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Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

TOWN CLERK
NORTH READING, MA

MINUTES

Tuesday, August 3, 2021

Mr. Warren Pearce, Chairperson called the Tuesday, August 3, 2021 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.

MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Warren Pearce, Chairperson
Christopher Hayden, Vice Chairperson
Ryan Carroll, Clerk
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.

Warrant Articles for October Town Meeting – Discussion

Mrs. McKnight stated that the Gerry Noel, Building Inspector, will be submitting to the Town Administrator's office, the change to General bylaw for Swimming Pools, for inclusion to the October Town Meeting.

The CPC is in support of this change to the general bylaw.

Habitat for Humanity

Mrs. McKnight stated that Habitat for Humanity has made it known that they are interested in developing the following properties: 57 Haverhill Street, 44 & 46 Oakdale Road and 7 St. Theresa Street. There will be an RFP process that will be open and it wouldn't be a "highest bidder" situation. It would be the best overall value for the town's goal situation.

Mr. Pearce asked if this is an Article that the CPC would bring forth.

Mrs. McKnight stated yes. She has contact Town Council to see what would need to be done. They have the files on these properties and will review them, and draft the Article.

The consensus of the CPC is that they are in agreement to put out an RFP for these properties.

Main Street – Revised corridor study survey questions

Mr. Pearce stated that when they last spoke about this survey, they were concerned that the survey was directing people towards bicycle lanes. So, they asked Liz Oltman, Director of Transportation Planning with TEC Engineering to make some revisions to the survey.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she was going to suggest one change and that is where they ask if people would want sidewalks along Rte. 28. She would clarify that the sidewalks be consistent, complete sidewalks on both sides of the roadway.

Mr. Pearce stated that the sidewalks are well placed on the east side of the road, but on the west side there are far more, and larger openings (driveways) that would have to be sidewalked which also means there will be interaction between people and vehicles, so this would require some kind of controls (crosswalks)

Mr. Hayden stated that some of those driveways are violating the Massachusetts Department of Transportation because they're wider than 25'. If Rte. 28 is rebuilt they may make them smaller.

Mr. Pearce stated that they may have some level of grandfathering on those driveways. He is strictly looking at this from the viability of sidewalk on that side as opposed to keeping the side walk on the east side which seems to have been well placed. There may be a couple of sections of the west side of the highway of Rte. 28 that would benefit from a section of sidewalk, but he thinks it would be spotty.

Mr. Carroll stated that he doesn't disagree with Mr. Pearce's comments, but to Mr. Hayden's point, he thinks when the final design is flushed out it'll determine what they end up doing with the curb cuts and the roadway and that will dictate the ultimate design. But, he thinks the question to the people, of the town, is a clear consistent path from one end of town to the other.

Mr. Hayden stated that there are no crosswalks at Kitty's Restaurant, Walmart, prior Stop & Shop site (97 Main St.) and the current Stop & Shop site (265 Main St.) and the corner at Park Street. There are lights, but no crossing lights.

Mr. Pearce stated that he doesn't think that it would be as advantageous as putting more crosswalks, would be.

Mr. Hayden stated that a sidewalk should be added on the bridge.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she would like to know if the CPC is more satisfied with these questions. She asked if she should change the wording of that question because she doesn't want people to read it and think that whoever wrote the survey wasn't aware that Rte. 28 has sidewalks. She wants them to at least acknowledge that what they're asking about is filling in the sidewalk gaps and making sure there are complete sidewalks throughout both sides of Main Street. She would ask the question of how important do they think it is to ensure that both sides of Main Street have complete, connected sidewalks.

Mr. Johnston stated that continuous sidewalks would be a better way to phrase it. The one thing that he mentioned to Liz Oltman of TEC Engineering is that they have to sell the vision, of the question they're asking them, just in terms of order. Question 4 kind of gets to that and he would lead with the question "What do you imagine in the future?" and "What do you want in the future?"

Mr. Pearce asked the board what they thought of the 3-lane roadway, in the Town of Reading.

Mr. Hayden stated that he loves it, and it doesn't really slow down the vehicle traffic.

Mr. Pearce stated that he drives Rte. 28, at different hours of the day and he doesn't think that there is a lot of traffic. So, do they really need this 3-lane in North Reading?

Mr. Hayden stated that the problem he has is when you go down to 2-lanes and there are cars that want to make a turn, they put their blinker on and then they stop, now he has to stop. If they had a turn lane and they know how to use it, then the other lane can continue on.

Mr. Johnston stated that he drives Rte. 114, quite a bit, and people tend to drive faster on that roadway and the in and out of that central lane can be a little bit more dodgy. It would be good if Rte. 28 could go at a slower pace.

Mr. Pearce stated that he is much happier with the revisions that were made to the survey.

110-124 Main Street – endorsement of plans

Mr. Carroll moved, seconded by Mr. Hayden and voted 4-0: (Mr. Rudloff absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to endorse the plan entitled, "RECR Realty, LLC, 110 Main Street, North Reading, MA 01864"; dated February 8, 2021; last revised May 19, 2021; drawn by Civil Consultants, Inc. Subject to the terms and conditions of the Certificate of Conditional Approval dated June 22, 2021.

265 Main Street – endorsement of plans

Mrs. McKnight stated that Mr. Hayden pointed out something that she thinks is worth mentioning which is that these stations have graphic advertising on them and she doesn't think that they noticed that or talked about it. She believes that this is a sign, but she will discuss this with Mr. Noel, Building Inspector when he returns from vacation, about whether these would require sign permits.

Mr. Hayden stated that there is a 55" television on the front of the EV station that he did not see before, and the charging rate on it is 30 miles per hour which is very little.

Mr. Pearce stated that this got him thinking about the gas stations which have the televisions at every single pump.

Mr. Hayden stated that they only turn on when you are pumping gas. These EV stations run all the time. Even the specifications that are on the plans, say not to have the bollards block the vision of the television screens.

Mr. Carroll asked if they were just paid advertisers.

Mr. Hayden stated that they are paid advertisers.

Mr. Pearce asked if they show Stop on Shop on the screen.

Mr. Johnston stated it's a 56" media display too, that's like a sideways big screen television.

Mrs. McKnight stated that animated signage is not allowed in the zoning bylaw.

Mr. Pearce stated that they are going to hold off on signing the plans. He would like to have the applicant/engineer come back to a CPC meeting to have a discussion about this.

Mr. Carroll stated that on page 8 it says UV charges include high impact digital media screens to provide properties with branding and messaging as well as additional revenue opportunities.

Mr. Hayden stated that people driving through the parking lot are more than likely going to be distracted by it, and this becomes a safety hazard.

Mr. Pearce stated that he is surprised that they didn't mention this media screen at the meeting. If they had, they would have been told that they're not allowed. He doesn't remember seeing a screen when they were looking at the plans.

Mr. Hayden stated that the only thing showing on the UV charge was VOLTA.

Zoning Board of Appeals

265 Main Street – On the petition of Brian G. Fabo, representative for Dustin Pierce, Phillip Edison and Co. For a special permit to run a business that includes not only the sale of pet supplies but grooming services for animals as well as overnight stay and cat adoption.

The CPC reviewed the above-referenced application and has several questions and concerns:

- Will dogs be boarded overnight?
- What are the sanitary arrangements?
- Smells from waste will need to be considered.
- There should be provisions for what will be going into the pipes during bathing.

Additionally, the new use would require a site plan review from the CPC, per Section 200-95 of the Zoning Bylaw.

25 Westward Circle – On the petition of Tim Tannian for a home occupation special permit as a 3D photographer.

The CPC has reviewed the above-reference application and has the following comment:

1. The CPC does not object to the request, provided the business adheres to the criteria of §200-42.

Accessory Dwelling Unit Bylaw - Discussion

Mr. Pearce stated that when he read through the Town of Needham's research for ADUs he found that the State of Massachusetts has an ADU recommendation law of some kind and asked why they didn't look at that.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they do have a model bylaw and she can see what MAPC has and usually they're the ones who produce those things. She will get a copy and put it into the Citrix File for the CPC to review. She also thought that the Needham study was interesting.

Mr. Pearce stated that he enjoyed reading the Town of Needham study for the research that they did. He thinks they did a good job. They looked at everything and they answered a lot of questions that this board had. For example: they addressed quite thoroughly that the requirement of having it be a family member, is something that should not be done. It also says that if a reasonable law is made it can be applied to the illegal ones and bring them up to code and the people will be willing to do it because they know they'll know that it will be legal, after that.

Mr. Johnston stated that the Town of Reading bylaw seemed all appropriate. Nothing really stood out as overly restrictive.

Mr. Pearce stated that the Town of Reading is very different from this town, but he did like a lot of what they had, but he liked the Town of Needham better because there was a lot more detail put into it.

Mr. Hayden stated that they included this key for the requirements for ADU bylaws, for the eight towns that they were looking at. In every one of those towns it's a special permit to have an external building, for a separate building.

Mr. Pearce stated that the Town of Reading also requires a special permit. One of the questions that he would like an answer to is can a person just build an ADU.

Mr. Hayden stated that if it's made handicap accessible, and everything is on the first floor. He believes that he read that that is one of the requirements.

Mrs. McKnight stated that on the Town of Needham's website they have an interesting advocacy piece talking about all of the pros of doing something like this and what the need was.

Mr. Pearce stated that the real issue comes when someone builds a new building to be an ADU because that would be construed as damaging the value of the property. When they first started talking about this, it was discussed that picking an area in town and setting up a zone

for it, but he doesn't think that can be done. He thinks that the bylaw has to be applicable to the entire community.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she doesn't think that most towns have done that. She thinks that most of them have made it a blanket.

Mr. Hayden stated that the Town of Sudbury's bylaw says that you can only have so many occupants in the unit.

Mr. Pearce stated that the big question is, can they build a detached ADU in their backyard. The rest of it is not too big of a deal. It's legitimizing what's already there, is really a good move.

Mr. Carroll asked what would be the distinction between that and basically just not subdividing and building two properties on the same lot. The size restriction is that only distinction we have between stopping them from building a detached ADU, and not really considering, basically just building a second home on the property.

Mr. Pearce stated that you cannot build a second home on your property, in this town. He is wondering if they should even look at detached properties as being an existing detached property that can be converted, and how we differentiate that from somebody putting a shed in their backyard and then turning into an ADU.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they could have a garage and then two years later they come back and want to change it to an ADU.

Mr. Pearce stated that if the garage is existing, that would be an existing structure.

Mr. Carroll stated that if a garage is built with space above it, what stops it from becoming a 2-story ADU, because people do that all the time with attached ADUs.

Mr. Stuto of the Select Board asked how this is different than being able to finish a basement with a unit.

Mr. Pearce stated that it's being done, but its proper egress, that's the case. The CPC doesn't have an issue with building an ADU inside of an existing home, but we want to encourage them to pull permits and take care of safety items where there's two exits and fire proofing in the right places.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they should advertise more widely when they invite people to come give input on a draft bylaw before they even get to the public hearing.

Mr. Pearce stated that they should get input from the Building Department and Board of Health and then present it to the public, for comment.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the Development Team is meeting on September 1, 2021 at 9:00am. It would be a good idea to have a discussion with them.

Mr. Hayden stated that the Select Board, Finance Committee and Conservation should also give input.

Mr. Pearce asked Mr. Stuto if an ADU is added to a building does this now increase the value of the building, to the point where the town gets more tax dollars. One of the points that Needham's study said was that it allowed older people to stay in their home by being able to rent out a section of their home for additional income.

Mr. Stuto stated that it all depends on those who show up and hear about and view how it's going to affect everything in general, community-wise.

Mr. Pearce stated that if they limit an ADU to an existing home, the option is if everyone moves out, it can be turned back into a single family home, because that's what it was originally.

Mr. Stuto stated that the way that it will be seen economically is whether or not it affects quality of life. North Reading is attractive because it is not a renter's community.

Mr. Hayden stated that the Needham survey also said the only time they hear about an ADU, when they were illegal, was when there's a fire.

Mr. Pearce stated that they need to look at how they are going to approach detached ADUs. He asked the other members what they think about the detached ADUs.

Mr. Carroll stated that it's important to get the feedback from internal town professionals. They may have some creative solutions that to help the building inspector with the problems that he's encountered. It'll be interesting to hear what the Board of Health director has to say. He thinks that there may be some way to tie some other elements of the approval process for these. If we are going to allow them I think there's ways to ensure that they're done correctly, safely, and done in a way that does add value, not detract value and hurt other members of town that which is beneficial for all.

Mr. Pearce asked the members how they felt about attached vs. detached.

Mr. Carroll stated that he sees the apartment over the garage, if they can afford to do and they want to go that route, as long as there's off-street parking, and it's done correctly and safely, in

a way that the town knows it's there. i.e. – They're going forward for a permit and are expressly saying what they want to do.

Mr. Johnston stated that he's not against detached, as a rule, but he thinks as long as there are rules and regulations in place to account for all of these potential issues, he doesn't think that it should be prohibited, outright. He thinks there's a place for them and believes that multi-generational living quarters are going to become more modern. As a recent property buyer in town and having a large lot, if he wasn't able to have that option, he would probably look in another town.

Mr. Carroll stated that with the proper regulations properly enforced he doesn't think are a deterrent for the person who really wants it.

Mr. Pearce stated that they need to have proper setbacks, if there is going to be an ADU' built over a garage, because a garage currently does not have the same setbacks as a home.

Mr. Carroll stated that if the height alone triggered an additional setback because it had a potential to be an ADU, the building inspector could head that off at the pass.

Mr. Hayden stated that the ADU needs to be invisible from the street.

Mr. Pearce stated that it would be a good idea to have this discussed a Development Team meeting to get some more input.

Planning Administrator Updates

Main & Winter Street

Mrs. McKnight stated that the last time they talked about preparing a presentation for the Select Board to discuss Main and Winter Street. Since then she and Mr. Pearce met and talked about her drafting something very basic, and then at the next CPC meeting everyone contribute to figuring out how that presentation goes. We also started to talk about the direction of that presentation as here's the work done to date, we're going to present it and this is what's been done and these are the findings. We would hold off of doing any sort of push for a particular outcome, but that would maybe follow at a later date. But, really what the need is right now is to just make the board of aware of what the work has entailed, and what we have found, so far, and what remain still outstanding.

Mr. Pearce stated that this isn't what they hoped to end up with from Abacus Architects, but he thinks that this is the best that they're going to get. So, they really need to make sure that initially they address the precept that they were handed in the beginning and that is it feasible

to put a package treatment plant in, and then actually build something and we have some conceptual ideas and we get some consensus on it, it will give us the opportunity to move forward. There's always that temptation to throw number around, but we want to stay away from too much of that. However, in the process of offering up a concept, the question of how much do we think that is going to cost, will come up. If that door gets open we can sort of answer that question as best we possibly can, with the help of Abacus. There is some movement of getting sewer, so we're looking at that as the possibility of having that opportunity come this way, a little sooner than we had thought.

Mr. Stuto stated that the sewer is in its infancy. There may be an opportunity to piggyback on Mass D.O.T. In his opinion this is really something that will affect how a developer would look at Winter Street. More importantly, the current owners of Winter Street will look at it. Because we're going to be moving past the concept stage on that one, hopefully, he thinks it's something where the resolution on whether or not that happens is going to hang very heavy on this and he doesn't see how outside of the concepts which we have to discuss, he doesn't see how anything concrete can move forward, it's just too big of a question.

Mr. Pearce stated that's why they want to keep this in a conceptual way, not so much in a plan, because if this other part of the project move forward they can say, "What do you think of our concept now, because we've got it all done". We were supposed to evaluate whether or not if we put a package treatment plant, would it support, or couldn't support - and the answer is yes and we have some concepts.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it's important to say that we were coming to the end of our work with Abacus, but it's okay to find a way to wrap up with them where they're leaving it with here's the information we got and here are your options, and to use that as a tool to further the discussion, as needed. It's fine to present what we've done and what they've come up with, but also say here are the outstanding questions. There's this big question about how there should be a public investment, if so, how much, and of what nature. That's still sort of to be discussed, that's okay, but she thinks that it's important to say that these are our findings and then, this is what still to come, as we try to advance the project.

Mr. Pearce stated that he would like to keep the idea of the marketplace in the concept.

Mr. Wallner of the Select Board asked if there was an estimate on the sewage, of when that might actually happen.

Mr. Pearce stated that there isn't, and there are still decisions to be made.

Mr. Stuto stated that there will be a Select Board meeting on September 8th and there should be an update on that.

Mrs. McKnight stated that there is a possibility that they may be able to speak about this project at the September 8th meeting.

Mr. Wallner stated that they have a survey that came back from UMass Genealogy.

Mr. Hayden stated to Mr. Wallner that they're talking about a concept, not a plan.

Mr. Wallner stated that approximately 1400 people responded to the survey which is a substantial amount of people who want to see some actions in town that the CPC has control over. One of the ones that you're talking about is the ADUs. That is a very important one that you're working on, and they also want a community center, and if it's going to take ten years to get it, he doesn't think that meets what they're looking for, and we've heard this request time after time, so timing is really important and he thinks that this just can't be ignored. If the CPC goes to present to the Select Board, or anybody in September without understanding what this survey said.

Mr. Pearce stated to Mr. Wallner that if he recalls all of the concepts that Abacus brought to us had a community center in it, so it didn't get ignored, at all.

Mr. Wallner stated that the CPC cannot properly present the concept without understanding what the survey said.

Mr. Hayden stated that they can't understand every survey. There's actually another group in town, another Select Board committee that's looking at building a community center, and funding it. So, we shouldn't be looking at that, that's not part of the CPCs charge, right now. The charge was if they build a treatment plant, what would we gain from that.

Mr. Wallner stated that if the school committee elected, was faced with a demographic that the school enrollment was going to go up by 50% to 60%, they would be making plans to anticipate that growth. They would be looking at infrastructure and programs that they need to support them. You are the CPC, you are elected to your roles, and you know that the seniors in town are going from 26% to 40%, in ten years. This plan that you're working on is part of the answer. So, your charge is larger than just that concept.

Mr. Hayden stated that the town does not own the properties, and they can't plan for private properties, and you're asking me too. We went down that road too far, already.

Mr. Pearce stated that he understands where Mr. Wallner is going with this conversation, but he thinks that the CPC actually have, as much as Abacus could put in there, in a conceptual capacity. There's a picture of it in all the different plans, but what they don't want to do is create a situation where's it's abundantly clear that the majority, of the support that they need,

disappears. They don't have in their charge the ability to tell the whole story which he wished they did. They would actually have to go to the Select Board to ask for more money in order to include that, or take money that's gone past the conceptual stage and begin to develop a plan which is what Mr. Wallner is taking about.

Mr. Stuto suggested that this would be a good topic for the strategic planning meeting, because if Mr. Wallner can convince the Select Board to give more money, you will get the answer to that.

Mr. Pearce stated what the CPC needs to do is address the charge that was given, and it did not have some of those components that Mr. Wallner is talking about. Abacus thought if we could put a town hall and community center, that it would be a good idea. Mr. Wallner can give his story, it just can't be part of the CPCs presentation.

Mr. Carroll stated that they're basically where they were when they got the directive in the first place. We're going to present a plan that gives no answers to the same people who didn't share the vision in the first place, without giving them any vision and expect a different answer, he doesn't think that it's going to happen. If that's how we do our business than we just wasted a lot of time.

Mr. Pearce asked Mr. Carroll what he would like to see.

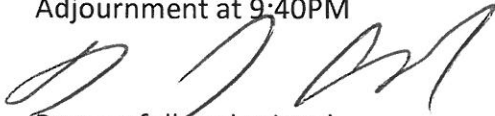
Mr. Carroll stated that the CPC got charged with using that money to look at that plan, and we got a concept plan for it, and he agrees with Mr. Wallner that they need to continue to fill in the blanks and take it beyond that. We sat at that meeting before without spending 25,000.00. Everybody knew how much a package treatment plant would cost and how much development it can support. We didn't need a concept plan to know that. He doesn't even know what they're presenting at this point.

Mr. Stuto suggested that when the CPC comes to the Select Board to present, they should come with a good answer of why a plan or concept should be taken seriously for land that owners don't want to sell and you'll get a lot further. If you don't have that answer, then your right it was a waste of time.

Mr. Carroll stated that no one has taken it that far. We don't know if they're going to sell, or if they want to sell. But, nobody's asking to do it either.

Mr. Stuto stated that it's a huge question that one gets asked, and gets ignored because no one has answer and the Select Board needs an answer to that.

Adjournment at 9:40PM

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ryan Carroll', written in a cursive style.

Respectfully submitted,
Ryan Carroll, Clerk