

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Minutes, October 26, 2004
Selectmen's Meeting Room

Members present: Joseph Barrell, Deborah Emello, Karl Haglund, James Heigham, Andrew McClurg

Also present: Tim Higgins - Senior Planner

7:00 p.m. There being a quorum Chairman Barrell opened the meeting.

1. General Business

- The minutes from September 28, 2004 were approved by 5:0 vote as written.
- Tim Higgins noted that the Board needs to report out the Town Meeting articles on the "multi-use" proposal and linear requirements proposal this evening or to schedule another meeting before the November 29th Town Meeting.
- McLean officials, Tim Higgins and Ellen O'Brien Cushman are working on the demo debris issue in the North Meadow and expect to agree on a course of action shortly. The Land Management Committee will discuss this issue tomorrow evening.

7:10 p.m. James Heigham read the public hearing notice on the proposed zoning articles concerning "multi-family-use" and the modifications to the "Linear Requirements" text.

Mr. Heigham asked that the linear requirements issue be taken first. ZBA Member Marty Cohen was present to discuss the proposed amendment to footnote #9 and an accompanying memo from the Zoning Board of Appeals. It was quickly agreed that the proposed amendment would correct an error made by Mr. Paulsen (when he made a floor amendment at an earlier Town Meeting) and that he supports the correction. After a brief discussion James Heigham motioned to send the proposal to Town Meeting as amended by Tim Higgins (5:0 vote).

Discussion then turned to the multi-family use proposal. T. Higgins provided a brief summary noting that the OCD proposal is designed to implement one of the main recommendations of the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street Corridor Study by allowing multi-family residences in the Local Business I zoning districts. This was combined with the Fire Station multi-family recommendation. The existing dimensional requirements for LBI would apply to any proposal.

D. Emello noted that a definition of "multi-family" use would be helpful and that the definition of "apartment house" should be deleted. T. Higgins agreed with the deletion

suggestion but believed the definition of multi-family being three or more units is well known.

A concern was expressed with the lack of an open space provision in the multi-family use proposal. Tim Higgins noted that the LBI zoning district doesn't have an open space requirement or setback requirements today as is for high density development. Karl Haglund said the problem is on Trapelo Road from Cushing Square to Willow Street where some of the businesses currently have lawns that could be built over. Tim Higgins said that this area could be built at 100% lot coverage tomorrow "by right" under existing zoning. The allowed 100% lot coverage pertains to all uses within the LBI zoning districts, not just for residential use. If the Town believes that the Willow Street area should be kept as it is today, then it should be re-zoned.

Roger Colton noted that there is an open area on Common Street in Cushing Square. Karl Haglund agreed that this area should be maintained and does not support increased density in this location. Once again T Higgins pointed that this specific area could be developed today by right, if the property owner chooses to do so. Further concerns were expressed with the building height and the size of multi-family developments and the negative impact they would have on the Town. T. Higgins pointed out the proposal is only applicable the three LBI zoning districts (where the Town's consultant recommended density increases) and is not Town-wide. He also noted that the height and bulk of any new building would be the same as any new building today as there are no proposed increases in existing dimensional requirements.

Deborah Emello suggested using a Special Permit for any demolition for new housing. She wanted to see this in the "transitional zones". The residential market is stronger than the commercial market today. Karl Haglund supports a Special Permit requirement as well.

Sheila Flewelling is upset that the Fire Station Committee proposal is being lost in what she referred to as "a controversial re-zoning". She is also opposed to the Trapelo Road re-zoning that was previously recommended by the Board. She feels that her efforts are being undermined and she will speak against it if it stays as it is at Town Meeting.

Karl Haglund asked if an overlay district would be supported for all three fire stations.

Jay Greene noted that the four properties on Trapelo Road proposed for re-zoning to LBI are predominantly non-residential. However, with the Butler School nearby he is opposed to re-zoning them. A general and lengthy discussion took place on the merits of the re-zoning and the possible use of an "overlay zone". It was noted that Watertown was proposing such a zone specifically for a Catholic church that was being closed in that community.

Tim Higgins explained the possibility of using an overlay zone for a specific parcel. He has spoken to the Watertown planner on this. In the case of the fire station it would require increasing residential density, providing for historic preservation and allowing multi-family use which the existing R zoning does not allow. There appeared to be a

consensus in this approach as there was apprehension over the ability of the current proposal to be approved by Town Meeting.

Mike Sullivan suggested a different zone line including the two residences on Sycamore.

Dick Betts suggested moving the zone line to the rear of the property lines of the Trapelo Road parcels to prevent a 30' intrusion into an abutting lot (This has been done).

Jennifer Page supported moving the zone line back to the middle of the block. Tim Higgins noted that the hearing has been closed on the re-zoning proposal and this issue cannot be formally re-visited without a new public notification process. T. Higgins explained the process and concluded by stating that there is not enough time for it to occur before the November 29th Special Town Meeting.

There was a discussion on amending the re-zoning on Town Meeting floor by decreasing the number of parcels to be changed. This would be possible if a written proposal was submitted before Town Meeting. However, changing the current multi-family use to an overlay district would be too extreme a change to be considered under the existing hearing notice according to Tim Higgins. A lengthy discussion ensued on the merits of changing the zoning to only allow the re-use of the Waverley Square Fire Station.

Discussion then turned to the impacts of delaying any zoning changes to a future Town Meeting. Roger Colton and Karl Haglund agreed that a Request For Proposal (RFP) for the fire station (to the development community) could be issued in January with a new zoning change for the April 2004 Town Meeting. The RFP could be changed if necessary. Deborah Emello expressed her concern with the Board being accused of taking another "piece-meal" approach if this issue is looked at alone.

Due to the public opposition expressed, James Heigham proposed that a better solution be worked out for an April Town Meeting presentation and the articles not be supported by the Board. (This included the previously recommended re-zoning of the fire station and four parcels on the south Trapelo Road.)

Deborah Emello will work with Tim Higgins. It was voted 5:0 and the Public Hearing was continued to the next meeting on November 23rd.

8:40 p.m. James Heigham read the hearing notice on the Demolition Moratorium response options.

Karl Haglund commented on the Warwick Road folks who wrote to complain about the construction of a new two-family dwelling at Common Street. Is the demolition issue bigger? Will it adversely impact the abutters?

Joe Barrell thinks not and believes that the Town needs some new growth. The Common Street proposal is to remove an out-building and the development is allowed "by-right" as it complies with all zoning requirements. There being limited discussion, it was moved to continue the Public Hearing on this issue to November 23rd.

Jennifer Page made a brief comment on the need for long term planning and hopes the Board would advocate for such. The Cecil Group Corridor Study should be implemented and there is value in “density”. However, it needs to be accepted by Town Meeting and advocated by the Board so it is better understood by the Town.

8:55 p.m. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next scheduled meeting of the Board is on November 23, 2004. A second meeting was scheduled for January 5th. There will be no December meeting.