

TOWN OF LINCOLN

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD

February 23, 2021

PLANNING BOARD ZOOM MEETING

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

STAFF: Paula Vaughn-MacKenzie, Jennifer Curtin

ATTENDEES: Craig Nicholson, Connie Ohlsten, Christina Van Vleck, Ginger Reiner, Bob Wolf

7:00 PM SLPAC Report

GT said that the new Massachusetts Housing Choice Law, Bill H.5250 “An Act enabling partnerships for growth “, has impacted the planning for the Lincoln Station area. It requires multi-family housing with a minimum density of 15 units per acre within .5 mile of MBTA stations. The penalties for non-compliance are in the form of being cut off from applying for certain grants that the Town has taken advantage of in the past. Additional guidance from Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) on the specific details is forthcoming. There will be a webinar conducted by the Massachusetts Municipal Lawyers Association tomorrow on this new legislation.

PV-M said that there will be a presentation by Town Counsel, KP Law, on this subject at the March 16th SLPAC meeting.

GT said that SLPAC is continuing to make progress on a septic study which will be crucial to determining what could be accomplished at Lincoln Station. A draft Request for Proposals (RFP) is out now for feedback. There are 4-5 firms lined up with additional firms being sought after. The major focus is on The Community Builders (TCB) septic plant. SLPAC is determining what can be done, what upgrades could be made and, if nothing can be worked out with TCB, what the other options are there for septic at Lincoln Station. TCB seems enthusiastic about working on redevelopment in the mall area, potentially including the Town’s commuter parking area. TCB has been provided with the RFP with a response expected in the next few weeks. There is also discussion about the potential of the Town and TCB co-funding the study.

PV-M agreed that TCB seemed amenable to working with the Town on this.

Connie Ohlsten asked about the progress on the Lincoln Village Center Survey.

PV-M said that the Planning Department will make it a focus to get it done soon.

Ms. Ohlsten asked when the evening SLPAC meetings will get back on schedule.

PV-M said that the February 16th meeting was cancelled because there were no agenda items as there had been no additional progress on the TCB discussion.

GT said that the TCB discussion occurred after February 16th so there will be more to discuss at the next meeting.

Ms. Ohlsten said that the next meeting is being repurposed for the KP Law Presentation.

PV-M said that the presentation will be vital to understanding the potential for South Lincoln planning and development. She added that the presentation was scheduled for that night so that the entire meeting could be dedicated to it.

BD sent out an email to the board noting his concerns. He said that there have been 6 morning meetings and only 2 evening meetings which was not the original schedule. He added that the March 16th meeting looks like a general meeting, not a SLPAC working meeting. He suggested the meeting should be rebranded as a Planning Board meeting, as the Board members should all attend anyway.

GT said that he does not object to noticing it as a Planning Board meeting.

MO agreed that the Planning Board members should all attend and that the label of the meeting is unimportant since it concerns both committees.

PV-M said that it can be categorized as a Planning Board/SLPAC meeting and that she will invite many outside boards and committees as well.

BD asked if the RFP for the septic could be revised so that the consultant is required to provide a range of costs based on a range of units instead of three scenarios with specific build-out numbers.

GT said that the most recent draft included language to address that issue.

Craig Nicholson sent around an article which reported on youths in the Town of Wolverton in the UK being included in the planning process. The kids were asked to use the game Minecraft, in which players use blocks to build whatever they want, to show what revitalization of the town could look like. In the end, they received ideas such as community spaces, walkable streets, renewable energy, and green walls. He said that this kind of concept could be employed in Lincoln to engage kids in South Lincoln planning. The School Building Committee (SBC) involved the Boston Architectural College in the development of ideas for the School renovation project. This was well-received and helped to bringing youthfulness to the design process. He added that it would be a great opportunity to collaborate with the school and other universities in the Boston area to get their input on creative ideas for the South Lincoln area.

MO said that this is a great idea.

GT said that Sarah Cannon Holden does an annual project with the 8th graders and that this may be an opportunity to get involved with that program.

Mr. Nicholson said that he will reach out to Ms. Cannon Holden.

LD suggested that Mr. Nicholson also reach out to the various graduate Planning programs in Boston.

Mr. Nicholson said that he will cast a broad net to obtain as much input and interest as possible.

PV-M agreed that it is a great idea and will open the planning process to more groups in Town. It will help to including the younger generation while getting fresh ideas and increased public participation.

Mr. Nicholson will do more research and present at a future Planning Board meeting.

7:20 PM Recommendation, Section 10.2, Uses Permitted Subject to the Permission of the Board of Appeals. 2 Lewis Street LLC, Parcel 161-1-0. Request for a recommendation to allow a new tenant to have an art studio and residence in a B-2 District.

PV-M reported that the owners of 2 Lewis Street are requesting a recommendation pursuant to Section 10.2 for the uses permitted subject to the permission of the Board of Appeals with written advice of the Planning Board. The owners, Christina Van Vleck and David Nydam have applied to the ZBA for a special permit requesting that the ZBA permit two uses in the same building under Section 10.5.2 as compatible with each other and consistent with the purposes of the Bylaw.

A potential tenant for the entire ground floor of the building proposes to use the front 1,400 square feet as an art gallery and the rear 900 square feet of space as a fire-separated, 1-bedroom residence for the gallery owner. The ZBA application contains additional details showing how the proposed use meets parking and septic specifications.

Section 15.3.2.1 (a) requires that dwellings have one parking space for each dwelling unit and sufficient parking space for employees or visitors. (b) requires retail businesses to have at least one parking space for each 250 square feet of space excluding basement storage area. This would require a minimum of 5.6 parking spaces for the gallery and one space for the apartment and adequate parking for visitors to the apartment. The lower parking area which services the first floor has nine parking spaces including one ADA van-accessible space, which will be sufficient to meet those requirements.

The capacity for the existing septic system has been officially approved by the Board of Health.

The ZBA reviewed the application at the last meeting favorably and continued it until their March meeting so that the Planning Board could give its recommendation.

The applicants live in the top two floors of the building and will have completely rehabbed all four floors with this final project. A more efficient and streamlined permitting process for this type of mixed use is one of the goals of the planning effort in the village center. The current process, although achievable in the B-2 District, has taken months and requires a special permit from the Board of Appeals and a recommendation from the Planning Board.

Christina Van Vleck said that the tenant is excited about the potential live-work zoning in the area.

PV-M said that the Building Inspector is aware of this project and will ensure that there is adequate fire separation between the living area and the gallery space.

BD said that this is a great project and that it shines a light on the issues with Section 10 of the Zoning Bylaw. He said that while Site Plan Review has been done, one could read that this new use may trigger Site Plan Review again. He added that an art gallery is not explicitly stated as a permitted use.

PV-M said that since nothing is changed on the exterior it would not require site plan review and ZBA has already stated that the gallery is a permitted use.

MO made a motion to favorably recommend. SG seconded. Roll Call: SG aye, GT aye, MO aye, LD aye, BD aye.

7:35 PM Presentation by the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee regarding the implementation of an advisory shoulder pilot program.

Bob Wolf gave an overview of how and why the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) was created. There were two cycling deaths on Lincoln roads in 2016. In 2017, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) created the Cycling Safety Advisory Committee (CSAC) to investigate how to address safety concerns. In 2018, CSAC issued a report documenting hazards and giving recommendations at which point the BOS created BPAC. In 2019, BPAC initiated a master planning project with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) which included conducting a Town wide survey.

Ginger Reiner said that the survey was distributed via various methods including posts on LincolnTalk and flyers at Town Meeting. BPAC received 250 responses in 3 weeks. 63% of those responding were parents of school-age children who would like to see their kids ride their bikes or walk more frequently to school but felt that part of their route was unsafe. 50% of respondents themselves would like to bike or walk more as well, but also said that safety was a large barrier.

Mr. Wolf said that those findings produced two goals: connecting neighborhoods safely with special attention paid to pedestrians and “family cyclists” who may not be used to difficult road cycling; and ensuring safe bike routes to adjacent towns, especially to rail trails. He added that the Town’s roadway and roadside path network is extensive and complex so one size does not fit all. For major roads under Lincoln’s control, BPAC suggests maintenance, striping, and signage standards with specific interventions to improve pedestrian and bike safety in hazardous locations. In addition, BPAC is actively providing input to MassDOT’s 2A projects. For minor roads, they are developing affordable, safe, and low stress solutions and have reached out to various neighborhoods in virtual meetings to get community input. Advisory shoulders were well-received as one option for treating minor connections. Town wide plans for situationally dependent roadside path, crosswalk, and conservation trail improvement and standards are being developed. BPAC is also considering approaches to education, enforcement, encouragement, and evaluation while working with BOS, RTC, DPW, police, schools, Conservation, LLCT, MAPC and affected neighborhoods. Mr. Wolf added that BPAC expects to revise their approach whenever necessary to respond to new information.

Advisory shoulders mark usable shoulder space with a right of way for pedestrians and bikes. They are marked with signage and painting and BPAC is exploring options for what they could look like in Lincoln. Advisory shoulders are shown to reduce vehicle speeds, lower stress for pedestrians and bikes, and are low cost. BPAC is recommending an advisory shoulder pilot that would be sanctioned and guided by the Federal Highway Administration. The pilot would allow for evaluation of how applicable this approach would be in the long-term and would be easy to reverse if necessary.

BD asked if there was a Massachusetts law about required distance from cyclists when passing.

Mr. Wolf said that it is only defined as “safe distance”. There is a bill before the legislature to make a minimum requirement of 3 feet. This would allow for enforcement opportunities and increased safety.

BD said that some states have up to 9 foot requirements.

Mr. Wolf said that Maine and Vermont have 3 foot rules, and some have variable distancing depending on the speed limits.

BD said that Carlisle had signs that required cyclists to ride single file when cars are around.

Mr. Wolf said that those signs became illegal with current bike law. The new law states that two cyclists can ride next to each other until it impedes traffic at which point single file would be required.

BD asked how evaluation would be done to determine efficacy of the pilot.

Mr. Wolf said that BPAC would conduct baseline traffic studies prior to the pilot and again during the pilot phase. They are also considering interviewing people on the street who are using the advisory shoulders. BPAC invites suggestions on additional ways to capture public perception of the program. The pilot will be launched on Farrar Road in Spring 2021. Farrar Road serves 180 households and has substantial pedestrian use. BPAC also plans to propose a crosswalk across Concord Road to safely connect Farrar Road to the town trails. Old Sudbury Road

would be the next expansion of the pilot but there will be additional issues to address and manage. Neighborhoods have been generally supportive of the pilots.

BD asked if there are any standard complaints voiced by Lincoln residents.

Mr. Wolf said that there were approximately 24 people who attended the Farrar Road neighborhood meeting. There were a couple of concerns about paint and increased pedestrian traffic, but the vast majority supported the project.

MO said that there is an active email list where people have shared their thoughts and once, they recognized that it was only paint and there were no plans to widen the road, respondents were all supportive.

Ms. Reiner said that the pilot will inform what aesthetic concerns there may be and BPAC will work to address them. She added that traffic calming slows the resident drivers on the subject road as well as those travelling through and it will be interesting to see if that leads to any complaints.

BD said that there are several roads in Lexington with excessive signage about cyclist awareness.

Ms. Reiner said that they are sensitive to that and BPAC is working with their consulting engineer, John Vancor, to ensure that signage and striping will comply with laws without being excessive.

Mr. Wolf showed treatments of striping and signage in Hanover, NH and Yarmouth, ME. Hanover's stripes are 6 foot painted stripes with 12 feet between them and Yarmouth's standard is 4 foot painted stripes with 4 feet between them. Yarmouth has the most experience with advisory shoulders and has them on 5 public roads.

GT said that this is a promising option for increased safety and that BPAC could get involved with the consolidation of crosswalks suggested in the traffic study that was done in South Lincoln. He added that some speed bumps are hard to get over for low profile cars and asked what the Committee's plans are for those.

Mr. Wolf said that BPAC welcomes collaboration for issues in the Lincoln Station area. On Winter Street and Sandy Pond Road there are traditional speed bumps which can be difficult for low profile cars. They are looking at speed humps which span a longer distance and are flat on the top to accommodate those kinds of vehicles. These serve to slow traffic and can double as crosswalks.

PV-M asked how long the pilot on Farrar Road will last.

Mr. Wolf said that it will take place over one year, which is the standard of the Federal Highway Administration, to observe effectiveness in all seasons.

PV-M said that it would be important to see how snow clearing will impact efficiency as it makes narrow roads such as Tower Road narrower already.

Mr. Wolf said that is an important consideration. There will need to be collaboration with DPW to develop additional standards for winter maintenance.

PV-M said that although advisory shoulders may initially be uncomfortable for drivers, that it is how people drive on narrow country roads currently, so it should not pose that much of a problem in practice.

SG said that this is very well thought-out and complemented BPAC on their efforts.

GT asked what the Planning Board can do to help.

Mr. Wolf said that members can volunteer to engage with the public in different areas in town. SLPAC collaboration would also be welcomed. He added that advisory shoulders are only one option they are considering for traffic calming techniques.

8:15 PM Business

- Approval of February 9, 2021 minutes.

GT moved to approve as amended, MO seconded. Roll Call: SG aye, MO aye, GT aye, BD aye, LD aye. The motion passed 5-0.

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

Approved on March 9, 2021.