and Kendrick Place casts light all around itself. While the Planning Board may not be qualified to make some of the technical decisions, as a group the Board is qualified to steer the lighting of this area and to exert gentle pressure to do it right rather than just letting it happen.

The Board discussed a schedule for making a decision. Mr. Mooring had said that he could install the traditional downtown streetlights and replace them once a new choice had been made. He can then use the traditional streetlights as replacement lights for the downtown area. There are lights on utility poles now and when the utilities are placed underground the light poles will come down because the poles themselves will come down. There will be a need for some lighting for the area. The decision for these lights needs to be made within the next few months. There is currently no definitive plan for the intersection. That decision will be made by the

Select Board with recommendations from the Public Works Committee. The Select Board probably won't make a decision until later in the year with construction occurring next summer.

The Planning Board was also asked to look at paving in the North Downtown area. Ms. Brestrup recommended that the Planning Board members walk around the downtown area and make note of the paving in the different areas – what works and what doesn't work. There are several different patterns of paving, including brick in the center of the walkway and brick on the edges, and a rectilinear and diagonal pattern of scoring and construction joints.

The current pattern was developed because it was thought that diagonal pattern of joints was less abrupt for people in wheelchairs and people with walkers. However, the pattern is hard to build and to maintain. We are looking for a more modern, smoother, more predictable pattern with less scoring. Mr. Tucker noted that the area north of the West Cemetery would contain only new buildings.

Ms. Brestrup stated that staff believes that the current downtown trash receptacles and benches work well and staff recommends that these continue to be used.

**B. Planning Board Size**

The Planning Board had received a memorandum from Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director, on the size of the Planning Board. It contained information on the size of other Planning Boards throughout Massachusetts. Many towns have 5 members, many towns have 7 members and some towns have 9 members. Amherst has had a 9-member Planning Board since it was established in 1917.

Mr. Webber noted that a change in the size of the Planning Board requires a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting, changes to the Zoning Bylaw and changes to the Planning Board's Rules and Regulations.

Mr. Tucker stated that staff was making no recommendation for or against changing the size of the Planning Board, but that staff did make comments on how a change in the size of the Board would affect the permitting process.

There was further discussion about the size of Planning Boards. It was noted that some communities have elected Planning Boards.

Mr. Schreiber had begun to research the issue when two Board members left and there was a problem reaching a quorum. He recommended removing the specified number of Planning Board members from the Rules and Regulations and from the Zoning Bylaw. He suggested that 7 is a better number than 9 and noted that the Town Charter specifies whether the Board is elected or appointed.

There was further discussion of having a smaller Board.

Mr. Tucker explained how changing the number of Planning Board members would affect the permitting process, how many members would be needed to vote on Site Plan Review applications and Special Permits.

Mr. Schreiber asked what happens if the Charter Commission that is currently being contemplated develops a charter that conflicts with the Zoning Bylaw with respect to the number of Board members. If that happens there would be a proposed amendment to the Zoning Bylaw, which would be voted on by the legislative body, to bring the two documents into alignment.

- C. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting  
SPR2010-00012 – 321 Main Street – Sign for “The Center: an Innovative Dance Studio” – review of proposed sign in accordance with conditions 2 and 6 of the Site Plan Review decision – Ms. Brestrup presented the proposed sign, designed by Ferguson Sign Works a 2 foot x 14 foot aluminum sign that covers less than 10% of the façade area controlled by the dance studio.

Mr. Carson MOVED to approve the sign. Mr. Stutsman seconded and the vote was 5-0-0.

Mr. Schreiber noted that Hope and Feathers, an art gallery in the same building, was celebrating its fifth anniversary and that his wife was one of the artists whose work was on display.

#### IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Bike Share – Letter of Support to Select Board – Mr. Webber read the draft of a letter from the Planning Board to the Select Board in support of the concept of a regional bike share program. After discussion Board members agreed by consensus to send the letter as written. Mr. Webber signed the letter.
- B. Planning Board – Fall Schedule – Mr. Stutsman and Ms. Brestrup will not be available to attend the Planning Board meetings on September 30<sup>th</sup> or October 7<sup>th</sup>. There is no public hearing scheduled for either of those meetings. The next meeting after that will be October 21<sup>st</sup>. Board members will decide on September 16<sup>th</sup> whether to hold or cancel either or both of these meetings. Mr. Tucker is available to staff both meetings should the Board decide to meet.
- C. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting  
Ms. Brestrup introduced Christine Gray-Mullen and announced that she had recently been appointed as a new Planning Board member. Planning Board members greeted the news and Ms. Gray-Mullen with great enthusiasm.  
Ms. Brestrup announced that there would be a conference on Chapter 40B scheduled for October 2, in Randolph, MA. Planning Board members who are interested in learning more about Chapter 40B are invited to attend.

#### V. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS – none

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

**ZBA FY2016-00001 – Co-Ed Realty, LLC** - For a Special Permit to re-issue and/or renew ZBA FY2009-00004 for the use of as a non-owner occupied duplex, with modifications to conditions, and to modify conditions of ZBA FY2014-00027, under Section 3.3211 and 10.33 of the Zoning Bylaw, at 382 North Pleasant Street (Map 11C-118, R-G Zoning District)

**ZBA FY2016-00004 – Paul R. Higgins** – For a Special Permit to renew and extend ZBA FY2010-00003 for the creation of a buildable lot as a flag lot, under Section 6.3 and 10.33 of the Zoning Bylaw, at 269 Leverett Road (Map 3A, Parcel 100, R-O Zoning District)

**VII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS** – On September 16<sup>th</sup> the Planning Board will review a Site Plan Review application for improvements to the two baseball fields at the Mill River Recreation Area.

**VIII. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS**

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – Bruce Carson  
Community Preservation Act Committee – Pari Riahi  
Agricultural Commission – Stephen Schreiber  
Transportation Task Force – Rob Crowner – Ms. Brestrup reported that the TTF would be meeting on September 21<sup>st</sup> at 2:00 p.m. in the First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall.  
Design Review Board – vacant  
Housing and Sheltering Committee – Greg Stutsman  
Zoning Subcommittee – Rob Crowner, Bruce Carson, Greg Stutsman and Stephen Schreiber

UTAC (University and Town of Amherst Collaborative) – Greg Stutsman reported that new committees were being formed that are associated with UTAC, which was formed out of the recommendations from the work of the Town Gown Steering Committee. Mr. Stutsman, Mr. Schreiber and Mr. Webber all served on the TGSC. Mr. Stutsman will be serving on the Housing Committee of UTAC and Mr. Webber will be serving on the Economic Development Committee of UTAC.

**IX. REPORT OF THE CHAIR** – Mr. Webber reported that Atkins North had opened recently and that there was a lot of foot traffic and that the parking lot was often full.

**X. REPORT OF STAFF** – Mr. Tucker reported that later in September the New Hampshire Highland Games would be held at the Loon Mountain Ski Resort in Lincoln, New Hampshire. This is the largest festival of its kind in the northeast. There will be tens of thousands of people in attendance, many from the Maritimes and some from the British Isles.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted:                      Approved:

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Christine M. Brestrup  
Senior Planner

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David Webber, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_