

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Minutes, May 25, 2004
Selectmen's Meeting Room

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

Also present: Timothy Higgins-Senior Planner

7:05 p.m. There being a quorum, the meeting was opened by Chairman Joseph Barrell.

- The minutes from March 30, April 13 and April 29 were approved 4:0 with one edit on the March 30 set.
- The Board agreed to meet on the following dates:
Tuesday, June 29, 2004
Tuesday, July 20, 2004
Tuesday, August 31, 2004

7:10 p.m. The Public Hearing notice for possible re-zoning in the Waverley Square area was read by James Heigham. Since the Waverley Square Fire Station Re-Use Committee has not yet completed its work, the Public Hearing was continued to June 29, voted 4:0.

7:15 p.m. Belmont Upland 40B Eligibility Application discussion.

Chairman Joseph Barrell opened the discussion on the proposal by asking if the members had any comments on the petition. Members had received copies electronically from OCD planners.

- Karl Haglund raised the question if the Town's Open Space Plan was formally approved by the Town. Deborah Emello noted that the Jeffrey Wheeler indicated that the Board of Selectmen had formally adopted the plan and that this vote was acceptable.
- Deborah Emello raised the point that the number of parking spaces and units within the development is inconsistent in the paperwork
- James Heigham expressed concern with the density. 300 units are too large. There is insufficient room on the lot for other improvements and amenities (re: drainage, recreation/playground and open space concerns cannot be resolved with the proposed coverage). It will also be difficult to provide municipal services as the site is geographically isolated from the remainder of the Town.
- There was a question as to the relevance of the pending re-zoning petition for the 250 market rate condominium units and the filing of the 40B eligibility application.
- It was agreed that the site is not ideal for housing. It was zoned for housing before an 18 month moratorium (several years ago) was used to review the best uses for the property -. It resulted in the site being re-zoned to office and Research & Development use. It is not readily accessible by private vehicle. There is no pedestrian access and public transit can only be accessed by vehicle or by climbing up and four foot high wall with a guard rail on top. It is an "island" surrounded by non-residential uses.

Residential development will create excessive traffic as private vehicles are the only means of access/egress.

- There was a general discussion of the negative environmental impacts of the existing Hill Estate (387 total units) on the Belmont side of the Little River.
- There are no provisions for over 55 housing in the proposal and this is an important housing need in the community.
- There is no balance between housing (re: lot coverage) and open space per the Town's Open Space Plan. There is such a balance under the current zoning and the current Memorandum Of Agreement in place with the property owner– this should be maintained.
- The Board has supported affordable housing in the past. It supported the adoption of the Inclusionary Zoning Law and the “B” Street and Brighton Street affordable housing recently approved by Town Meeting. Tim Higgins will place these concerns in a draft memo and forward it to the members.

8:10 p.m. O’Neil Rezoning Public hearing Continuance: James Heigham read the hearing notice. He believed that the residential petition submitted by O’Neill should be “withdrawn” as there was no one present to present or to discuss it, it has gone on for over one year and the Board can’t leave the hearing open ended. After a brief discussion the public hearing was closed and the petitioner will be required to start over if this rezoning option is to be pursued again (voted 4:0).

8:20 p.m. Discussion of Demolition Moratorium Options

James Heigham briefly discussed his preliminary list of options. Tim Higgins gave a detailed explanatory of the process he would like to follow. The Office of Community Development has expanded upon Mr. Heigham’s list and has identified eight (8) options to investigate. He noted that OCD is in the data collection and research phase and is NOT prepared to discuss the individual options. He has received feedback from the Assessors and will be collecting data over the next month or so. A “white paper” will be produced to be used as a basis for future discussion and deliberation on the issue. The paper will include single-family demolitions on small lots (Knox Street) as well as the two-family prohibition. He noted that change in the “height” definition seems promising and that planners will be looking “outside the box”. The intent is to have a response prepared for a fall 2004 Town Meeting if one is called. Members agreed with this process.

8:40 p.m. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.