

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
January 30, 2007

7:00 p.m. Meeting called to order.

Attendance: Karl Haglund, Chair; Jennifer Fallon, Andrew McClurg; Andres Rojas
Staff: Jeffrey Wheeler
Absent: Sami Baghdady

7:00 p.m. Discussion: Cushing Square Transportation Design with BSC Group

Peter Briere from the BSC Group provided an overview of the design of Trapelo Road through Cushing Square. He explained how the BSC Group and the Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) developed the current design for the road. He explained that the design is limited because MHD requires bicycle accommodations. He reviewed various options for providing sufficient capacity at the intersection while increasing the width of the sidewalks. To reduce pedestrian crossing time, BSC shortened the distance of the crosswalks and changed the phasing of the traffic lights. Peter explained that the design calls for making Common Street concurrent so that the intersection contains one traffic light, moving the bus stop to Williston Road, and installing bump outs at Williston and Payson Roads to create gateways to Cushing Square. Jennifer Fallon stated that the Planning Board is focusing on making Cushing Square pedestrian friendly and therefore wants the distance of the crosswalks to be reduced further. Karl Haglund suggested that the crosswalks be installed mid-block. He also added that the Planning Board is looking long term and that the driveway openings for Starbucks and the S.S. Pierce building probably will disappear. Andres Rojas suggested creating a bump out at Real Estate 109 to create more pedestrian space. Peter Briere stated that this bump out would take away 1 on-street parking space. Jenny Fallon added that the Planning Board wants to create something that feels different and is more visually appealing and therefore would encourage pedestrians to use the parking lot. Jeffrey Wheeler questioned why Common Street was designed to be concurrent and suggested creating a dog leg. Peter Briere stated that BSC could show this but was not sure that MHD would approve of it since this creates inefficiencies at the intersection. Karl Haglund encouraged Peter to look at this idea arguing that cross volumes are low enough and that it will cut down on the amount of pavement needed at the intersection.

Peter Briere stated that the existing crosswalk was 75' long and that the proposed one was 46'. This shorter distance was created by enlarging the island and straightening the crosswalk. Karl Haglund stated that the goal should be for a 41' long crosswalk – 3 travel lanes at 33' and 2 bicycle lanes at 8'. He understood why the consultant would be reluctant to go to MHD with this but argued that the Town should go instead.

Peter Briere reiterated that he will draw up the dog leg and move the crosswalk to Starbucks. Karl Haglund suggested that the Planning Board meet with the Traffic Advisory Committee to review the recommendations for Cushing Square.

7:50 p.m. Discussion – Smart Growth Zoning District (Our Lady of Mercy)

Elizabeth Gibson introduced the Oakley Road Neighborhood Association and provided an overview of where the draft by-law was at. She emphasized that this was a starting point but acknowledged that this project needs to move forward in a timely fashion. She questioned whether the schedule was too tight to bring this amendment to Town Meeting in April and

thought that it would be ready for a June Town Meeting. David Johnson presented his conceptual drawings for the properties. He stated that the buildings blend well with the surrounding neighborhood and that the proposal includes 2, 3, and multi-unit buildings – the multi-unit buildings are the church and the rectory. He stated that the parking requirements are 1.5 spaces per unit, but argued that this worked because of the existing public transportation.

He reviewed the specifics of the proposed plans for each lot and structure. Six of the ten units are rehabilitated units that are proposed in existing structures. Additionally, the church is recognized by some as an historic structure and many argue that it provides a sense of continuity in the neighborhood. He stressed that these plans were not final and that they were developed to begin the discussion. Nancy Conlin added that the neighborhood wants the 40R because it gives them more control and gives some state money to the Town for the affordable housing.

Jenny Fallon stated that if this amendment is too rushed then it will not be ready for Town Meeting. She added that the Board does not want to go to Town Meeting twice and that the amendment must be ready so that it succeeds on the first try. Karl Haglund explained the public hearing process with Cushing Square and stressed the importance of neighborhood meetings. He suggested that this be placed on the Board of Selectmen's agenda in order to discuss the possibility of having this appear at the June Town Meeting.

8:25 p.m. Discussion – Number of Cars Parked in Driveway

Jeffrey Wheeler reviewed the parking issues and presented some initial data. Michael Collins from 290 Payson Road explained his situation regarding the number of vehicles parked in the driveway and expressed frustration with the existing by-law. Andres Rojas cautioned the Board about the impact of too many vehicles in the driveway within the General Residence district. He stated that the existing by-law protects the visual appearance, open space and property values and he questioned how the neighborhood would feel about any changes to this by-law. He stated that there was a reason why parking is controlled and wondered how to keep a dense zoning district from losing its visual appeal. An audience member stated that people need to be forced to use their garages and wondered whether there was a way to control absentee landlord properties from owner-occupied. He mentioned that residents could use the school lot; however, Jenny Fallon was concerned about too many people using these lots. Another audience member questioned installing screening along the driveways but acknowledged the limited space between structures. Karl Haglund questioned how egregious the violations were – does the data show how many cars are in violation? Jenny Fallon agreed that the threshold was too low but did not want a situation where there was no cap. She questioned where the Town's interests kick in – when would you need to regulate the number of parked cars? Jenny Fallon felt that there must be a more reasonable way to control this than to limit the number of cars.

9:10 p.m. Discussion – Zoning for Transitional Areas

Jeffrey Wheeler reviewed the data gathered thus far. Andres Rojas stated that there is significant pressure to do something with Concord Avenue. Jenny Fallon wanted to make sure that the Board continues to look at the Corridor. She stated that there is public pressure to continue implementing the Corridor Study. An audience member stated that he would like something to happen with the properties at the intersection of Flett and Trapelo Roads. He stated that the

properties were for sale and argued that zoning to allow townhouses was more appropriate for the area and would fill out the neighborhood. The Board requested snap shots of each of the properties on Flett Road and Concord Avenue and those along Trapelo Road.

9:40 p.m. Update: Senior Center Building Decision

Karl Haglund reviewed the status of the Senior Center decision. He had spoken with Karen Pressey and agreed to see if something could be done to remove the architect's memo. Jeffrey Wheeler indicated that he had contacted Town Counsel for his interpretation of the Town's liability. Town Counsel will review the architect's contract to see what it states regarding liability.

9:50 p.m. Approval of Minutes, Committee Updates, Town Planner's Report

Karl Haglund asked for a motion to approve the minutes of December 12, 2007 – First by Jenny Fallon; Seconded by Andres Rojas - Board unanimously approved.

All agreed to hold the minutes of January 10 until their next meeting.

9:55 p.m. Follow-up to Work Plan, Comprehensive List, Timeline calendar

Jenny Fallon reported that the Capital Budget Committee will be meeting every other week and that nothing is directly pertaining to the Planning Board. She again questioned why the Planning Board is represented on this committee.

Jenny Fallon liked the idea of the Open Space zoning district listed on the comprehensive list. She also wants to make sure that the Board has a conversation about comprehensive planning. She argued that the Board needs to have a discussion with the Board of Selectmen in the near future in order to begin a budgeting process if everyone agrees that a comprehensive plan should be drafted. She asked that the Planning Board be placed on the Selectmen's agenda and agreed to work with Jeffrey Wheeler to draft a letter to the Selectmen. The Board also had a brief discussion on the zoning for South Pleasant Street and agreed that this needs to be looked at soon.

All agreed to hold the conversation on the timeline until their next meeting.

10:15 p.m. Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 8, 2007
Town Hall, Conference Room 2