

TOWN OF LINCOLN
MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD
OCTOBER 27, 2020
ZOOM MEETING

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

STAFF: Paula Vaughn-MacKenzie

7:00 PM SLPAC Report

Gary Taylor gave the SLPAC Report. GT noted that the SLPAC meetings have been engaging and raised two main issues to be addressed. The first is scope and the second is the capacity of the existing septic treatment system. There is a fair amount of diversity within the committee as to what should be the geographic scope. Allen Vander Meulen thought that limiting the scope would limit the options that they may have. James Craig thought that the geographic scope should be limited to the Mall side of Lincoln and possibly just the Mall area itself. Gary Taylor took a middle position and thought the scope should include the Mall, Lincoln Woods, the commercial properties across from the Mall and Lewis Street. He would leave out the Ridge Road Condominiums as well as the Ridge Court Condominiums. GT noted that if the scope is limited to the Mall side of Lincoln Road, Lincoln Woods would need to be included so that there would be some incentive to cooperate with the septic system. He thought that at least some refinement of the B-2 zoning along Lewis Street is necessary to increase flexibility of allowed uses.

There was discussion regarding the existing septic system. A study was done approximately 10 years ago and at that time it was noted that it has single wall container tanks that were past their life expectancy at that time. The life expectancy of the facility needs to be studied as well as any expansion possibilities. In the event TCB is not willing to participate, there needs to be a study of options. The committee agreed that it would need to hire a consultant to help with a feasibility study.

PV-M noted that the committee had discussed liaisons and that Fred Mansfield from the Board of Health has agreed to be a liaison to the committee. SLPAC is still waiting for the South Lincoln Residents group to see if they would like to appoint a liaison. SLPAC has also extended invitations for liaisons from Conservation, the RLF and any other stakeholders in an effort to cast a wide net for participation. Packy Lawler, a Lincoln resident who has been a member of the Water Board and who has expertise in municipal waste systems has volunteered his time and support to help with the septic study.

GT noted that Andrew Glass is the liaison from the Historic Commission and is also the Town's representative to the MBTA. He will hopefully work with Allen Vander Meulen to pursue upgrades to the station. The MBTA train station needs upgrades and the MBTA may be more interested in investing in the Lincoln stop if there was more housing in the immediate vicinity.

LD noted that at the SLPAC meeting, James Craig suggested having a new survey as one source for reaching out to get Town opinion. LD said that she has been advocating for such a survey for a while and commented that it worked well for the Marijuana Committee in gaging what the Town wanted. The Board noted that a free form response survey can be difficult to quantify. MO noted that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) had done a survey that was well received and was able to work with some free form questions. GT suggested that we have someone involved that has expertise in constructing surveys. MO agreed and noted that we do not want to have useless data or frustrated users.

BD asked if the survey would be just about scope or if it would be broader. LD said that the survey should be broad in scope about what people want in South Lincoln. MO thought the Board should decide what the Board wants to find out rather than what the questions should be. GT noted that it may be wise to get some expertise on the survey as well. He also thought that the Board should explore funding resources.

BD noted that the geographic scope is still up in the air and wondered when it would be addressed. GT thought that the public needs an opportunity to weigh in and suggested that the next SLPAC evening meeting should set aside an hour for a discussion of scope. BD also asked if TCB has a reserve to replace the tank or whether TCB thinks the Town will bail them out. GT noted that although he does not have an answer right now, the question needs to be answered.

PV-M summarized next steps:

At the next evening SLPAC meeting, there will be an opportunity for public input on the question of scope.

Margaret will reach out to Ginger Reiner regarding her help in constructing a survey. Connie Ohlsten also said that she has experience in drafting surveys and volunteered to help.

It was agreed that the survey questions would be reviewed by the Planning Board and include their input.

Public Comment:

Andrew Glass suggested that a survey will be useful as a foundational point to look at what we want the center to look like in ten years. It may guide SLPAC as to what the goals should be. Having defined goals will make the committee's work productive.

Connie Ohlsten also noted that the survey should develop our starting point and to state what the Town's goals are.

Jane Herlacher likes the idea of a survey and agrees a broad-based foundation is a good idea.

7:20 PM Site Plan Review, Section 17: 9 Lewis Street Realty Trust, 9 Lewis Street, Parcel 161-5-0. Site Plan Review of reconstruction of the building now known as building 9 and other parking and landscape improvements. No vote expected.

THIS APPLICATION HAS BEEN WITHDRAWN PER APPLICANT'S REQUEST.

7:20 PM Business

- Approval of October 13, 2020 minutes.

MO made a motion to approve the October 13, 2020 minutes. SG Seconded. Roll Call: SG aye, BD aye, MO aye, GT aye, LD aye. The motion passed 5-0.

- Discussion of SOTT presentation

The Board discussed the draft power point deck that will be presented at the SOTT. The Board discussed wording and flow. The Board suggested that wording should be specific. The Board also noted that the current vision for the Town Center needs to be confirmed and not taken for granted.

MO noted that a survey can be used to validate a vision for the Town Center. The survey should be careful to not ask for amenities that are not feasible. GT thought that balancing trade offs is an important concept. If a project is before Town Meeting, there are always small groups that do not approve of a part of any project. GT thinks the Board needs to be up front about what is necessary to achieve a reasonable project. MO thought that a survey could re-confirm the vision instead of assuming that the Comprehensive Plan is the shared vision of the Town.

The Board agreed to discuss the issues and take another look at the language after edits. MO suggested that the Board consider a timeline for the survey.

LD asked what is meant by “balancing trade-offs” and thought it sounds like we need to accept something negative for something positive. GT suggested that there needs to be a way to trade off objectives and concerns. LD agreed with the concept but suggested different wording would be better. BD thought it is better to come forward with a specific project to Town Meeting rather than abstractions. MO agreed that people have an easier time reacting to specific proposals but wherever the final mechanism, it is important to see where the Town stands. BD suggested that a survey could contain different scenarios that people could respond to. LD thought it would be too specific.

MO and LD thought that because people do not know what the zoning allows now, that a map or some other mechanism would be helpful in showing what can or cannot be done with existing zoning. The Board acknowledged that many people are fearful of large changes when there is talk about changing zoning. BD suggested not calling out changes in zoning so that people will be more relaxed about the changes. GT said that even if you change the wording on the power point, the mechanism is to change the zoning.

The Board noted that the Planning Board can affect economic diversity. It cannot directly affect racial diversity. Accomplishing racial diversity is a more complex issue. The Planning Board discussed whether economic diversity based on housing options is the only way the Board can address the issue of racial diversity. Another complex question is why professional families of color are not drawn to Lincoln.

LD asked how do we know that people want to live in Lincoln Station if they are downsizing? Is the demand for anywhere in Lincoln? SG noted that there is no current option for people who are downsizing to live in the Lincoln Station area. LD asked about electric cars. GT noted that the Town could promote the use of electric cars by promoting charging stations at Lincoln Station and at homes.

BD noted that private developer input will be necessary and should be included in the slides. GT agreed and noted that it will be necessary to explore the feasibility of any development.

PV-M suggested that if it is possible, to include some questions at the end of the presentation for a thumbs up or down response from the audience.

GT noted that the effects of COVID-19 should be acknowledged so that people know the Planning Board is thinking about the issue. Andrew Glass noted that although things are in flux, the MBTA is very important for people that live in gateway communities for essential workers who physically need to go into work. The MBTA is aware of the need that the MBTA serves as necessary transportation for these communities and will continue to be used despite the pandemic. GT added that people do not just commute into Boston but can commute out from Boston to Lincoln for recreation and to take advantage of Codman Farm, the trail network, and other places of interest. The idea of a shuttle service that stops at different points of interest should be researched. PV-M noted that there is a feasibility study underway funded by Minute Man Park that includes the Towns of Lincoln, Lexington, and Concord. PV-M will distribute when the study is done.

Jane Herlacher does not like the many different references to the Center and thinks that the Board should come up with one term. She likes Lincoln Station.

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

Approved November 10, 2020