

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD

Wednesday, February 1, 2017, 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: Stephen Schreiber, Chair, Robert Crowner, Christine Gray-Mullen, Michael Birtwistle, Jack Jemsek, Maria Chao, Greg Stutsman

ABSENT: Richard Roznoy, Pari Riahi

STAFF: Christine Brestrup, Planning Director
Steven McCarthy, Administrative Assistant

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

I. MINUTES

No minutes available for review at this time.

II. LINCOLN-SUNSET LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE

Town of Amherst Preliminary Study Report on Lincoln-Sunset Local Historic District – discussion and recommendation

Steven Bloom, Chair, and Maurianne Adams presented on behalf of the Lincoln-Sunset Local Historic District Study Committee. Mr. Bloom began by discussing new answers he had researched to questions that came up at the previous meeting. Local Historic Districts can be increased in size after they have been established, but one must form a new study committee to do so. The other side of Amity Street, discussed as potentially part of the LHD, is of a different scale and character than the proposed boundaries – it is much older, and the lots are of a somewhat different scale. The LHD decided not to include it in the current proposed district.

Design guidelines for the Elm Street LHD in Northampton were discussed. It was very interesting to see that the Elm Street LHD was established in 1994 but no design standards were established until 2010. The standards were developed by PVPC. The Elm Street LHD is only united by geographic parameters – the area contains over 300 years of styles. This allows for the construction of new and large buildings, including the Smith College Campus Center. There is a glossary in terms of design for old buildings, and guidelines for the general design, building alignment and setback, architecture, and materials of new construction. The emphasis is on the compatibility of new buildings and alterations with the existing site design in the area, but generally the guidelines are open.

A topic of discussion at the last meeting was an informal list of survey responses provided by Mr. Bloom for a survey that was conducted via email. Some of the responses were from Nutting Avenue, McClure and Phillips Streets, which were originally part of the study. There is no threshold prescribed for how many residents have to respond for an LHD to be legitimate, and response to this survey was good, considering the typical response rates of surveys of this style.

Mr. Bloom reported that the Committee has rigorously followed all procedures prescribed and has held public meetings. The concerns of Planning Board members relating to the low response rate were unfounded, he said. This is a very unique town, small, with two colleges and a major university, and planning for it requires bold, creative thinking, and statutory protections, or it will turn into a place like Newark, DE, [home of the University of Delaware] a town that has been so inundated with development over historic areas that it no longer has any local character.

Ms. Brestrup clarified a point with regard to the survey response. A lot of the surveys don't have an address associated with them, so they are not able to be mapped.

Ms. Adams spoke about the matter of the six B-L properties between Hallock and McLellan Streets along North Pleasant Street, which had been an area of contention at the last meeting. There is currently significant debate regarding the future of the B-L district.

Ms. Adams talked about the relationship between the regulations of the LHD and zoning requirements, stating that zoning would supersede the LHD regulations. She referred to Mr. Carson's memo in which he stated that North Pleasant Street should not be the boundary of the LHD and noted that she and others have concerns about the architectural and historical integrity of the western edge of North Pleasant Street.

Ms. Adams stated that the Board was already balancing two competing concerns stated in the Master Plan: preserving the architectural design, appearance, and distinctive characteristics of buildings and places, and encouraging new designs compatible with existing buildings in the district. It is important to preserve the streetscape of historically viable neighborhoods. The B-L properties include two very small historic houses on McLellan Street: the Harvey White House (1860) and the Ernest Steves house, formerly Silverscape Design. There are other houses that she considers historic, some of which housed Amherst's earliest African-American families.

It is worth noting that some of the buildings in the proposed district are three stories tall and substantial in size. Some large houses can be expanded upon, even vertically, without losing the character of the street, or coming into conflict with the restrictions of the LHD. Ms. Adams asserted that, should new zoning be incorporated, new zoning would supersede the restrictions of the LHD, and the LHD Commission would only be concerned with the visual integrity of the streetscape.

Mr. Bloom announced that Chris Skelly, Director of Local Programs at the Massachusetts Historical Commission, has more information and will be present at a meeting at 3:00 in the Town Hall Second Floor Conference Room on February 2nd, 2017.

There was discussion about the Planning Board's role in the process of establishing a Local Historic District.

Ms. Adams said the LHD Study Committee is choosing to ask for the Board's recommendation, but they are not a statutory part of the process. The step by step process as defined does not require the approval of the Planning Board.

Tom Ehrgood, a former member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, was present to give insight into the process from his experience as a member of the Dickinson LHD Commission.

Ms. Brestrup clarified that this local historic district does not override zoning, but to some extent it has that effect; to maintain the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood, the LHD would not allow drastically different development from what is there already in the zone. The Commission would have fairly significant control over what may or may not be built in these neighborhoods.

Mr. Schreiber said that the predominant use in this area is that of a single family residence, which is currently allowed by right. If the LHD was incorporated, single family home developments would still be allowed by right after review by the LHD. Any projects allowed subject to the granting of a Special Permit or by Site Plan Review would also be subject to LHD review. The six properties in the B-L along North Pleasant Street are also subject to Design Review Board review.

Mr. Ehrgood said that for uses allowed by right in the Dickinson LHD, if there is no building permit necessary, then no LHD approval is needed.

Mr. Stutsman thanked the Committee for their hard work on the proposal, and agreed that there are definitely some sensitive areas worth protecting. He expressed two concerns: that of guidelines and criteria, and the inclusion of the North Pleasant Street area.

Mr. Ehrgood said that the guidelines read by Mr. Bloom are from the Elm Street LHD [in Northampton]. Northampton finds that those guidelines have been satisfactory for their district.

There was further discussion about the need for design guidelines.

Mr. Ehrgood observed that a design guideline is not the guarantor of a good decision - good decisions come from a good process, with people looking carefully at all relevant criteria.

Mr. Bloom said that this is a neighbor-generated effort, and there are very specific guidelines defining architectural styles, as well as very broad guidelines saying that original architectural

elements should be kept if at all possible, and architectural elements falsifying or obscuring the architectural heritage of the building should be avoided. These broad guidelines can apply to any architectural style. In the Dickinson LHD, the styles are very disparate, as they are in the proposed LHD.

Ms. Adams said that she has been using the Mass Commission operational statements as an example for guidelines, and the last sentence is that “The commission shall not make any recommendations or requirements except for the purpose of preventing developments incongruous to the historic aspects or the architectural common character of the surrounding historical district.”

They have a large district with a great deal of consistency as well as a broad historical range of architecture; there could be prototypes and analogues for modifications and construction, but primarily the LHD Study Committee wants the Commission to have the opportunity to speak to people as they are making their plans.

Mr. Schreiber noted that in the presentation, the Committee talked about threats to the District, such as subdivided lots; one example of which is the barn on Lincoln Avenue that was torn down despite neighborhood outcry. There would have been benefit to design review for the replacement garage. One of the biggest reasons to support this proposal is the threat of subdivisions of lots, including the creation of flag lots. In the District, there are two types of lots - larger ones that can be subdivided, and tiny lots that are already nonconforming; with those, there is not much development possible.

Ms. Adams expressed concern about people buying multiple tiny lots and combining them to allow new construction.

Mr. Ehrgood noted that in the Dickinson Historical District, the Commission has dealt with relatively small issues, such as small playgrounds and signs. Their main focus is on avoiding negative change, not insisting on integrity. Their standard is to decide if they think a change will be consistent with the preservation of the district; not a strict architectural preservationist approach.

Mr. Stutsman said that complexity is a good reason to have guidelines in place; out of the myriad architectural styles in the district, which styles would a commission member favor? He added that he was comfortable with the process as it relates to changes to, say, an existing single family house, but not so much with new development on a subdivided lot, or new commercial/mixed use buildings on North Pleasant Street - what will be the preferred style? This could be better suited to a form based code. He appreciates that these are neighborhood groups that would have difficulty with form based code. Especially with the inclusion of the North Pleasant Street corridor it is very important that comprehensive design standards are created.

Mr. Ehrgood noted that the Town has not provided much staff for LHD efforts. Perhaps staff could provide applicable provisions from regulations.

Ms. Adams noted that guidelines follow the establishment of the Commission, which follows the establishment of the LHD. According to the MHC guidelines, the Committee is tasked with coming up with boundaries, evidence, a historical narrative, etc., not defined guidelines.

Mr. Birtwistle said that in the current existing LHD bylaw, the criteria for determinations and exclusions provide a detailed framework of things that can and cannot be done. Specific guidelines written by the Commission might be useful, but it might not be necessary. If the Planning Board is in favor of an LHD, Criteria #8 and #9 provide a decent place to start. He urged the Commission to think about the question of guidelines again given that two different districts will be involved.

Ms. Gray-Mullen informed the Board and the Applicants that she had reviewed Northampton’s Elm Street LHD design standards and found them to be very rigid and specific which is something she wouldn’t want to see in the proposed LHD. Throughout the history of the Dickinson LHD there has been a lot of discussion on what to include in the guidelines - how specific to get, etc. If the Commission came to an agreement, how are potential guidelines vetted, accepted and approved, and do property owners get a heads up?

Mr. Ehrgood described the process as laid out in the Bylaw; the commission makes a proposal, which is noticed like meeting, although letters are not sent. They give 15 days' notice and, and then at the next meeting they can formally adopt the regulations. With different commissioners and different circumstances the process could be made different.

Ms. Adams added that this is a grassroots movement that came from the neighborhood. She asserted that the people of the neighborhood want this to happen, and from what Mr. Ehrgood said, the inclusiveness of the process depends on the commissioners and the process they are using. The Committee would want maximum input as they determine the criteria.

Mr. Bloom showed a picture in the presentation which showed a pre-fab house of 1990s vintage within the District, and said it was an example of exactly what the Committee would like to prevent in their neighborhood. Mr. Stutsman asked if that meant the Commission would disallow that style of building in the District. Mr. Bloom replied that he personally would not approve of such a building if he were a commissioner, as it degrades the historic neighborhood.

Paige Wilder added that it has nothing to do with who is on the commission or whether or not they like a given building – they will focus on defined historical design standards. Buildings such as that prefab would not be built as they do not match historical standards.

Jennifer Taub spoke in support of the proposed district. The neighborhood is a treasure to Amherst, and these properties – two of which are on Lincoln Avenue – are “prefabricated shacks” which are an eyesore in the neighborhood. She does not want Amherst to become a historic New England town where historical buildings are torn down for prefab boxes. Residents in the area passionately want to protect the beauty in the neighborhood.

Ms. Gray-Mullen asked about ‘new houses’. She asked if the LHD would prevent new, green, more desirable houses to be built on subdivided land.

Mr. Ehrgood replied that LHD commissions have jurisdiction only over the alteration of exterior architectural features. Commissions look at a building’s relationship to other houses in the district, and the LHD is made to protect what stands, not to remove unfortunately designed buildings. When you evaluate a change, you have to accept what it is, not what it should have been.

Ms. Gray-Mullen clarified that she was asking about a new building, including green elements and lots of glass that doesn’t fit with what’s already there.

Mr. Ehrgood said that the bylaw encourages new and innovative architectural techniques. Most similar bylaws don’t have the opening for new architecture, but the Amherst one was amended to include it. They would have to evaluate what this new style is in relation to the district. A project will not be ruled out just because it’s different – there will be consideration of whether or not it is compatible. A judgment can only be made with the input of an architect like Steve Schreiber.

Mr. Crouner gave the example of a house on Taylor Street where an applicant wanted to put up a pre-fabricated unit, and the Planning Board put forth conditions that made it fit better in the neighborhood; it looks much better now.

From his experience on the Comprehensive Planning Committee, Mr. Crouner knows it is a top priority in the Master Plan to try to preserve historic neighborhoods. A failing of the Master Plan is that several objectives are in tension with each other, and it was left to boards, Town Meeting, and others to resolve these tensions. As a Planning Board we need to figure out a way to increase the size and uses of the town center, but also be conscious of the neighborhood right next door that is in continual conversation with the town center. One of the ways to accomplish this is by agreeing there is an historic dimension to this neighborhood, and that it has a political, demographic, and architectural history. These make it a nice place to live, make residents proud to be from there, and there is value to all residents in seeing where Amherst came from and how this interacts with the new parts of downtown.

Mr. Crouner said that he supported this proposal and the boundary as proposed, and did not think the establishment of an LHD there would be in conflict with the mixed-use goals for the North Pleasant

Street area. Some of these buildings are already mixed use. He believes that the North Pleasant Street buildings can turn over in a way that is in harmony with the rest of the neighborhood. It would make development a bit more difficult, but it is an important step towards finding a future that respects all the goals we have for Amherst. He proposed that the Study Committee consider waiting until fall Town Meeting to bring forward their proposal; the Planning Board is working on reimagining the downtown transitional zone, and hopefully the proposals could be presented together to harmonize the two proposals and show a way forward for increasing the density and diversity of the town center while respecting the historic neighborhood abutting it.

Ms. Chao agreed and said that she has flipped in her thinking about the district. She agreed that it was early to have design guidelines, but at the same time, some of the bylaws in the existing Dickinson LHD are very specific, such as dimensional and setback requirements. Having some kind of bare-bones understanding of what exactly this would entail would help her fully buy into the proposal. She said that the North Pleasant Street strip has always been contentious, and it is a good idea to work together to envision the future of those lots. It is a little overreaching and counterproductive to the Master Plan ideals to overregulate those, as the Master Plan emphasizes higher-density, mixed-use development in the town and village centers, and a lot of those lots are underutilized.

Mr. Stutsman agreed that the area south of Amity Street should be included, and agreed with Mr. Crowner and Ms. Chao that this proposal is best presented alongside a Planning Board proposal to address the North Pleasant Street corridor. Throughout recent discussions about the use of this area, consensus has been that there needs to be more discussion and community input until a cohesive proposal is developed.

Rolf Karlstrom cautioned the Board against debating the merits of LHDs in general, and encouraged focusing on the historic value of the district at hand. As it stands, there are some houses recently built in the district that could have been designed to better fit the character of the area. This is an historic area that we would like to preserve, and we need to figure out logical ways to preserve the area as a livable historic neighborhood while developing downtown. LHD designation is a way to show that we value it and want to move forward in our town while preserving what we have. The Board is not judging whether or not LHDs in the abstract are reasonable, but whether or not this one is worthy of support.

Mr. Jemsek questioned whether or not there was support within the entire LHD, and was also concerned about overreach. The town has established a smaller NHR district, and there is no question that that part holds historical value and needs protection, but the district as proposed seems too large. He said it seemed like the proposal exaggerated the level of support throughout the whole district. He said he agreed strongly with Mr. Roznoy's memo about the importance of property rights and other aspects of the memo as well.

There was further discussion about the level of support that the district has among property owners.

Sarah la Cour, Executive Director of the Business Improvement District, brought to attention Section 8.2 of LHD Bylaw, which states that in the case of new construction or additions to existing structures, the Commission may impose additional dimensional and setback requirements in addition to those that are applicable by current statute or bylaw. This runs in conflict with Ms. Adams' earlier point that dimensional requirements only run through zoning, not the LHD. She disagreed with the Committee's earlier point that there is overwhelming support within the District for its establishment; only 20% of people responded positively to the survey earlier mentioned by Mr. Bloom, and very few respondents were from the North Pleasant Street section. She stated her strong support for the Lincoln Avenue/Sunset Avenue/North Prospect Street section, but was concerned that the Committee may be using a preservation tool to do something other than preserve the historical integrity of a neighborhood. Speaking about the B-L zoning district, she emphasized that what has been suggested over time is a transition zone. She suggested waiting on including the B-L properties, and having LHD inclusion be discussed in the public forums related to the downtown and the B-L.

Jim Wald, member of the Select Board, spoke in support of the new district; he was a member of the Historical Commission when they called for the preservation plan. He later served on the Design Review Board and was last chair of Master Plan Committee. He disagreed with Mr. Crowner and Ms. Adams' characterization of the contradictions in the Master Plan – he said that it sets out a group of values, and it is the task of the people and the boards and committees to interpret them subjectively as applied to particular cases. He believed that most people in town are in agreement that they want downtown development as well as to preserve neighborhood character, and it is possible to pursue these goals simultaneously. He said that in cases like these, boundaries are subjective – he may have drawn them differently, but the MHC has significant experience and if they found these boundaries acceptable then he has no problem going forward with them.

Mr. Wald emphasized that LHDs are not new or rare – there were many questions about them in the abstract, but they have been used in the United States since the 1930s and have been in the MGL since the 1950s. There are over 200 in the Commonwealth. He said that some of the common objections about property rights don't stand up - case law is clearly in favor of LHDs. They have wide regulatory power, including the ability to regulate for aesthetics. He felt that based on experience both in the Dickinson LHD and across the Commonwealth, as well as the advice of Mr. Malloy, the language in the bylaw, the principles enshrined in the Master Plan and Design Review standards, it is possible to get a good idea of what the Commission would look like going forward. He said that holding up this proposal due to the lack of guidelines would not be constructive. He urged the Board to think with clarity of purpose about these deliberations; they are not about the merit of LHDs in general, just the merits of this LHD.

Ms. Wilder said that a 20% response to the survey in question is overwhelming compared to the typical level of response to a survey of that type. In addition, there were no negative responses, and even many members of the Committee did not respond to that informal survey. She said the neighborhood is very close-knit, and many people have lived there a long time. From her experience interacting in the neighborhood, support for the proposal is overwhelming. Recalling Mr. Crowner's earlier point about the recently built house on Taylor Street that was improved with Planning Board design standards, she stated that a similar house was constructed on Lincoln Avenue by the same owner; in this case, there were no design standards imposed and the building is an eyesore.

Mr. Jemsek said that he was working off of the survey, and there are people that said no. He is concerned about the minority that Mr. Roznoy spoke about, as the regulations can be far-reaching.

Ms. Taub encouraged people to reach consensus about which areas need protection. It does seem like there is consensus about some streets in the District, she said.

Ms. Brestrup noted that the B-L district is a very contentious area, and forums are beginning soon on what to do with the downtown and transitional areas. She suggested cutting out these contentious properties from the proposed district and proceeding with the residential portion which has a good deal of agreement.

Mr. Schreiber expressed his deep appreciation for the work of the Committee. He stated that the area that has a National Historic Register District overlay is uncontested, and that the rest of it has a very unique Amherst quality. He expressed concern, especially about the North Pleasant Street corridor, but is completely in favor of moving forward with the R-G section.

Ms. Adams said that the Study Committee's mandate expires in June, which is one of the reasons they were eager to present at the spring Town Meeting. She said it sounds like everyone is coming to a compromise where the B-L properties are removed from consideration for the time being, and the proposal proceeds with the R-G properties.

Mr. Schreiber expressed his concern about multiple rounds of review for proposed projects by 7-9 person committees. If possible, he would ideally want a circumstance in which the LHD has jurisdiction on all projects not otherwise subject to ZBA, DRB or Planning Board review.

Mr. Stutsman suggested including the B-L properties in the LHD, but advising that any projects subject to DRB would be exempt from LHD review. Mr. Ehrgood replied that it was possible to

amend section 6.1 to reflect that. Mr. Schreiber said there were circumstances in the current map as drawn that could require ZBA, DRB, and LHD Commission review.

Mr. Birtwistle agreed with the concern about timing. Waiting to combine the proposal with future plans for the transition zone is both attractive and daunting. The Master Plan emphasizes preserving cultural and historic resources, calls for the increase of historic zoning protections in Amherst's zoning provisions, and calls for the establishment of new historic districts – it seems clear what is intended here. Because of the time pressure, it is a reasonable compromise to express support for the LHD as proposed with the exception of the six B-L properties – some members want protections all the way down to St. Brigid's Church, and some want the LHD completely off North Pleasant Street. Those six properties are also already subject to DRB review.

Mr. Birtwistle MOVED that the Planning Board express its support for and endorsement of the Local Historic District Study Committee Preliminary Study Report for the proposed North Prospect-Lincoln-Sunset Historic District with the exception of the following six properties, all currently in the B-L zoning district: 256 North Pleasant, 264 North Pleasant, 274 North Pleasant, 284 North Pleasant, 10 McClellan and 16 McClellan. Mr. Crowner seconded. After discussion the vote was 2-5-0 (Schreiber, Gray-Mullen, Jemsek, Chao & Stutsman opposed). The motion failed.

Mr. Crowner MOVED that the Planning Board express its support for and endorsement of the Local Historic District Study Committee Preliminary Study Report for the proposed North Prospect-Lincoln-Sunset Historic District with the exception of the properties along North Pleasant Street. Mr. Stutsman seconded and then offered an amendment to the motion to state "with the exception of the properties along North Pleasant Street and the two properties on McClellan Street that are in the B-L district" [10 McClellan and 16 McClellan]. Mr. Crowner accepted the amendment to the motion and Mr. Stutsman seconded the amended motion. The vote was 5-2-0. (Jemsek and Gray-Mullen opposed) The motion passed.

Ms. Adams said that the attention given to the number of respondents to the survey is unfortunate. It is not something the Committee was asked to do until they reached the public hearing stage. The Board asked for numbers that are in no way representative of the support the Committee believes they have in the neighborhood.

Mr. Schreiber said he did not use the numbers in his determination at all, and sees some structural issues in the way the LHD process is laid out.

Mr. Bloom thanked the Board, and said it was unfortunate they seized on the informal list; he expressed regrets for sending it. He clarified that solar panels and skylights are allowed in an LHD, particularly if they are not visible from public way.

Ms. Gray-Mullen said that if a house faces north, that is good; if it faces south, that could be a problem.

Mr. Bloom replied that they just need to have as little visibility from the public way as possible. Mr. Schreiber added that the Commission looks at the neighborhood context, and that context already includes houses with solar panels.

III. REMOTE PARTICIPATION

- A.** What is it?
- B.** How does it work?
- C.** Questions and answers

Mr. Schreiber presented information about the newly adopted Remote Participation regulations passed by the Select Board. There was some discussion and the Board understood that they did not need to take action on the matter. Written information was distributed to the Board.

IV. PLANNING & ZONING

A. Zoning Subcommittee Report

Mr. Crowner said that the deadline for submitting articles for Spring Town Meeting is at the end of this month. There is one more meeting to decide which articles to submit. There are a few articles under consideration. The first one relates to a request from Valley CDC to find a way to create or build a facility for single room occupancy targeted towards very low income people. SROs are a form of efficiency apartments for people coming from homelessness, etc., and they don't fit well into the use categories we have. The most applicable use categories currently in the zoning bylaw are apartments and nonprofit residential uses. Non-profit residential uses are allowed by right in all zones. These SROs may have 20 or 30 people in them, and could be uncomfortable for neighbors in some zones. It is also not clear if these projects fit the nonprofit use category. Valley CDC has considered making some of the apartments one bedroom, so as to satisfy the mix requirements, but any expense added will make the project difficult. They would rather not have that restriction. The idea that we are going to propose is to keep the condition in the ZBL that an apartment building must have a mix of units, but allow that cap to be waived by if the units are 100% affordable. This does not get them over the 24 unit cap, but that may not be fatal to the project. They would like this to go before Spring Town Meeting.

One warrant article that is ready is that of non-substantive corrections, which will allow the correction of erroneous cross-reference numbering and other numbering errors by the Town Clerk without needing to change it at Town Meeting.

There are two, perhaps three, articles dealing with reassigning and relocating footnotes from the dimensional tables.

There is a long list of articles being started. Recreational marijuana needs to be dealt with in some way. The Legislature has delayed the rollout of that law by 6 months; it will involve at least one use category, and possibly some standards and conditions relating to other laws.

There are reviews underway of the flood-prone conservancy zone and the B-L zone, as well as work by the DPWG on the Municipal Parking District; it is possible a zoning article may come out of those efforts.

Mr. Stutsman added that there is a petition article for Town Meeting that would downzone some parcels in the area of the Beacon project on Cows Road.

Mr. Jemsek asked about how recreational marijuana would be addressed in the zoning bylaw.

Mr. Stutsman said the ZSC had not gone into too much depth on that issue yet – the understanding is that the implementation delay gave municipalities six extra months to look into the issue and it can be pushed to fall Town Meeting.

Mr. Birtwistle asked if a site had been identified for the SRO project. Mr. Stutsman replied that Valley CDC is looking at a number of sites, but they don't have a site publicly identified yet and won't have one by Town Meeting. This would be the most expeditious way to allow this to happen.

B. Planning Issues

Mr. Schreiber said that the Board is waiting to hear back from PVPC on the topic of technical assistance with the downtown forums, so the issue can wait for now. There will be a joint meeting with the Downtown Parking Working Group and the Planning Board on the 28th of February.

Ms. Brestrup said that this meeting would be an introduction on what can be done in the Municipal Parking District.

Mr. Stutsman said that the Zoning Subcommittee wants to pass on to the DPWG the idea of increasing parking requirements in the MPD, in concert with a payment in lieu mechanism. Hopefully either the ZSC or DPWG could look into this further and examine approaches in other communities with help from staff.

Ms. Gray-Mullen said that the DPWG has only spoken about this at one meeting, and they have asked staff to look into examples. When they get examples they can forward them to whole Board.

Mr. Stutsman said that Sarah la Cour attended the ZSC meeting today, and pointed out that there is a new parking model, a downtown parking benefit area, that is being used around state and could be proposed here.

C. Public Comment Period – no comments

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Signing of Decisions

The Board signed the decision for SPR2017-00008 – 113 Cows Road – W.D. Cows (Atkins North).

B. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting - none

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting

The Board has received the annual newsletter from the PVPC, and their top ten resolves for 2017. The PVPC is planning to vote on this list at its next meeting on February 9th.

Mr. Schreiber said that the resolves set the PVPC's priorities for the coming year. Historically, the Board has been very interested in the rail issue. When Amherst was in danger of and lost its rail service, the Board tried to bring rail back to Amherst. Resolve #1 looks like it addresses some of these concerns. It is important to have train good service to Palmer, and possibly a connector rail to Amherst [in the future].

Ms. Gray-Mullen said was she pleased to see so many environmental concerns, given the current political climate.

VII. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS

The Planning Board endorsed ANR2017-00008, James Hoerle, 908 South East Street, outlining property proposed to be included in an APR (Agricultural Preservation Restriction).

VIII. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS

One upcoming application besides Beacon's North Square is at 28 Amity Street – Amherst Coffee. They are expanding into the former Chamber of Commerce space and adding outdoor seating.

IX. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS

Amherst Hills, an old subdivision, will be coming back to the Board to request more lot releases. The developers also want to resurrect the idea of a three-party agreement; rather than having to come forth with escrow money to finish the infrastructure, they will propose an arrangement where the town, the developer, and the developers' bank would make an agreement to satisfy requirements to put money aside.

X. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – Jack Jemsek and Christine Gray-Mullen reported that there will be a meeting next Thursday, and they will focus on marijuana regulations

Community Preservation Act Committee – Pari Riahi – no report.

Agricultural Commission – Stephen Schreiber reported that there is a meeting this coming Tuesday, and there is nothing on the agenda with Planning Board relevancy.

Design Review Board – Michael Birtwistle reported that Amherst Coffee will be appearing for new signage tomorrow.

Housing and Sheltering Committee – Greg Stutsman reported that the HSC is in process of merging with the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. They may be looking for a revision of the trust bylaw at fall Town Meeting. They are meeting next week.

Zoning Subcommittee – Rob Crowner, Greg Stutsman and Maria Chao - Already reported above.

UTAC (University and Town of Amherst Collaborative) – Greg Stutsman and Christine Gray-Mullen – no report.

Downtown Parking Working Group – Christine Gray-Mullen and Richard Roznoy - Already reported above.

Transportation Advisory Committee – Richard Roznoy – no report.

XI. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Mr. Schreiber is considering holding a Planning Board meeting at the new UMass Design Building. The building is beautiful and has a unique structural system.

XII. REPORT OF STAFF

Town Meeting is earlier this year; it starts April 26th. A list of proposed Warrant items needs to be submitted to the Select Board's Office by the 28th of February.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 9:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted: Approved:

Steven McCarthy
Administrative Assistant

Stephen Schreiber, Chair

DATE: _____