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Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

TOWN CLERK
NORTH READING, MA

Community Planning

MINUTES

Tuesday, December 4, 2018

Mr. Warren Pearce, Chairperson called the Tuesday, December 4, 2018 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
William Bellavance, Vice Chairperson
Ryan Carroll

STAFF

PRESENT:

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

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

Minutes

Mr. Bellavance moved, seconded by Carroll and voted 3-0: (Mr. Hayden and Mr. Cody absent)

that the Community Planning Commission vote to approve the minutes of November 20, 2018, as written.

Master Plan – Discussion

Mr. Pearce stated that there were a lot of questions on the survey, but only three choices. The commission would have liked to see more choices. They also think that they may have been getting off track from what the town may want. The outcome of a survey can be controlled by how the answers are asked. They were not trying to control the outcome, but may have inadvertently made the outcome different if the questions or choices were posed a little differently.

Carlos Montanez, Principal Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council stated that their starting a Master Plan cobbling together recent pertinent studies that the commission recently put together and approved, so they're not starting the visioning from scratch, so they tried to put forth some of the ideas that were already under town examinations over the last five years. They were trying to answer and measure to get input on things that they could easily translate into a specific recommendation. (See memorandum dated 11/29/2018)

Mr. Bellavance stated that he was concerned with the survey being too difficult for some people. The comments listed in the memorandum dated 11/29/2018, do give more understanding to what the people were thinking.

Carlos Montanez stated that the choices were for areas of the town.

Mr. Pearce stated that he has worked on many Master Plans that have gone nowhere. He wants to know how they can make this one happen.

Carlos Montanez stated that they should put out the plan with a public comment period. MAPC will provide hard copies that can be conspicuously displayed. The people can have a link that they can go to, as well. There will be a visual executive summary which is basically a poster that has the most compelling ideas.

Mrs. McKnight stated that what's different about this Master plan effort, is in the last 3 to 5 years they've done some interesting studies with the most interesting being the Economic

Development study for Main Street and the streetscape changes that people would like to see on Rte. 28. Those two studies dug a little bit deeper than the previous Master Plan efforts because we actually had marketing information. Everyone in town may say that they would like a mini version of Market Street, but we know based on the market analysis that that may not survive. They have talked seriously about how the town does not have sewer, but may someday and this is the difference of what we can have and not have. Digging into those issues made the studies more useful and because they're taking a lot of points from those studies she feels as though they are addressing some of the things that are important to people. They will never have a Master Plan document that is completely reflective of what every resident wants. The main themes that have really shone through over the past few years is that they really want a more interesting Main Street, a public gathering place like some of the towns around us with a downtown feel and more businesses that are oriented toward that. The questions, surveys and themes of the event they have had so far, have really focused in on those as issues.

Mr. Pearce stated that every Master Plan they have done has mentioned the potential for sewer and the town still does not have it.

Mr. Carroll stated that he respects Mr. Pearce's opinion, but he really doesn't agree that the survey was lacking in direction. He agrees with Mrs. McKnight that the direction was very pointed towards the downtown re-development. Maybe it wasn't as holistic as some people would have liked, but that may be a little unrealistic to try to capture all areas of the town and re-development to plan for the future, so maybe it was good that it was a little more focused. His concern is and maybe it's not founded because he hasn't seen the final document, but he would like to see from the final document when it is handed back to the board to make it a reality; is there anything in terms of previous success stories from other towns and how the other towns have utilized the plan. How do we put the plan in motion? How long does it take? What is the burden to the town?

Carlos Montanez stated that based on the studies put together most of the potential for the town's change is along Rte. 28, and this involves issues that have been discussed for the last five years. The studies include the Cecil study with the streetscape improvement, sewer feasibility, and the housing production plan for affordable housing. All of these things need to be addressed together and what they usually do is have a visual executive summary, to get people excited with the top 10. The other key is time making those connections. Such as, the town is not going to make streetscape improvements along Rte. 28, until you have sewer because you are not going to get the uses you want, even with sidewalks. You do want to do the zoning tweaks to allow what you want, so a ten year implementation and action plan will be produced, with three phases.

Mr. Pearce stated until we have the stores and services available to the people to make use of that, it doesn't make any sense to do the streetscape improvements.

Mr. Carroll asked where they get that information. Do they need to hire a civil engineer to do the plan?

Mr. Pearce stated that the Select Board has to ask that the proposal be brought to them for approval and signage.

Mr. Carroll stated that that is the level they need to be on for a realistic time frame. They need a micro-schedule so that they can convince the people that they have a plan and are implementing it.

Mr. Bellavance stated that the Select Board has surveys and studies going on in regard to the water and sewer.

Mr. Carroll stated that someone needs to be the driving force.

Mr. Bellavance stated that the driving force should be this board.

Mr. Pearce stated that to some extent they are the driving force, but it is the Select Board that needs to get involved.

Carlos Montanez stated that usually in the implementation table they say that this is the target year to take the actions and then they identify logical parties. They should take this part of the plan as a reference and try to bring it to the Select Board and Planning Commission meetings throughout the year to keep it going.

Mr. Bellavance stated that they have liaisons that go to these meetings. The liaison should say that they have a Master Plan that needs to be discussed at these meetings.

Mr. Gilleberto, Town Administrator stated that there is a planning effort underway relative to the wastewater and the focus is two-fold. The first is getting a better understanding of how much construction and costs is involved in getting a wastewater line to our northern border on Main Street, so, basically what it is going to cost to get wastewater from the North Reading line to the plant in North Andover. That is the first component of what they are studying which will take about six to nine months. They do know that it is approximately a \$135,000,000 project to do the whole wastewater program that they have looked at within the past year, which is getting the flow from Concord Street, up Main Street, Martin's Pond, a number of side streets off of Main Street. The Select Board was concerned with the magnitude of that cost, so they have asked the consultants to look at some of the revenue-based studies, like the FXM study that the planning board was instrumental in, a few years ago, and try to figure out how they can phase that \$135,000,000 project so that they can actually get something done, this is also on the same timeline. So, there is a plan in terms of advancing that project that is happening, somewhat separate from the Master Plan project. He thinks that the groups mentioned; Select

Board, Planning Commission, School Committee, Finance Committee, and Economic Development Committee, all know that everyone participating in government is where the ideas and discussion are coming from. So, getting them directly involved at this stage of the planning effort is definitely worthwhile. The CPC has already had two workshops with a decent turnout, but he thinks getting everyone in the room sooner than later and letting them know what came from those workshops and asking if you are on the right path with the people who are charged with implementing this.

Mr. Pearce stated that he likes what Mr. Gilleberto stated that it's a great idea, but we don't do this right now, we need to do something else first because it gives them a plan to work with and one of the advantages is that the town does not need a school right now. One of the problems they have had is competing interest for the money and the sewer system is cheaper than the school. The current administration of this State has done a pretty good job financially and he thinks there might be some grant money coming up in the next year or so. He would be willing to talk to the State Senator to see if there is a possibility for some money to be available to help start this. The Wastewater Advisory Committee had to have a plan put together for a treatment plant. They did a taking from New England Power, so there is some land that is not being used. There was a lot that got done, but then it came to a complete stop.

Mr. Carroll stated that there is a big opportunity now because interest is higher, than ever. People like staying in their towns and shopping in their own downtowns and are infatuated with this type of development.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that he and Mrs. McKnight had a brief informal discussion to see if there was any avenue for outreach that they should consider. This was before they received the detailed report from the MAPC. One thing they discussed is as much as it can be challenging to wade into that area at times, whether there is some on-line social media based interaction and the reason that he thought that might be a good avenue to consider is because one of the places where our community is actively gathering is on-line through the Facebook page. That is a captive audience and we will obviously get a lot of perspectives and feedback that is directly related and not directly related.

Mr. Pearce stated that they have been talking about starting a Facebook page.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that there was also a "Candidate for Rooms" online that may also be worthwhile looking into.

Mr. Bellavance stated that everyone markets themselves, but there is really no marketing for the CPC. Putting it on a Facebook page would allow them to have interactions with the people of the town.

Mr. Pearce stated that it might be better to create through the town hall website.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that the town hall has not ventured onto a Facebook page, so this may be a challenge. There is a member of the Select Board who would be willing to moderate or maybe create a Facebook page for just this one item.

Mr. Bellavance stated that a lot of the people have questions about things that we have already taken care of. This would give the people the information they are looking for.

Carlos Montanez stated that they created a page where the survey lived and paid for Facebook ads to target North Reading residents for two months and received 45,000 impressions out of 15,000 people. This means that individuals saw the same ad for the survey and the Master plan at least three times in the newsfeed. People were aware that there was a Facebook landing page that was created for the Master Plan, but they did not receive any comments, but some did click through to the survey page and took it. His opinion is that they have plenty of information to write recommendations and if the town wants to have a focus group, by all means, but look through the questions that were asked and figure out what wasn't asked and get feedback on that. Also, make sure that all of the decision makers receive get a hard copy of the plan, once they have it.

Mr. Pearce stated that getting all of the boards together and putting it on Facebook will show the residents that everyone is in agreement.

Mr. Bellavance stated that the idea would be to finish the plan, get a plan so that all the boards can review it and then have one more public input. This way everyone in the town understands it and the town boards are on it.

Mr. Pearce asked if there was going to be a preliminary report.

Carlos Montanez stated that there will a draft report and then the final.

Mr. Pearce asked if the draft is what they would use for public input.

Carlos Montanez stated that the plan is to deliver the draft and have a three or four week comment period on-line. Then they will give the board hard copies that should be conspicuously posted and distribute to everyone that you possibly can.

Mr. Pearce stated that they can then post a public meeting to answer as many questions about the draft.

Mr. Bellavance stated that there should also be a meeting in the morning or early afternoon to reach the residents who cannot make the evening meeting.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they do this in Melrose and Stoneham for seniors who cannot make the evening meetings.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that his only suggestion would be is to get feedback from the officials of the town. It might be helpful to gather them together before you're at the stage of having that draft plan together. The concern is that the ideas of the community as a whole are in one place and the ideas of the people who are actually charged with the stewardship and implementation are in a different place, then this is going to start with a pretty big disconnect. This might bring a delay or otherwise complicate the time line.

Carlos Montanez stated that there is an expiration date on the contract, he's unsure when it is, but they had anticipated presenting the final plan in February, so they could displace this to March to allow this to advance.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that he would not go to the draft stage without having this session

Mrs. McKnight stated that they could have a meeting at the senior center.

Carlos Montanez stated that he will give the CPC the summary of the survey, workshops and some of the board's summaries that are informative.

250-250R Haverhill Street – discussion

Mr. Bellavance stated that the owners really like the name Buxton Lane for their driveway which was on the historical street list.

Mr. Pearce stated that if an ANR is done for this property of what is basically a driveway that will become a roadway, how many other people will want to do this.

Mr. Bellavance stated that it's already been approved as an ANR.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it's already an ANR in regard to the lots and the frontage which is the basis for the ANR is on Haverhill Street. The concern is that if the CPC takes a driveway and makes it a private way, couldn't someone come in and say doesn't that give it frontage. The CPC would say no, because it already had frontage and that wasn't the purpose of the ANR.

Mr. Pearce stated that he just wanted to give the driveway a name.

Mr. Carroll stated that it would give more exposure if done.

The consensus of the Community Planning Commission is to not allow the driveway to become a roadway.

Mr. Bellavance stated that if they don't have the frontage, they would have to go through the subdivision process.

Mrs. McKnight stated that if they had a way they would need to do a Determination of Access. Because we have the adequate access bylaw no one can just take any private way and ANR it.

Mr. Pearce stated that the question about an ANR non-conforming access, so one resident comes down the driveway and the other resident comes from the other direction and neither can pass one another because the driveway is not wide enough. This has nothing to do with the frontage, they have a common driveway. They have legal frontage on the accepted way.

Mrs. McKnight asked if she should have the "legal frontage on the accepted way" added to the plan.

Mr. Pearce stated yes it should be added.

Mr. Bellavance stated that the following should be added to the plan: sign "Buxton Way" "Private Way" and that there will be no town maintenance.

Mr. Pearce stated that this could be a safety issue for emergency personnel. If they get a call and go to this address and don't know which house is the right one, it could delay them in reaching the house at a proper time.

Mrs. McKnight stated that when she reached out to the Fire and Police Departments about changing the name of the driveway they asked her what was the reason. She told them that she was informed that a 911 call was made last October and there was a problem figuring out which home they had to respond to. They responded back saying that they looked at the log time of this incident and found that the response time were no issues. She reached out to the owner stating that the emergency personnel were concerned with this and asked that he call and speak to them. The owner responded back to her saying that there was not an issue with the response. It was really more of a convenience for the mail and giving directions.

Mr. Pearce stated that given a choice of the two different ways which one would be the quicker to figure out and that would be to have them have their own address. If we put enough notes on the plan to make sure that it's clear it is a private way and the two houses frontage is on Haverhill Street, so that there is no question that they haven't created an ANR using a dirt driveway.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they can also hand write on the plan if they think of anything else they may want to add, before signing off.

Mr. Pearce stated that the deeds should also state that this is a private driveway and will not be maintained by the town.

Mrs. McKnight stated that a disclosure could be used to notify the owners that it will not be maintained.

Mr. Carroll stated that it just seems innocuous to give it a name and could lead to a trending development pattern.

Mr. Bellavance stated that everything we are talking about is there now.

Mr. Pearce stated that it hasn't been validated yet and many of the driveways in this town will not support a fire truck.

Mr. Carroll asked if would be a safety concern for the Fire Department if the driveway was given a name. Would they assume it's a roadway and meets the standards?

Mr. Bellavance stated that he does not want the owners to spend money on a plan if the board is not in agreement with the changes. If the board does not feel comfortable approving this he will inform the owner of the decision. It's very hard to deny an ANR.

Mrs. McKnight stated that this plan has everything that it's supposed to.

Mr. Pearce stated that it doesn't because the frontage is illusionary. Even though it has frontage along the road, in order to get to one of the house you have to go through the swamp.

Mrs. McKnight stated they constructed a way.

Mr. Pearce stated that it's only good for one house. The line goes down the middle of the driveway, but the driveway is not wide enough to accommodate two cars side by side. Technically, one of the lots is not being accessed by Haverhill Street. There is adequate access for one lot and yet it's serving two. The problem is that the plan shows a driveway being split down the middle and no one noticed that it's three there is only 4½ on each side.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the only way the frontage is really illusionary is throughout the entire length of the frontage along Haverhill Street, if there was a guardrail or cliff. Even if there is only 4' and you could physically drive a vehicle into it to the buildable part of it, it still counts as real access.

Mr. Pearce stated that there is a wetland and that qualifies. Does the access count if there are two lots? Each lot does not have enough width to drive a car down to get to their lot, they have to drive onto someone else's property.

Mr. Carroll stated that he does not like the idea of common driveways.

The consensus of the board is to not allow the request to make changes to the driveway.

Zoning Board of Appeals

Mr. Bellavance recused himself from the meeting and left the room.

2 Sandspur Lane– On the petition of Yan Huang for a special permit to raise chickens.

The Community Planning Commission doesn't object to the application subject to:

- A condition that there be no roosters allowed, and that the proper Board of Health permits be obtained and proper facilities maintained.
- Abutters do not object.

Mr. Bellavance rejoined the meeting.

Adjournment at 9:37PM

Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan Cody, Clerk