

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

Remote Public Meeting

Attendance

Members Present: Michael Gorr (Chair), Robert Roemer, James Barr, Michael Lau, Erik Neyland
Austen Groener

Staff Present: Pamela Harding (Town Planner) Mark Caisse, Bolton Tree Warden

Others Present: Randall Arendt, consultant

Meeting called to order by roll call vote at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Michael Gorr (Chair), Robert Roemer, James Barr, Michael Lau, Janes Barr Austen Groener, Erik Neyland (arrived 7:40)

Randall Arendt was present to discuss review of the Towns Subdivision Control Regulations and Zoning Bylaws to improve cluster type development. Mr. Arendt reviewed a few case studies and asked if the Town was amenable to shared septic and well systems. He suggested open space preservation requirements be increased to 50%, the best layouts occur after good soils are identified.

A cottage style development was discussed, his experience has been that a compact development (i.e. Donovan Farm) incorporating open space throughout the development is more desirable and creates a village green, he thinks the Cottage concepts could be revisited. Erik Neyland thought the previous attempt at adopting the Cottage Overlay District wasn't marketed enough, one person expressed a concern about the water table and it negated public opinion.

R. Arendt stated visuals are extremely important and there may have been misunderstandings about the housing and density. He did not recommend site plans he suggested photographs and pictures of existing conditions. The former attempt included a density bonus of 4x. R. Arendt stated if you draw water through well use and it is discharged into leaching fields it goes right back into the water table.

M. Gorr stated it take times for that and this item will require consultation by someone with expertise. R. Roemer stated this grant originated from attending a workshop in Harvard, where you take natural resources into account prior to designing the development, thinking it was beneficial to utilize R Arendt's four step process.

The four-step process begins with examine existing resources and site analysis to determine the most valuable open space. It should be required for board members and engineers to walk the property prior to designing the subdivision to experience the land and identify priority preservation areas. Tree species identification and preservation should be identified by diameter and species to determine significance.

R. Arendt referenced the process for designing golf courses with associated development. Step 1 requires identify the priority open space area. Step 2 locates the homes after the open space is identified. Step 3 includes the Engineer to designs streets and stormwater system. Step 4 draws the lot lines. R. Arendt suggested moving away from conventional subdivisions, allowing cluster subdivisions by right and requiring a Special Permit for the conventional.

Erik Neyland stated currently conventional subdivision design are required to determine the density. And asked the consultants opinion on excluding wetlands from open space etc. Randall supports requiring a yield plan, and 10% sample of lots should require soil testing, 50% of buildable land should be preserved as the open space and can reduce the size of the house lot to accommodate preservation. R. Roemer stated current market conditions show a trend toward smaller lots with bigger homes to required less yard maintenance.

M. Gorr stated all subdivisions have been FOSPRD, it doesn't allow greater density but allows smaller lot sizes of one acre, reduced from the two-acre requirement. Thought smaller dense homes is a goal. Arendt stated updating the design process in the bylaw/regulations is crucial and get to density through yield plan, smaller lots will require shared water and sewer services, shared services can be grouped or services the entire development depending on the proposed layout, set the allowed density and provide housing type options. The Board may want to consider architectural requirements, limiting placement of the garage to prevent it being the front focal point of the homes.

R. Roemer stated he would like to see a combination of FOSPRD and Cottage Overlay as one bylaw, so there doesn't have to be a new bylaw but incorporate things into the existing FOSPRD. The difference was Cottage was an overlay district and FOSPRD applies all throughout Town. Mike Lau asked if we had sufficient bylaws to address requirements of shared utilities. R. Roemer state the shared utilities fall within jurisdiction of Board of Health. M. Gorr didn't remember how this item was addressed in the former Cottage Overlay district.

FOSPRD is already being utilized exclusively, the current open space preservation requirement is 33% and the Board should seriously consider increasing this requirement. Need to be clear in defining buildable and unbuildable areas and don't want to increase the requirement to deter use of the FOSPRD, consider width and curbing requirements as well. R. Arendt suggested having clear design standards and allow FOSPRD by right. R. Roemer suggested objectives are to preserve as much open space as possible and provide additional housing opportunities.

FOSPRD applies to property ten acres or more. Roemer thinks the best thing to do is conduct a charrette. Type of housing is a critical part of this. A. Groener asked if we currently require site visits there is no requirement, soil testing is required for septic's and locations of stormwater basins.

Next step is a workshop with graphic images for the public. R. Arendt suggested it may be helpful to insert an intermediate step for bylaw language but that is not included with the original scope of work.

Approval Not Required Plans were discussed and what can be done. R Arendt doesn't think communities in Massachusetts have been successful in regulating this type of development. Specific reference to Meadow Road was made. . Arendt said case studies are the most effective way to reach the public and obtain visuals. Davidson North Carolina requires charrettes for every subdivision, often times with all Board and Committees Mr. Arendt would look at the wording.

There is a meeting scheduled for January 24 with one Approval Not Required Plan. Prioritizing goals and objectives should be added to the agenda..

M. Gorr made amotion to adjourn at 8:45 pm, R. Roemer seconded the motion all were in favor. 5-0.

The January 17, 2024 minutes were approved on March 13, 2024