

TOWN OF LINCOLN
MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD
SEPTEMBER 22, 2020
ZOOM MEETING

PRESENT: Margaret Olson, (Chair), Lynn DeLisi (Vice-Chair), Gary Taylor, Stephen Gladstone, Robert Domnitz, Craig Nicholson

STAFF: Paula Vaughn-MacKenzie

7:00 PM Report from SLPAC

Gary Taylor gave a summary of the September 18, 2020 SLPAC meeting. PV-M noted that a report of SLPAC activity will be given every second Planning Board of the month at 7:00pm. GT suggested that once SLPAC minutes are approved, they should be distributed to the members of the Planning Board. BD asked if the calendar was available and PV-M replied that a three-month schedule is posted on the town calendar. GT noted that the committee agreed to review the charge at the next meeting. There is concern about the effect of the pandemic on the commercial activity in South Lincoln as well as the effect on MBTA ridership. Liaison positions were raised and will be discussed at the next meeting. The committee also discussed lessons learned such as traffic concerns as well as the fate of existing moderate housing. There was a fair amount of public participation and GT was confident that public participation would continue. BD noted that the Planning Board was invited by the BOS to a discussion with the RLF and wanted to have free discussion at that meeting. MO and GT agreed that it would be best to post a Planning Board meeting. The BOS meeting will take place on October 5, 2020. BD stated that he had worked on a study looking at affordability of housing in Lincoln with Ellen Meadors in 2011. The result was a graph showing the percentage of housing that would be affordable at different incomes. The graph includes all, single family residences, multi-family residences, rentals, and accessory apartments in Town. He noted that single family homes required a substantial income. BD would like to have SLPAC update the study with possible help from MAPC. MO suggested that the data should include units with enough bedrooms for a family. PV-M will follow up with MAPC to see if a previously submitted grant proposal could be used for this study.

7:10 PM Discussion

- **Diversity, Equity & Anti-Racism Roundtable Series scheduled for October 7, 2020.**

The Planning Board will have 10-15 minutes to discuss the ways in which the Planning Board can address the issues of diversity and equity. Specifically, the Planning Board will discuss what tools

they may have to help implement goals of the Town. MO thought the Board should acknowledge that the existing zoning is exclusionary but noted that the implementation for change would be more complex. GT noted that in 1971 the Planning Board recognized that the consequences of the Town's conservation and open space policy would affect the affordability of housing and thus limit access to many who might desire to live here. This acknowledgement led to the establishment of affordable housing at Lincoln Woods. MO noted that the Town did not seem to attract professional families of color but did not think that the Planning Board had any tools with which to address this. The Planning Board can only deal with economics of land use. BD disagreed and did not think that the connection between density and pricing was strong. He suggested that the desirability of living in a town and the quality of the school system are greater factors. For example, the Town of Lexington has smaller lots and higher prices than Lincoln.

GT noted that the Planning Board can propose zoning that helps to create housing options. MO would like the discussion at the roundtable to clarify what problems we are trying to solve. LD suggested that the issue of why people of color do not feel welcome in Lincoln is a larger problem. She gave the example of the minister and his family that left Lincoln because they did not feel welcome. LD noted that another woman told her that her child was assumed to be in the Metco program because he was a child of color. BD stated that people create groups who like to live with each other, and this problem is beyond the Planning Board. BD thinks that the density and housing options are not the same thing. GT noted that that way in which you add housing makes a large difference as to whether it will change the character of the Town. A good example is Lincoln Woods. Most people do not even know Lincoln Woods is there and the development has no impact on the rural character of the Town.

MO thought it would be useful to educate the Town as to what the Planning Board can and cannot do. GT noted that land use is broader than zoning. For example, land use policy prioritized land being put in Conservation which has impacted what land is left for other uses. LD noted that conservation land may impact the Town's tax base. BD stated that residences do not increase available taxes. He does not think that scaling up the residences in Town will increase taxes available to the Town. MO noted that it is not linear and there would be some economies of scale. The increase in units required to attain such economies of scale, however, may be too great. BD noted that the requirement of septic systems and the limit on drinking water are physical restraints. GT noted that septic systems may have been a way to prevent development.

MO noted that regulations increase the cost of building a house. BD talked about a report done approximately 15 years ago of the cost of regulation. MO thought it was interesting, but 15 years is a long time and it would be interesting to see what the assumptions of the study were. GT agreed. LD asked if other communities were discussing this topic. PV-M noted that many communities were having similar town-wide discussions.

MO will put together a draft of slides for the roundtable and send around to the Board members. All comments should be sent to PV-M.

- **Options available for struggling commercial spaces in South Lincoln.**

The Board next discussed the situation of an owner of a small commercial building in South Lincoln who was struggling to rent out the space. Could the South Lincoln Overlay be used to allow a different use or mixed use even if no new development is anticipated? Other options could include changing the zoning of the parcel to B-2 or developing zoning in South Lincoln that would allow some flexibility. This is something the SLPAC committee should review.

- **Accessory Apartment Bylaw.**

The Board discussed the restrictions of the current accessory apartment bylaw where any substantial addition (over 10%) of the existing house will result in the entire structure being considered new and therefore cannot meet the 10- year old rule. The Board members agreed to review the bylaw and suggest zoning changes to address the trend and need for multi-generational housing. MO suggested that a change could be made so that the ten-year requirement could be waived if the accessory apartment will house a family member. The Board will need to discuss what the policy should be. BD asked if the Board could review the history as to how the current bylaw was developed.

- **SOTT scheduled for November 19, 2020.**

The Planning Board has a placeholder for November 19th SOTT. The Board will decide if they want to make a presentation regarding South Lincoln. MO noted that it is an opportunity to get information out and receive input with a broader audience than the Planning Board normally has. BD thought that since there was nothing new and concrete to share regarding SLPAC's work, he would rather not make a presentation.

8:00 PM Business

GT made a motion to approve the August 11, 2020 minutes as amended. MO Seconded. Roll Call: MO aye, BD aye, GT aye, LD aye, SG aye. The motion passed 5-0.

MO made a motion to adjourn. SG Seconded. Roll Call: MO aye, BD aye, GT aye, LD aye, SG aye. The motion passed 5-0.

Approved as amended October 13, 2020