



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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RECEIVED

By KWilber/Assistant Town Clerk at 9:05 pm, Feb 25, 2024

Planning Board

Zoom Meeting Minutes

December 19, 2023

Approved February 20, 2024 as Amended

Members (Remotely): Kerri Martinek, Chair; Amy Poretsky, Vice Chair; Bill Pierce; Anthony Ziton; Millie Milton

Staff Present: Laurie Connors, Planning Director; Robert Frederico, Building Inspector

The Chair opened the remote meeting at 6:00 p.m. and made the announcement that this open meeting of the Planning Board was conducted remotely pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 an Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency signed into law on March 29, 2023. All members of the Planning Board are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. The Act allows the Planning Board to be entirely remote so long as reasonable public access is afforded so the public can follow along with deliberations of the meeting. The public is encouraged to follow along using the posted agenda unless the Chair notes otherwise. Members of the public who wish to view the live stream during this meeting may do so by going to Northborough Remote Meetings on YouTube via the link listed on the agenda. Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will feature public comment. The process was explained.

Ms. Martinek read the public notice.

The meeting began at 6:00 pm.

Discussion of 2024 Town Meeting Zoning-Related Articles including MBTA Multi-family Bylaw

Multi-Family Development Overlay District Bylaw

Ms. Connors explained the modifications on the tracked changes copy of Option #3. Members discussed the deletion of Bullet (5).

A multi-family mixed use district was added into section B. of the MBTA bylaw. Ms. Connors explained the parameters of the mixed-use district for the MBTA land. Ms. Poretsky asked if there should be a mixed use section in the MBTA overlay bylaw in case they wanted to add a mixed use property into the overlay in the future. The members discussed the options.

Mr. Pierce agreed with Ms. Connors regarding mixed-use. He also had concerns with additional traffic on Hudson Street should the developer build 15 units per acre on the full property in the future. The Board discussed the traffic issue of the additional cars emptying onto Hudson Street across from River Street. Ms. Connors explained to the Board that under the current zoning scheme, 195 units could not be placed on the 13-acre parcel. She indicated that Mr. Bishop was interested in developing this land under the MBTA guidelines; however, he is not comfortable committing to a specific number of units and bedrooms at this time. She cautioned that the Town may not be able to meet its deadline for compliance with the new law if they are not willing to zone any area unless they have a development agreement. Most of the property owners are not developers and would not have the interest or ability to commit to a specific

development agreement. Ms. Poretsky suggested including the Candle Factory property on Whitney Street, which is close to 10 acres, with some parcels in the downtown, including the current town offices and surrounding properties. Ms. Connors explained that she didn't think the Town will be able to get any grant money for downtown revitalization improvements unless there is actual development potential downtown. She also reminded the Board that in her opinion the grant money will follow the MBTA zoning district location.

Mr. Pierce suggested property on Route 20 and Route 9 that was almost 50 acres. Mixed use could be reserved for the downtown area. Ms. Connors explained that every location that is an MBTA district must include multi-family housing. Ms. Poretsky indicated that there are already 38 acres at Avalon that can be used in the overlay so we only need to find 12-20 more acres to meet the state criteria. She stated that the Westborough MBTA overlay included 3 apartment building complexes that are already developed including one that is a 40B development. The Board discussed these parameters as well as using Avalon as part of the MBTA project.

Ms. Connors and Ms. Poretsky made some other modifications to the bylaw for consideration. These were brought before the Board. The Board agreed that so far, the changes to the bylaws are acceptable.

The meeting turned to the discussion of sites for the MBTA Project such as Avalon, the Harvey land, Hudson Street, the old Town Hall, Centre Drive, and the old Country Candle location on Whitney Street. Ms. Connors reminded the Board that these areas should have some potential for new development. Ms. Martinek suggested using half of the Harvey property for the MBTA and the other half for development of mixed-use on Hudson Street. Ms. Poretsky suggested using some of Blake Street as that is part of the downtown revitalization plan and the plan calls for higher density with mixed-use. Mr. Pierce indicated that a second district could be created for downtown revitalization that mandates mixed-use.

The Board discussed alternate areas for development. Ms. Connors indicated that the development of the Harvey property is more attractive because of the possible creation of a bypass roadway linking Hudson Street to Route 20. This would take some of the traffic away from Hudson Street. The Board members each gave their opinion about how they would like this area developed.

A mixed-use incentive was also discussed for Main Street and Hudson Street. The Board discussed the implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Project and reviewed the various options available. Mr. Pierce discussed creating a circular overlay district in the vicinity of the downtown. Ms. Connors explained the current growth of Northborough and how it would affect the school system.

The members agreed that a plan that is passable and manageable should be presented to the town. Mr. Ziton suggested tabling further discussion until the Downtown Revitalization Project is revealed to the Town. Ms. Connors indicated that she would forward the Draft Downtown Revitalization Plan to the members for their review, even though it is in draft form, in preparation for the January meeting.

Bond Releases

This will be carried over to the next Planning Board meeting.

Sign Bylaw

This will be carried over until the January meeting.

Design Review Bylaw Changes

Ms. Connors explained, and the Board discussed, the changes to the Design Review Bylaws, which included deleting the requirement for two architects and adding a spot for a resident with a landscape design, architecture, historic preservation or civil engineering, background. The bylaw would also require design review to review signs, but only in the downtown.

Zoning Changes

Highway Business District in the Southwest Connector. Following up on comments made at the November 14, 2023 Planning Board meeting, Ms. Connors addressed the Board regarding adult entertainment uses at Northborough Crossing. She suggested excluding Avalon, Northborough Crossing and other properties from the new Highway Business District as an alternative to creating an entirely new District. The Board Members expressed their thoughts. Ms. Poretsky was still concerned about expanding the zone with adult uses and asked if there could be a footnote that Adult Uses would not be allowed unless they were on route 9. Ms. Connors will ask Town Counsel. In response to a question about the need to zone an area for adult entertainment, Mr. Frederico indicated that there needs to be a zone for adult use as it is protected by the First Amendment.

Discussion of Statement to Sell Land Under Chapter 61A Right-of-First Refusal- 432 Whitney Street (parcel size: 23.77 acres, zoning: Industrial District, partially located within Groundwater Protection Overlay District Area 3)

Ms. Connors explained that the property is under Purchase and Sale Agreement and the purchaser is interested in the freight line adjacent to the property for the transfer of materials. She expressed concern about the potential to develop the property for industrial uses and stockpile/transport undesirable materials, especially given the presence of wetlands on-site. There was some talk about possible soil contamination located on the property. Since this property is under Chapter 61A protection, the Town has 120 days to act on its right-of-first refusal. The Board discussed the ramifications of not exercising the right-of-first refusal. The P&S Agreement is for \$1,700,000.00. The Board discussed funding for the purchase and Mr. Ziton asked what other avenues the Town had to explore before the purchase could take place. Ms. Connors indicated some of the steps that need to be taken. The Board Members expressed their thoughts about the purchase of this property.

Ms. Poretsky made a motion that the Town exercise its right of first refusal regarding the purchase of 432 Whitney Street; it was seconded by Ms. Milton. Roll call vote: Poretsky – aye; Ziton – aye; Milton – aye; Pierce – aye; Martinek – aye; motion approved.

Ms. Poretsky requested that the questions asked during the meetings be made a permanent record.

Ms. Poretsky asked Ms. Connors about the completion of the Feasibility Study. Ms. Connors was unsure when it would be completed. They were waiting for the contract from the MA Housing Partnership before the work could get underway and this has just been received.

Minutes for November 14, 2023

Ms. Poretsky made a motion to accept the November 14, 2023, minutes. Mr. Pierce seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Pierce – aye; Poretsky – aye; Milton-aye; Ziton-aye; Martinek – aye; motion approved.

Minutes for December 5, 2023

Mr. Pierce made a motion to accept the December 5, 2023, minutes. Mr. Ziton seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Pierce – aye; Poretsky – aye; Milton-aye; Ziton-aye; Martinek – aye; motion approved.

Upcoming Meetings

Next Planning Board Meetings are January 2, 2024, and January 16, 2024.

ZBA Meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2024. The main item on the agenda is the appeal of the Building Inspector’s decision regarding the former Tradebe site at 345 West Main Street.

Ms. Poretsky made a motion to adjourn the meeting; it was seconded by Mr. Pierce.

Roll call vote: Pierce - aye; Poretsky - aye; Milton – aye; Ziton - aye; Martinek - aye; motion approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda M. DiCeglie,

Planning Board Secretary