

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, February 3, 2016 – 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: Stephen Schreiber, Acting Chair, Rob Crowner, Bruce Carson, Richard Roznoy, Greg Stutsman and Christine Gray-Mullen

ABSENT: Pari Riahi

STAFF: Christine Brestrup, Interim Planning Director

Mr. Schreiber opened the meeting at 7:01 PM. He noted that he would be serving as Acting Chair for this meeting because of the resignation of Chair David Webber.

I. MINUTES

Mr. Crowner asked that the word “better” be changed to “well” in the sixth paragraph on page 2 of the Minutes of January 6, 2016.

Mr. Carson MOVED to approve the Minutes of January 6, 2016 as amended. Mr. Stutsman seconded and the vote was 5-0-1 (Roznoy abstained).

Mr. Roznoy asked that the sentence at the bottom of page 4, Section IV.A., Minutes of January 20, 2016, be amended by adding the phrase “at the convenience of Mr. Hechenbleikner, in accordance with his schedule.”

Mr. Carson MOVED to approve the Minutes of January 20, 2016 as amended. Mr. Roznoy seconded and the vote was 5-0-1 (Stutsman abstained).

II. ZONING

A. Zoning Subcommittee Report

Mr. Crowner presented the ZSC report. The Planning Board agreed at its last meeting to bring several zoning amendments to spring Town Meeting, including an amendment to separate the B-L (Limited Business) and COM (Commercial) zoning districts in Table 3 (the dimensional table), an amendment to add the B-L district to Footnote “b” and an amendment to rezone a parcel of land on University Drive from OP (Office Park) to B-L. The ZSC is also continuing to work on other articles.

Mr. Crowner noted that the zoning amendments related to Footnote “b” will be controversial. Currently residential development is allowed, but not really possible, in many places in the B-L zoning district because of the small size of many of the lots. The proposed change would enable more density, but the density will be limited by allowed building coverage and height of buildings. He noted that all of the B-L zoning districts (along University Drive, on Dickinson Street and around the downtown area) abut residential neighborhoods.

Issues that are predicted to be raised regarding the change to the B-L district include issues of affordable housing, parking, increased residential density and mixed-use building standards.

Mr. Crower explained that the B-L and Footnote “b” zoning amendment is a first step to allowing more density around the downtown. The ZSC has also been working on Mixed-use Building Standards. It is important to have standards for the kinds of development that will be promoted by the change to the B-L dimensional requirements.

Parking is also being worked on by others. The ZSC has concluded that the solution to the parking problem will not be found in zoning.

There is also a petition article that deals with inclusionary zoning.

All of these amendments will have an impact on each other. The ZSC proposes to bring forward the Mixed-use Building Standards amendment as well as Cluster Subdivision Standards. Changes to the Cluster Subdivision Standards will make development in outlying areas a little more involved.

Mr. Crowner explained the changes that had been made in the Mixed-use Building Standards amendment. The changes require a certain amount of residential use and a certain amount of non-residential use. The ZSC would like to promote an active and vigorous streetscape. He described changes to the orientation of uses on the first floor and the deletion of the paragraph that would have limited on-site parking.

There had been a proposal limiting the number of bedrooms in units. The housing market now appears to favor smaller units so this section has been changed to reflect that reality.

Mr. Crowner noted that the Mixed-use Building amendment was a response to a petition article that had been submitted last spring.

The zoning amendments related to Cluster Subdivisions are a response to the public hearing for The Retreat. The amendments are meant to guide Cluster Subdivision developments. Duplexes in Clusters will be required to be owner-occupied or affordable, as is the case in the rest of town. The amendment related to Footnote "k" would clarify the extent to which dimensional requirements may be modified. The amendment related to the Yield Plan would provide a definition and refer to the definition in the Cluster Subdivision section of the Bylaw.

Mr. Crowner described the petition article regarding affordable housing. It would require that any project that proposed 10 units or more, that needs a Special Permit for any reason, would be required to provide affordable housing units.

The petition article has two parts. The first part changes the definition of affordable housing in Amherst. The petition article would drop moderate income housing from the definition of affordable housing and require that all affordable housing units be available to those making 80% or less of area median income.

The second part of the petition article has a number of parts, but essentially would require the provision of affordable units in any project with 10 or more units that requires a Special Permit for any aspect of the development. Mr. Crowner explained the other changes contained in the petition article.

The petition article requires that affordable housing units be "permanently" affordable. This may not be possible. A better way of stating this would be "permanent or as allowed by state or federal law." He noted other problems with the petition article.

Mr. Crowner stated that the article has some potential to be fixed, but the ZSC does not have time to create its own article to replace the petition article for this Town Meeting.

The ZSC has also been considering establishing a threshold for provision of affordable housing units for projects that require a Special Permit.

The ZSC and the Planning Board need to schedule public hearings to deal with the proposed zoning amendments. There was further discussion about scheduling public hearings.

There was discussion about the issue of non-owner occupied duplexes in Cluster Subdivisions and how these would be permitted.

Mr. Crouner stated that the expectation is that a developer would propose owner-occupied or non-owner occupied duplexes and permit them accordingly, during the land use permitting process. A Special Permit application would be needed for non-owner occupied duplexes. Changes to the occupancy of the duplexes would be dealt with the same way that they are currently dealt with in other parts of town.

B. Public Comment Period

Mollye Lockwood of W.D. Cows asked a question about the non-residential uses listed in the Mixed-use Building Standards.

Mr. Crouner stated that the list of non-residential uses is intended to cover every type of use that would be possible in a Mixed-use Building.

Mr. Carson MOVED to request dates for public hearings for these two zoning amendments [Mixed-use Building Standards and Cluster Subdivision Standards]. Mr. Stutsman seconded and the vote was 6-0-0.

The Board proceeded to set tentative public hearing dates as follows:

March 2	Rezoning of Property on University Drive
March 16	Cluster Subdivision Standards and Mixed-use Building Standards
March 30	Petition article – Affordable Housing

**C. Planning for Zoning Seminar with TMCC & LWV (Zoning 101)
Tuesday, April 26th, 7:00 p.m., Town Room, Town Hall**

There will be an update on this topic at a later meeting.

III. OLD BUSINESS

Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Officers and Planning Board Reorganization

Mr. Schreiber announced that the Planning Board was opening nominations for officers.

Mr. Stutsman MOVED to nominate Mr. Schreiber as Chair. Mr. Roznoy seconded and the vote was 5-0-1 (Schreiber abstained).

Mr. Roznoy MOVED to nominate Mr. Stutsman as Vice Chair. Mr. Carson seconded and the vote was 6-0-0.

Mr. Roznoy MOVED to nominate Mr. Crouner as Clerk. Mr. Stutsman seconded and the vote was 6-0-0.

Mr. Schreiber announced that he would be resigning from the Zoning Subcommittee because he would now have the added duties as Chair of the Planning Board.

Mr. Stutsman stated that he serves as the Planning Board's representative to the UTAC Housing Subcommittee and that he would be willing to serve as the Board's representative on the Economic Development Subcommittee, if needed. Mr. Schreiber asked if the representative needed to be a member of the Planning Board or whether the representative could be a delegate. Ms. Brestrup offered to research this topic and to report to the Board.

- B.** Downtown Parking Working Group – Planning Board representative – Ms. Brestrup reported that the Downtown Parking Working Group was being formed by the Select Board, but that a final charge had not yet been developed. She noted that Mr. Roznoy had expressed interest in serving on this Group but she recommended that the Board wait to see the final charge before nominating a representative. This topic will be placed on the next agenda.
- C.** Crosswalks for West Bay Road – Letter from Applewood Residents – Ms. Brestrup reported that the Interim Town Manager Dave Ziomek had received a letter from residents of Applewood requesting that crosswalks be installed on West Bay Road. The Planning Board received copies of this letter because the Board would soon be reviewing a project for Hampshire College that proposes to install a crosswalk and a bus stop on West Bay Road.
- D.** Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none

V. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS – none

VI. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS – none

VII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS – Ms. Brestrup had reported at a previous meeting on upcoming Planning Board applications.

VIII. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – Bruce Carson – no report
Community Preservation Act Committee – Pari Riahi – no report
Agricultural Commission – Stephen Schreiber – no report

Transportation Task Force – Rob Crouner and Christine Gray-Mullen – Mr. Roznoy reported that there was a meeting of the TTF scheduled for Monday, February 8th. Ms. Gray-Mullen reported that a final draft report about the proposed Transportation Advisory Committee had been developed by consultants, Nelson\Nygaard. The draft report will be discussed at Monday's meeting.

Design Review Board – vacant

Housing and Sheltering Committee – Greg Stutsman

Zoning Subcommittee – Rob Crouner, Bruce Carson, Greg Stutsman and Stephen Schreiber
UTAC (University and Town of Amherst Collaborative) – Greg Stutsman and David Webber

IX. REPORT OF THE CHAIR – none

X. REPORT OF STAFF – none

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Approved:

Christine M. Brestrup
Interim Planning Director

Stephen Schreiber, Chair

DATE: _____