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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
TOWN OF NORTH READING, MASS.

Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

MINUTES

Tuesday, August 15, 2023

Mr. Warren Pearce, Chairperson called the Tuesday, August 15, 2023 meeting of the Community Planning Commission to order at 7:30p.m. in Room 14 of the North Reading Town Hall, 235 North Street, North Reading, MA and via Virtual Meeting (Zoom participants may call 1-301-715-8592, meeting code 9854300926, or visit <http://us02web.zoom.us/j/9854300926>).

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Warren Pearce, Chairperson
David Rudloff, Vice Chairperson
Jeremiah Johnston

STAFF

PRESENT: Danielle McKnight, AICP
Town Planner/Community Planning Administrator
Debra Savarese, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Pearce informed all present that the meeting is being recorded.

Minutes

The minutes have not been completed.

Planning Administrator Updates

MBTA Communities Housing - discussion

Mrs. McKnight stated that the school committee meeting on August 29th will be in-person and virtual. The CPC can participate virtually if that is what they choose to do. She believes that they will be meeting in the Distance Learning lab, but will check to be sure. She will prepare a presentation for that meeting. The CPC did discuss scheduling some public meetings after the meeting with the school committee.

Mr. Pearce asked if they are just informing the school committee about this, or are they looking for very specific input from them, because the site their going to use already exist, they don't have to project what it's going to do to the school enrollment.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she believes the CPC decided that starting with letting the School Committee know about the MBTA zoning and asking if the school committee is in agreement with their approach would be best. She does think that it's good to be clear with people because this is an already developed site the likelihood is lower that it would be redeveloped, but if they're going to change the zoning on it then there's always a possibility that owners could say that they do want to redevelop it, and if it does get redeveloped children cannot be restricted from that site, ever again. Unless it's at the choice of the person who wants to develop it. The restriction can't be in the zoning.

Mr. Pearce stated that the CPC did try to restrict it by making it 1 and 2 bedroom units, to try to limit how many can live in the unit.

Mrs. McKnight state that was probably Edgewood because Martin's Landing wanted to limit it to seniors.

Mr. Rudloff stated that as far as what the CPC is doing now, and the way the pro formas work out, developers we don't want to do more than two bedrooms.

Mrs. McKnight asked if they still want to meet with the school committee.

Mr. Rudloff stated that it will be productive because they can assure them of what the existing conditions are.

Mrs. McKnight concurred with the CPC that the school committee are voters and an important committee and they need to make sure that the school committee understands what the approaches are and why. She will also mention that this is a town meeting decision and if it doesn't pass at town meeting the CPC will need to come up with something else, but this is the most conservative approach that they can take right now.

Mr. Rudloff suggest that a diagram would be helpful to show to the school committee.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she's going to do a PowerPoint and give the history of why the CPC is doing this.

Mr. Johnston stated that it's important to build into this the idea that this is something that's happening. Our options are limited in terms of pushback, and it seems like our idea from the very beginning was going to the school committee and saying that they are the ones touching the nerve of the town, and if this becomes a school issue, then the whole thing could fall apart. It's important to stress when they have this meeting with the school committee that this is the way the State's going and our options, if we say no, are limited. So, we are open to suggestions, but there's a certain kind of reality that everybody has to face.

Mr. Pearce stated that they want their support, so if they go to town meeting with this and school department gets up and says, we support this that will go a long way.

Mr. Johnston stated that makes total sense to him. It almost feels like a frustrating thing that they have to be the ones to say to the town "This is what the State's telling us. This is what they have to do." There's limited ways they can push back. They found a great convenient kind of way to approach this that minimizes what they perceive to be the town's apprehensions of what could otherwise be the State's interpretation of all this. There does need to be a matter of fact statement of this is what they have to do, unless the school committee has something tangible to give back to the CPC in terms of alternatives. If they stonewall this they're just going to push the CPC into a corner and that's going to waste town resources trying to fight the State.

Mrs. McKnight stated that those are really good points and she will definitely work that into the presentation. Just the idea that this is legislation that's been passed, and the town's ability to opt out is that they don't have any.

Mr. Johnston stated for the record that his family moved to North Reading from North Andover specifically for the proximity to the Reading MBTA station, so they are an MBTA community. There are a lot of people and families in this community where it doesn't apply to them. But there are a lot that it does apply to and he doesn't want us to be a community that's part of the problem. Let's be the solution and they need to make sure that we bring other people to the table on that.

Mr. Rudloff stated that Mr. Griffin has been peeling back the layers to understand the genesis of it. So, he thinks it'd be good, because they've been trying to do that and he's not sure they ever got an answer of when this happened.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she wrote up the whole history of this for the presentation and she also emailed it to Mr. Griffin because he asked – but it is in the ShareFile for the CPC to review.

Mr. Rudloff stated that that is perfect because when they went to town meeting on this there were few people that asked why we're still doing this. We are an MBTA community and this is what's coming.

Mr. Pearce stated that the town could not comply, but the damage to the town could be great, because they could take away some of the town's funding for grants.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they thought they could say no and the cost would be just grants, but actually the Attorney General's office put out a statement a few months ago, saying that this is mandatory.

Mr. Pearce stated that they need to get all of the town boards on the same page. The more people that are knowledgeable about it, it should go smoothly.

Mrs. McKnight stated that this should also be presented to the Select Board. They are aware of it because it's been discussed at their meeting, but it would be nice to give them a presentation.

Mr. Johnston stated that as an attorney he thinks that they should lean on the town's counsel to tell the rest of the town and the boards that this is a requirement that's been vetted by Town Counsel. This isn't the CPC or the Select Board saying "Let's do this". He thinks that should be the first step forward in any kind of communication that they put out there. Here are all the ways the town is looking to manage and mitigate it.

Shay Lane subdivision – tree discussion

Mrs. McKnight stated that the Shay Lane subdivision and their street tree placement came to their attention recently, that somehow when the Shay Lane plans were approved they didn't notice that the trees are shown in the grass strip. They're supposed to be behind the grass strip per the regulations. The developer Dave Murray told her that he doesn't care where he puts the trees, and that we just need to tell him where we want them to be. She believes that this can be handled as a field change.

The consensus of the board is to make it a field change.

66 Winter Street – SPR – cont. P.H. 8:00PM

Mr. Rudloff moved, seconded by Mr. Johnston and voted 3-0: (Mr. Carroll & Mr. Griffin absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to continue the public hearing for 66 Winter Street until September 5, 2023 @ 8:00PM.

Roll call vote: Mr. Johnston, Mr. Pearce and Mr. Rudloff in favor, none opposed

17 Anthony Rd. & 346R Haverhill St. – Definitive Subdivision – cont. P.H. 8:15PM

Mr. Rudloff moved, seconded by Mr. Johnston and voted 3-0: (Mr. Carroll & Mr. Griffin absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to continue the public hearing for 17 Anthony & 346R Haverhill Street subdivision until September 5, 2023 @ 8:15PM.

Roll call vote: Mr. Johnston, Mr. Pearce and Mr. Rudloff in favor, none opposed

Adjournment at 8:15PM

Respectfully submitted,
Ryan Carroll, Clerk

