



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD  
MINUTES  
Tuesday, February 28, 2023



On July 16, 2022, Governor Baker signed into Law an Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, including an extension of provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2023. Accordingly, and pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to access the meeting may do so via ZOOM. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted and public participation in any public hearing conducted during this meeting shall be remote means only.

Recognizing the presence of a quorum Brian Massey, Chair called meeting to order at 7:00 PM, with the following other members in attendance: Michael Baker; Abdul Kafal; Rainer Forst; and Andrew Howden (Associate Member). Jim Berkowitz was absent. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner, and Barbara A. Kinney, Administrative Assistant, were also present. No members of the public were in attendance.

**I. CITIZENS FORUM**

None

**II. FORM A**

None

**III. 2023 HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN (DRAFT) -DISCUSSION & NEXT STEPS**

**Scheduling of Public Forum**

G Bechtholdt indicated that spoke with Lori Tanner, Consultant (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission) following the last meeting of the Planning Board and will be speaking again this week to discuss the draft Housing Production Plan and next steps. G. Bechtholdt suggested the Planning Board should look to schedule a follow up public forum in April/May, depending on availability of the consultant and others. The purpose of the forum will be to review with the public affordable housing needs and identify potential opportunities and means to address those needs. G Bechtholdt explained after the public forum and completion of the Housing Production Plan, arrangements will be made with the Board of Selectmen for a public presentation and local adoption. Planning Board members noted the draft of the Housing Production Plan included some interesting statistics and were surprised to learn Section 8 housing does not count towards the town's subsidized housing inventory; G Bechtholdt suggested reason being the voucher program is tied to the individual and not necessarily a dwelling unit. Overall, the Planning Board felt the plan was a good report.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Approval of Meeting Minutes -January 10, January 24 & February 14, 2023

Upon motion made (M. Baker) and seconded (A. Kafal), the Planning Board voted 4-0 by roll call vote of A. Kafal -Yes; R. Forst -Yes; M. Baker -Yes; and B. Massey -Yes to approve the minutes of February 14, 2023.

Minutes of January 10 and January 24, 2023 were tabled.

Open Meeting Law Remote Participation -Expires March 31, 2023

G Bechtholdt indicated that he has not heard of any extensions of the Act allowing for virtual meetings to continue beyond March 2023. R Forst stated if remote meetings are no longer permitted, he will not be able to attend in-person and will need to resign from the Planning Board.

2023-2030 Open Space & Recreation Plan (DRAFT) -Status & Next Steps

When the draft document is ready, it will be forwarded to the Planning Board and other municipal departments. The departments will need to review the document and offer their letters of support.

Master Plan (Update Initiative) -MGL Chapter 41 Section 81D

G Bechtholdt suggested with the soon to be completed Open Space & Recreation Plan and preparation of the Housing Production Plan, the Planning Board should look to prepare an update to the town's Master Plan (1994); G Bechtholdt suggested this initiative will require a consultant to help facilitate discussions and prepare the comprehensive plan; an approximate 16 to 18-month process.

Mumford Riverwalk Boardwalk (Linwood Ave) -Status/Update

G. Bechtholdt indicated construction bid documents are currently being prepared and should be advertised this spring.

Rockdale Pocket Park (Providence Rd) -Status/Update

G. Bechtholdt explained, the landscape architect is preparing layout design changes to address initial comments received by the Conservation Agent, in preparation for Notice of Intent filing with the Conservation Commission.

Site Plan/Subdivision Developments -Status/Update

Construction activity is minimal during the winter season.

2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting (May 02, 2023)

Point of information -no discussion.

2023 SATM -Scheduling of Public Hearing(s)

Planning Board acknowledged receipt of petition article to extend the Residential Three (R-3) Zoning District along Wing Road (from B-3 to R-3). The Planning Board shall look to schedule its public hearing for April 11, 2023 in advance of the 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting.

Planning Board Concerns

None

Mail -Review

None

Other

G. Bechtholdt mentioned he will be meeting with Bill Renaud concerning the Providence Road conceptual development plan and a draft zoning provision prepared by others on behalf of the property owner(s).

Board members noted the completed Housing Production Plan is to be considered as part of any type of zoning change for the subject property.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Having no additional business, the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of February 28, 2023 at or about 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Planning Board:



*March 14, 2023*

Barbara A. Kinney

Planning Administrative Assistant

Cc: Town Clerk /File