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By Karen Wilber, Town Clerk's Office at 4:25 pm, Oct 12, 2021

TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING BOARD

Town Hall Offices • 63 Main Street • Northborough, MA 01532 • 508-393-5019 • 508-393-6996 Fax

Approved 10.05.2021

Planning Board Zoom Meeting Minutes September 7, 2021

Members (Remotely): Kerri Martinek, Chair; Amy Poretsky, Vice Chair; Anthony Ziton; Mille Milton; Michelle Gillespie

Members Absent: None

Others (Remotely): Kathy Joubert (Town Planner)

The Chair opened the remote meeting at 6:06 p.m. and made the announcement that the open meeting of the Northborough Planning Board is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of June 16, 2021, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency. All members of the Planning Board are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. This Order allows the Planning Board to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along the 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 of this meeting can 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 not feature public comment. The process was explained.

Member and Staff roll call was taken: Amy Poretsky, Millie Milton, Anthony Ziton, Michelle Gillespie, Kerri Martinek, Kathy Joubert (Town Planner)

Old/New Business

Consideration of Minutes (07.06.21) – Ms. Gillespie commented that what was in the minutes should remain in the minutes to reflect an accurate accounting of the discussion with Lisa Maselli; lengthy discussion ensued. Ms. Milton felt there was a lot of material but said Ms. Maselli requested they be very specific. Ms. Martinek saw the request as Ms. Maselli wanting them condensed. Mr. Ziton was disappointed that the board was still talking about it. After revisions were made, Ms. Poretsky made a motion to approve the 07/06/21 minutes as amended; Mr. Ziton seconded; roll call vote: Poretsky-aye; Ziton-aye; Milton-aye; Gillespie-nay; Martinek-aye; motion approved. Ms. Gillespie requested the original draft minutes be kept on file in the Planning Department.

08.03.21 – Mr. Ziton made a motion to approve the 08/03/21 minutes; Ms. Milton seconded; roll call vote: Poretsky-aye; Ziton-aye; Milton-aye; Gillespie-aye; Martinek-aye; motion approved.

08.17.21 – Ms. Milton made a motion to approve the 08/17/21 minutes as amended; Ms. Poretsky seconded; roll call vote: Poretsky-aye; Ziton-aye; Milton-aye; Gillespie-aye; Martinek-aye; motion approved.

Planning Board Rules and Regs Review and Update – Ms. Joubert sent out a request for information to a group of municipal planners regarding the possibility of adopting a regulation requiring applicants to submit documents to the board a specific number of days in advance of the public hearing; no responses were received. She will send the request to the Planner’s Listserv group.

Master Plan Implementation Committee – The Committee is meeting September 8, 2021.

Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020 “Housing Choice” Update – Ms. Joubert said changes were made to Chapter 40A (The Acts of 2020); DHCD is working on how to implement them. What could affect the town is Section 3A regarding MBTA communities. Legislature is trying to increase workforce housing in Massachusetts. Northborough is considered an MBTA community because it abuts Westborough who has a train station that is very close to our border. The state is trying to encourage MBTA communities to adopt multi-family housing by right; it would be become a simple majority at town meeting if the board were to bring zoning forward. The density is very different from what this community has. The minimum density has to be 15 units per acre. It cannot be age restricted, has to be available for children, and the number of bedrooms cannot be restricted (at least two bedrooms are required). If MBTA communities don't adopt this type of zoning, there are certain grant programs that the town wouldn't be able to apply for. The town has never applied for any of the three grant programs and it may not be applicable to Northborough.

One of the most significant changes is the amendment to Section 5 regarding accessory dwelling units. The town already has accessory dwelling units and are within the parameters of what the state is suggesting the towns adopt. Other changes have to do with changing town meeting vote to a simple majority as opposed to the 2/3 requirement, multi-family as of right, Open Space residential development as of right; it all relates to increasing the housing density. The state is in the process of developing comprehensive guidelines for the MBTA communities.

Ms. Martinek asked if there was a way to appeal Northborough’s determination because we are not like Westborough. Ms. Joubert has not seen anything about how to challenge it but can check with the state. Ms. Martinek asked what grants would the town not be eligible for. Ms. Joubert said before the legislation was changed there was a Housing Choice Program that towns can participate in but it's very dense for housing, you become a housing choice community, and must build a specific number of housing units within five years; it doesn't pertain to Northborough. Mass Works is a grant program that focuses primarily on economic development/infrastructure improvements. It's not a grant program that we have a particular project for. Ms. Joubert was not very familiar with the Local Capital Projects Fund that was created a few years ago having to do with gaming and casinos where a certain amount of the money funds local capital projects.

Ms. Gillespie commented that she knows many people that would consider Northborough an MBTA community; many streets are only a few miles away from the commuter rail. There are many people from Northborough that commute to Boston using the MBTA commuter rail, which is what the state is looking for. She would not look to have Northborough removed from it.

Annual Town Meeting Zoning Bylaws Discussion – Ms. Joubert said in talking with Bob Frederico earlier, a popular question is about how many company vehicles you can keep at your house whether or not you are running a business out of your house. Questions also come from people who are not operating a business out of their house but have a company vehicle (e.g., Coca Cola). The only limit in the town bylaw is about home occupation (which was recently changed to allow two vehicles). She will be

investigating it further with Mr. Frederico. Staff might suggest it and it may come back before the board if it needs to be addressed. She anticipates zoning recommendations will come out of the Master Plan Implementation Committee for 2023.

Sober homes/rehab facilities. Ms. Milton said the state is still working on how to define them so the towns can determine how to zone them appropriately. She will look into what progress has been made to determine how we want to proceed, and will contact Bob Frederico as well. Ms. Joubert will check with Mr. Frederico to see if anything has changed from last year. Breweries were also discussed. A bylaw was drafted; where to put them was not determined; it would be a challenge in the downtown area; parking would be an issue; and there are water requirements (Ms. Joubert will check with the DPW Director).

Mr. Ziton wants to pursue externally lit signs. Many towns around Northborough have implemented front lit signs in the downtown and main street areas. He will research more to see how it is implemented and the language needed. He also wanted to allow more creativity in the industrial zones. Ms. Joubert said if they want to pursue an overlay district, not many tweaks would be needed; where to apply the overlay would need to be determined. It was written specifically with how people envisioned the southwest area developing at the crossroads of Route 9 & 20.

Ms. Milton was asked if the Historical Commission had any discussions for possible bylaws. She said only a discussion about revisiting why the Historical District segment hasn't been successful and how they might want to reword it. Ms. Gillespie suggested Ms. Milton have discussion and focus on the historical element at the Master Plan Implementation Committee and bring it back to the board so they could make a decision on zoning.

Ms. Poretsky suggested conversion only for downtown for a duplex and multi-family. Ms. Martinek talked about defining or reviewing some definitions in industrial: warehouse and trucking, e-commerce product definition. Ms. Joubert will check with CMRPC. Ms. Poretsky has definitions she will share with the board. The board is waiting for the breakdown from the GIS Department for Aaron Hutchins' request specific to Brigham Street. Ms. Joubert said it is being worked on. There is also the consideration of an overlay related to Ridge Road; the board is looking for a preliminary subdivision plan. Ms. Joubert said nothing has been provided; she does not believe they want to provide it (they indicated that they prefer not to do it), but if the town is going to do any bylaw on that parcel that increases the density, the board should absolutely ask for it as part of the requirements. Including a possible trucking moratorium was discussed until the board has a handle on the growth of warehouse and trucking. Ms. Joubert will put it out on Planner's Listserv group for information. Use variances: the board would need to work with the ZBA; it has been defeated before at town meeting. Ms. Poretsky suggested eliminating the Groundwater Committee. She said the reports are long and technical and the Committee felt it was best that staff and Mr. Litchfield read it. Ms. Martinek will draft a letter asking why they decided not to do it and if they plan to resume it. It was suggested that dark skies be included in the bylaw.

Subcommittee Updates – No reports tonight.

Ms. Joubert noted that the public hearing for Lincoln Street duplexes scheduled for next meeting will not take place. The applicant has decided not to pursue it at this time. She also let the board know that the 2021 Zoning Amendments were approved by the Attorney General and are officially in effect.

Planning Board Meeting Minutes – September 7, 2021

Town Counsel has requested an Executive Session at the next meeting.

Upcoming Planning Board Meetings are September 21st and October 5th; the next ZBA Meeting is September 28, 2021.

Ms. Milton made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Ziton seconded; roll call vote: Poretsky-aye; Ziton-aye; Milton-aye; Gillespie-aye; Martinek-aye; motion approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Rich
Board Secretary