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Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Community Planning

MINUTES

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

Mr. Warren Pearce, Chairperson called the Tuesday, December 18, 2018 meeting of the Community Planning Commission to order at 7:35p.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
Christopher Hayden

STAFF

PRESENT: Danielle McKnight, AICP
Town Planner/Community Planning Administrator

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

Shay Lane Subdivision – bond reduction

Mrs. McKnight stated that it was suggested to her to have the board review the bond estimate because of all the various issues that have occurred, on this site.

Mr. Pearce stated that he believes that the developer will finish the subdivision in a timely manner. Therefore, he does not think that a "Clerk of the Works" is necessary.

Mr. Bellavance stated that the gas lines have not been installed. Is this something that they should be concerned with?

Mr. Pearce stated that adding gas lines is not a subdivision requirement.

Mr. Hayden stated that the developer is going to put crosslinks, 4" PVC pipes in, so that the gas can be connected when the strike is over.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the developer is taking the gas line as far as the gas company will allow him to do. He has offered to do the work himself that he can't get them to do because he has already paid for everything.

Mr. Hayden stated that he did get the connection in off of Park Street.

Mr. Bellavance asked if the trees were planted for the abutter (Chris Simpson) and is he happy with the outcome.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the trees have been planted and she will contact Chris Simpson to be sure that everything is good.

Mr. Hayden asked what types of trees were planted.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she believes it is cedar.

The consensus of the board is to accept the bond estimate as written.

Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Mrs. McKnight stated that she received this information and wanted to share it with the board.

CPC Budget

Mrs. McKnight asked the board if they had any comments that should be added.

Mr. Pearce stated that the only change he noticed was to add \$358.00 for the North Reading FY20 contribution to the Regional Housing Services Office.

Mr. Bellavance stated that as part of one of the objectives should the Carpenter Drive property be added.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it is mentioned at the fifth bullet point, as follow-up to the Housing Production Plan.

The consensus of the board is to submit the budget as presented this evening.

Master Plan – Discussion

Rich Wallner asked since this strategic plan is coming out and one of the objectives was to notify the town, is there money set aside to do this.

Mr. Pearce stated that in the original budget there were methods in place to send it out via Facebook, Town website and a notice went out with the water bills. They also spoke to Carlos Montanez, Principal Planner for the Metropolitan Area Planning Council about this, but were not completely satisfied and have asked him to come back to discuss it.

Mrs. McKnight stated that Carlos sent her some suggested dates to set up a meeting. She needs to contact all of the boards and committees to see which date is best for all. Carlos came in for an informal discussion at the last CPC meeting, so that the board could let him know that they were a little concerned with the following:

- 1) The complexity of some of the materials.
- 2) Although we got some feedback, the survey was a little complicated and not too accessible.
- 3) A small turn-out at the meetings. The content was dense and jargoned.

They ended the meeting with the decision to have a third meeting. They will be reaching out to key-decision making boards and committees of the town, to have a facilitated conversation.

Rich Wallner stated that he worked on the survey and even though they made changes, it was still challenging and was actually surprised with the confusion of the survey and how many responses to it.

Mr. Pearce stated that after reading through it, it was clear that the survey, got at certain things, but was trying to make North Reading into something else. The survey didn't reflect what North Reading means to the residents.

Rich Wallner stated isn't that is what the survey does. Let the people decide if those are they type of changes they want to make.

Mr. Pearce stated yes, but the choices were not there that they would want to make.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she did ask MAPC to add "none of these options".

Mr. Hayden stated that the meetings were impersonal.

Mrs. McKnight stated that everything from the survey and ended up with the boards to review came from previous studies. Carlos was trying to distill what was already done.

Mr. Pearce stated that a lot of the stuff that was done came from people who also tried to lead us down a different path. If we have an open discussion we will hear different options.

Mrs. McKnight stated that as a follow-up to conversation from the meeting held on December 4th, Carlos sent her a memo and she was still concerned because he was talking about using the same, very dense materials that were used the first time, without having a discussion. She told him that they have to have a discussion and he agreed and added it to the agenda as being a big centerpiece. The meeting will start with the presentation, discussing all the concepts and ideas that we have talked about so far, followed by a facilitated large group discussion. He wanted to do a written feedback, but we decided to not do that because people have been given plenty of opportunity to write down their feedback. Although, she is fine with that format for the meeting, but she is still struggling in terms of what we want to cover at this meeting and Carlos is very concerned about re-purposing the ideas that we have discussed previously and she wants to be sure that they have covered everything we need to cover. She said for example we haven't discussed Concord Street, maybe the answer to Concord Street is to let it keep going in the direction its going, but we need to ask the people what they think.

Mr. Hayden stated that more than a third of the survey was answered with housing and we already have a housing production plan. A lot of time was also spent on the Economic Development Committee. A lot of the comments were that we need a new town center; we need to make the town center more like Andover and Reading. We can't do that because the town's not built like they are. It wasn't built a 150 to 200 years ago with those structures on Main Street and our town center cannot support those structures.

Mr. Pearce stated that the Town of Wareham is similar to North Reading. Mr. Pearce stated that you need a place to call home, a place to focus on, a big enough place that you can support an attractive business, restaurant, theatre and open space for town events. We have the Ipswich River Park, but there is nothing around it.

Rich Wallner stated that Stop & Shop at 97 Main Street is the obvious place.

Mr. Pearce stated that the 66 Winter Street and 103 Main Street would need to be incorporated into that space for street front exposure, but it would not be real because it would not be the center of town.

Mr. Hayden stated that it would just be a location because you can't change Main Street.

Mr. Pearce stated that it's important for a small town to have history and this site would not have it.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the discussion seems to find its way back to Main Street. Why don't we pose a few simple questions about what the people would want us to do? Do they want us to manufacture an artificial style town center, hang-out place which is more of a lifestyle mall, rather than organic town center? Which one do they want us to pursue.

Rich Wallner stated that this is what they want.

Mr. Pearce stated that a lot of people don't like the current Main Street.

Rich Wallner stated that they would also like to have the traffic slowed down on Main Street and walkability.

Mr. Pearce stated that the Select Board would have to take property by eminent domain. One of the pertinent points made by Rich Wallner is that we need to get every town group on board to make this happen.

Rich Wallner stated that he believes that the same results are going to come back no matter how the survey is worded. We need to educate people or it's not going to happen.

Mr. Pearce stated that he told Carlos, he is telling everyone these things, but not how to do it. If we like the ideas, we need to promote it to our friends and groups that we belong to.

Mrs. McKnight stated that that comes later. First, he wants to know what people want and then he follows at the end with recommendations of how to get things done.

Mr. Pearce stated that may be true, but if you don't inspire, or enable people right up front they're not going to get involved enough to get to that point. We have to tell them that this is possible. If they really like these ideas they need to be told what they need to do.

Mrs. McKnight stated that we don't know what to tell them right now.

Mrs. McKnight asked how we plan the next meeting and what do we need to cover.

Mr. Pearce stated that we need to tell the people that these things are possible and here are some of the ways that we go about getting these things to happen. Now that they're excited that this can happen, what do you want to see happen.

Mr. Hayden stated that we can't let the report sit on the shelf.

Rich Wallner asked if they were using the data that they have already received. If so, that would be a good baseline to start the 3rd meeting.

Mrs. McKnight stated she would like to try to do that, but a lot of it was very complicated the way it was presented.

Rich Wallner asked if she could take the findings and make them really simple. He would be happy to do it, if she couldn't.

Mr. Pearce stated that there were a lot of questions that didn't get answers, so we should take those out and work on the more meaningful.

Mr. Bellavance stated that they have some great information, but it should be whittled down and discussed with all of the boards

Mr. Hayden stated that the survey only gave us numbers.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he has spoken to a lot of people and they have some really good ideas and he thinks that this upcoming meeting is a good idea.

Mrs. McKnight stated that MAPC would like to start the meeting with a presentation and then a discussion which she thinks is a good idea. The idea is to find a date that is good for all the boards, but it should be open to everyone.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he heard there was a discussion about having a meeting during the day for people who are unable to make the night meeting.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they should plan the evening meeting first and then a date to follow, for the day meeting because they won't have MAPC's help with that, but they can facilitate the discussion themselves.

Mr. Hayden stated that Carlos of MAPC needs to keep the intro brief, formative and simple.

Mrs. McKnight stated that she is meeting with Carlos tomorrow to plan the 3rd meeting. She wants to give him a list of themes that she thought the board would want to discuss, but it sounds like what we need him to do is share with us what the popular and meaningful themes were and what we don't need.

Dan Mills of 5 Green Meadow Drive stated that this board has all of this data. The residents have provided their input. This board and MAPC should be saying that this is what has been identified and these are the suggested solutions of what will and won't work. There is an approximately two miles roadway with a very linear type of zoning, build-out, setbacks, segmented based on geology, cross-streets or large shopping centers that segment these sections. If you hone all your investment and build this one center, everyone has to drive through it because there are no residents around that area. You need to zone and build residences along the corridor, in order to get people to visit this once location because you have designated as your town center. If you want to have a walkable type of situation you probably need to build smaller, multiple sections closer together, as opposed to building one area.

Mr. Pearce stated that this is consistent with the MAPC study. He believes that there are a lot of customers in town right now that would use more of Main Street if there was more variety and choice, instead of going out of town.

Dan Mills stated that you need to market to a developer for different products that no other community has. We don't have tremendous highway access. Yes, it is a very accessible community with access to Routes 95, 1, 125 to 93, but we are not a from market retail perspective. This town is not marketable and this could be a good thing to people who enjoy a more rural community. You should look at other communities, such as Middleton. They have a market place that has a Market Basket, but what are the high ends, such as an Apple Store. You're not going to find those in those types of communities because they go to lifestyle centers that are at an interchange. We have Concord Street, focus on something like that, that is going to attract businesses. Even though Wilmington and Reading have walkable centers, they are small and you pass right through them in a blink of an eye. They are quaint centers, but it's going to be very difficult to try to replicate that on Rte. 28. You can try to fabricate it, but you need willing developers and parcels that are a little more conducive to that kind of development. He thinks that providing walking paths, sidewalks, trees, benches, median strip with trees and grasses and facades would make it more beautiful. Sewers are a whole other issue.

Mrs. McKnight stated that the materials are complicated, but if you do read through everything, Carlos looked at the old studies that said if you want anything interesting to happen in town you need a sewer, these are the types of uses people want, so then he is saying, where should we focus that economic development when we get the sewer. He's already jumped to that point. He's already said we understand that if you want to support additional retail you need to have more residences near the downtown. So, his question is: where do you want the housing and what type do you want, not do we need more housing. This is why we are having this impression that he hasn't listened or asked anything specific to North Reading, because he's already there. He did the economic development study for the town and remembers the market study numbers and knows what this town can support.

Mr. Pearce stated that Walkers Brook Drive in Reading had nothing there and they didn't build any housing whatsoever and yet there this huge economic benefit of businesses there.

Mrs. McKnight stated that if you look at where they have their little boutiques and cafes' they are walkable, the big box stores are car dependent and don't rely on housing.

Rich Wallner stated that he always imagined the Stop & Shop area being little boutiques, not huge things because he doesn't think sewer is going to come too soon.

Mr. Pearce stated that a package or treatment plant could be put there.

Rich Wallner stated that the main thing is to get this out to the people and getting them to support it. The demographics are changing and the older people and families that want a community center.

Mr. Hayden stated that you don't just want to put a community center, only where Stop & Shop is, it makes no money. You want a mixed use place. The current businesses on Main Street should be advertising in the Transcript to let the people in town know that they're there.

Rich Wallner stated that it sounds like you have the data from the survey.

Mrs. McKnight stated that we don't have the key findings from the survey; we have 92 pages of comments. She will ask Carlos what the key findings have been from all of the information they received and what are the main points and questions that need to discuss. Are there certain things that the board wants asked and answered, by Carlos? Such as, we have to incorporate these things because they haven't been asked or just have him to tell her what the key things are, what the hot issues are; accessory apartments, rezoning a part of town to a higher density of housing.

Mr. Pearce stated that that is exactly what they want asked and answered.

Mrs. McKnight asked if she should push for certain questions (sewer), at the third meeting. Should the topic of discussion then be, this has been a hot topic, for a while? Do you as a town want to see the Select Board, finance committee, etc.? Do you really want us to financially get behind this, are you willing to make an investment like that vs. something else.

The consensus of the board is that is the direction they want to go in.

Mr. Bellavance stated that there were quite a few comments where the residents of the town don't want anything changed, except for beautification.

Mr. Pearce stated that there is an impact by not allowing North Reading to grow and begin to accumulate some economic benefit from businesses means that to keep your little hamlet in place, you are going to have to pay and pay until you become a place with a \$30,000.00 tax bill. We don't have that much commercial property, even if the commercial property was maxed out, it would only be about 12%.

Mrs. McKnight stated North Reading has a higher percentage of commercial than Reading.

Mr. Hayden stated that they also have leverage because they have a split tax rate and North Reading does not.

Mr. Bellavance stated that the Select Board uses a certain calculation of how they can figure out the maximum difference between the two.

Mrs. McKnight stated that in her discussions with Carlos they have not spoken about Concord Street.

Mr. Bellavance stated that he thinks that it should be discussed, but is not a high priority.

Mr. Pearce stated that everyone assumes that Concord Street has to be commercial. There are 2 or 3 residential homes on Concord Street and they may have concerns, but overall he thinks most would support putting sewer and having it grow commercially, though there are wetland concerns. If you make the land valuable enough per square foot, the trucking companies may have to find another place

Mr. Hayden stated that it's good for the trucking companies because they're close to Rte. 93. He thinks that it should be discussed.

Rich Wallner asked when the sewer study would be available.

Mrs. McKnight stated town meeting funded it in October and it should be ready sometime in the spring.

Mr. Pearce stated that he believes that if a developer does not have to buy the property located on Carpenter Drive and all they have to do is build those units, they've got to be able to get enough money out of that.

Rich Wallner stated that it would probably a good place for an assisted living complex.

Mr. Pearce stated that there is a substantial amount of income that a place like that could generate if it's operated properly.

Mr. Bellavance stated that there are a lot of these places being built because of the baby boomers hitting that peak age.

Mr. Hayden stated that if the town could somehow keep ownership, they could do a treatment plant, they just have to get it there.

Mrs. McKnight stated that it have to go across the river. She also thought that the assisted living and supportive service type places that were not "non profit" were extremely expensive.

Mr. Hayden and Rich Wallner stated that it's between \$5,000.00 and \$7,000.00.

Mrs. McKnight stated that we are either talking about an affordable, nonprofit type of place or a very profitable, very expensive place.

Mr. Pearce stated that if there is no acquisition costs for the property, he doesn't see how they couldn't build something and make it profitable.

Mr. Hayden stated that they should have Fran DeCoste of TRA help us with this.

Mrs. McKnight stated that they received a quote from TRA in the amount of \$60,000, but they are going to get help from the Housing Services office, which the town pays for anyway. They said that the town does not need to design or permit it, but instead put out an RFP and let the respondents do the work and then the town just needs to decide which is better for the town.

Mr. Pearce stated that he would like to look at Lynnfield's plan.

Mr. Hayden stated that they started the plan 30 years ago.

Mr. Bellavance stated that Life Inc. is a Massachusetts non-profit corporation created by Lynnfield residents and cooperators, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen. There is a five-member Life Board of Directors appointed by the Selectmen. There are no public funds used for this development or operation of the corporation or villages. Life is the owner, developer, operator and property manager of Center Essex Village.

Rich Wallner stated that this sounds like the Hillview Commission.

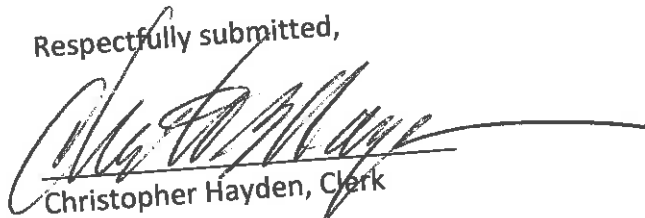
Mr. Pearce asked why we don't do this.

Rich Wallner stated that that Carpenter Drive may not be the place to do it.

Mr. Bellavance asked if a town could donate property to a non-profit. This could be a potential for Carpenter Drive.

Adjournment at 9:30PM

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Hayden", is written over a horizontal line.

Christopher Hayden, Clerk

