



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES
Tuesday, March 14, 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 7:02 PM, with the following other members in attendance: Michael Baker; Rainer Forst; Jim Berkowitz; and Andrew Howden (Associate Member). Abdul Kafal was absent. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner, and Barbara A. Kinney, Administrative Assistant, were also present. Attendees: Michael Wilkes, resident.

I. CITIZENS FORUM

None

II. FORM A

None

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minute -January 10, January 24 & February 28, 2023

Upon motion duly made (J. Berkowitz) and seconded (M. Baker), the Planning Board voted 4-0 by roll call vote of M. Baker – Yes; J. Berkowitz – Yes; R. Forst – Yes; and B. Massey – Yes to approve the minutes of January 10, 2023. Upon motion duly made (J. Berkowitz) and seconded (M. Baker), the Planning Board voted 4-0 by roll call vote of M. Baker – Yes; J. Berkowitz – Yes; R. Forst – Yes; and B. Massey – Yes to approve the minutes of January 24, 2023. Upon motion duly made (J. Berkowitz) and seconded (M. Baker), the Planning Board voted 4-0 by roll call vote of M. Baker – Yes; J. Berkowitz – Yes; R. Forst – Yes; and B. Massey – Yes to approve the minutes of February 28, 2023.

March 28, 2023 -Vote to Cancel Planning Board Meeting

Upon motion duly made (J. Berkowitz) and seconded (M. Baker), the Planning Board voted 4-0 by roll call vote of M. Baker – Yes; J. Berkowitz – Yes; R. Forst – Yes; and B. Massey – Yes to cancel the meeting of March 28, 2023 due to the potential lack of quorum.

Acts of 2021 Chapter 20 (Open Meeting Law Remote Participation) -Status

G. Bechtholdt suggested the State may possibly extend the remote participation through 2025 and or may allow for hybrid-meetings on a permanent basis. B Massey noted he spoke with the Town Clerk and believed an extension of the remote participation is likely. A poll of Planning Board members suggested meetings would remain remote as long as option is extended and authorized by the State, where after Town Election

(May 16, 2023) the composition of the newly elected Planning Board can decide on whether to remain via ZOOM (if allowed) or return to in-person meetings.

Housing Production Plan Public Forum -Tuesday, May 09, 2023 (7:00 PM)

The Planning Board shall host a Public Workshop on May 09, 2023, to take input from the public on the draft housing production plan and identify potential options to address housing needs for Northbridge. G Bechtholdt explained to the Board, as a result of the additional public forum and additional time required to review Planning comments, the Consultant has submitted a budget amendment to cover associated added costs. Board noted receipt of draft contract amendment for Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. *Upon motion duly made (J. Berkowitz) and seconded (M. Baker), the Planning Board voted 4-0 by roll call vote of M. Baker – Yes; J. Berkowitz – Yes; R. Forst – Yes; and B. Massey – Yes to authorize the funds of \$7,000 for the additional costs to be paid from the ARIS Group escrow account.*

Winston Woods (Spring Street) Definitive Subdivision -Status of Approval

G Bechtholdt advised the Planning Board that the plan set for the approved Winston Woods definitive subdivision have yet to be prepared and readied for Planning Board endorsement. G Bechtholdt explained the Owner/Applicant was looking to incorporate modification(s) to the plan, however informed by Planning the plan set shall be updated to address the conditions of approval and not include any modification not considered or reviewed by the Planning Board during the public hearing. G. Bechtholdt will keep the Planning Board posted on status and will continue to work with the Owner/Applicant, DPW Director, Conservation Agent, and the Board's consulting engineer on plan preparation.

(draft) Providence Road Mixed-Use Development Bylaw -Input/Comment

G Bechtholdt informed the Planning Board a draft zoning bylaw amendment has been submitted to Planning for a so called 122 Overlay district; prepared to allow for the mixed-use development on Providence Road, abutting and included the town-owned parcel. G Bechtholdt advised the Board that the property owner (BK&R, LLC) has opted not to submit a petition article for the 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting, choosing to work with the town (Planning Board) on potential provisions. Planning Board acknowledge receipt of Community Planning & Development memorandum dated March 09, 2023 and the draft zoning bylaw prepared by others. Board members expressed concerns with the idea of rezoning property for residential absent a Housing Production Plan, an updated Master Plan and input from the schools; Board members noted concerns with proposed density, dedicated open space areas (30%) for constructed parks as part of development proposals and proposed height of buildings not fitting within the neighborhood; Board members questioned the validity of the mixed-use conceptual plan, siting a carwash is not a compatible use; members suggested mixed-use projects typically are within downtown areas or within walking distance of a commuter rail service; Board members questioned how to ensure commercial component is to be built-out and not just the residential; B Massey suggested Board members take some time to research true mixed-use projects (online) to see if this area of town is comparable and appropriate for mixed-use. B Massey noted in his research and travels around the United States, mixed-use developments (small and large) are within downtown areas or along rail lines to promote walkable communities. B Massey reminded Board members of the obligation to protect the longer-term interests and needs of the town, want to make sure they consider all potential impacts (water, sewer, traffic, school, etc) a development such as this may have on the town. G Bechtholdt and other departments may continue their review and dialogue with the owners, the Board will wait until the Housing Production Plan is completed before any additional discussions.

2023 SATM -Scheduling of Public Hearing(s) Zoning Petition Articles

Planning Board scheduled public hearings (April 11, 2023) for two (2) Zoning Amendment Petition Articles for the 2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting; G Bechtholdt briefed the Board on the proposed amendment for Wing Road, from Business-Two to Residential-Two and for Providence Road, from Business-One to Business-Two. G Bechtholdt indicated that he reached out to Attorney Knapik (representing the main petitioners) to provide a written summary of the intent of the proposed zoning amendments. G Bechtholdt noted, depending on the status of the Open Meeting Law, the public hearing(s) may be remote or in-person.

2023 Spring Annual Town Meeting -Tuesday, May 02, 2023

Point of Information -no discussion.

Castle Hill Farm Land Acquisition -Status/Update

Planning Board reviewed status of the CPA -Community Preservation Act funded land acquisition, where the Conservation Commission will oversee and manage property on behalf of Northbridge with the holder of a Conservation Restriction to be held by Metacomet Land Trust or other entity. G Bechtholdt explained as part of the Conservation Restriction the Commission is considering a series of draft permitted and prohibited uses for the property. The Planning Board acknowledged no formal ballfields and agreed that mountain biking should not be allowed, considering mountain bike activity as active recreation and not compatible with hiking, walking trails and wildlife preserve. Board authorized Town Planner (Board Chair) to prepare a letter to the Conservation Commission indicating their position of the need to protect the open space and not allow mountain biking as a passive recreational use.

Mumford Riverwalk Boardwalk -Status/Update

Owner's Project Manager is putting together the bid documents on behalf of the town for the elevated boardwalk and should be ready for advertisement May/June 2023. G Bechtholdt explained construction may be delayed a year depending on construction bid solicitation and available scheduling of selected qualified contractor.

Rockdale Pocket Park -Status/Update

Landscape Architect is working on Notice of Intent filing with the Conservation Agent. G. Bechtholdt explained he had hoped the project would be further along but remains hopeful construction bids may be readied and solicited early this summer.

Master Plan -MGL Chapter 41 Section 81D

Planning Board shall look to prepare a comprehensive Master Plan update for Northbridge once the Housing Production Plan and Open Space & Recreation Plan are completed. A Master Plan Update Committee and Consultant will be required for this 12 to 18-month initiative.

Site Plan/Subdivision Developments -Status/Update

G Bechtholdt noted installation of vertical-granite curbing continues within the Camelot subdivision. The Board's consultant (Graves Engineering, Inc) has been onsite to review and inspected improvements.

Planning Board Concerns

None

Mail -Review

In addition to the mail listed (see attached), the Planning Board noted receipt of the following communications: Planning Board Agenda dated March 14, 2023; Draft Planning Board Agenda dated April 11, 2023; Citizens Forum Document; Draft Minutes of January 10, 2023; Draft Minutes of January 24, 2023; Draft Minutes of February 28, 2023; Document Defining Affordable Housing In Northbridge; Draft Housing Production Plan; Aris Group, LLC (Pine Knoll Monetary Gift Account) document; Memo dated March 09, 2023 to Planning Board from Town Planner regarding Draft – 122 Overlay District Bylaw; Draft 122 Overlay District Bylaw; Memo dated February 10, 2023 to Planning Board from Town Planner concerning Providence Road Town Owned Property (AP14-17) and Providence Road Private Property (AP24-21); Petition Article for Spring Annual Town Meeting for Providence Road; Map of proposed Rezone of Providence Road; Petition Article for Spring Annual Town Meeting for Wing Road; Map of proposed Rezone of Wing Road; 2023 Planning Board Meeting Schedule.

Other


G. Bechtholdt noted a draft of the town's 2023-2030 Open Space & Recreation Plan may be available for review and comment April/May 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no additional business, the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of March 14, 2023 at or about 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Planning Board: _____


Barbara A. Kinney
Planning Administrative Assistant

April 11, 2023

Cc: Town Clerk /File

March 14, 2023

Planning Board

FROM	DATE	SUBJECT

Douglas

- Public Hearing Notice – Amendments to Town of Douglas Zoning Bylaw for Section 8.3 Floodplain District.

Grafton

- Decision – Approved with Conditions the Modification to an approved Definitive Plan for a 46 lot conventional subdivision for Pulte Homes of New England at 100 Westboro and Institute Roads.
- Decision – Approved with Conditions the Site Plan for Jagath Senasinghe for a family day-care at 25 Snow Road.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Pulte Homes of New England, LLC for a Modification of a Special Permit and Site Plan Approval for a Mixed Use Development “Afonso Village” to modify the connection with the adjacent subdivision by removing the vehicular connection and shifting the alignment of the pedestrian connections at 100 Westboro Road.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Willard House Clock Museum for a Special Permit and Site Plan Approval for a common driveway to serve two (2) single-family dwellings at 62 Wesson Street.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Pulte Homes of New England, LLC for a Modification of a Definitive Plan Approval for a two (2) year extension of the construction completion deadline of “Village at Institute Road” (Woodland Hill) subdivision south of Westboro Road and west of Institute Road.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Sean Padgett for Site Plan Approval for a café with seating up to 36 people at 1 Grafton Common.

Sutton

- Decision – Granted with Conditions the Special Permit for a Retreat Lot at 141 Burbank Road and the applicant/owner is Joseph Danko, Jr.
- Decision – Granted with Conditions the Special Permit for an Accessory Apartment at 10 Mark’s Way and the applicant/owners are Lindsey & Joel Welcome.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Tim and Tammy Mahoney to create breaks in the stone wall/remnants and removed public shade trees to construct driveways at 114 Manchaug Road (Lots 4 & 5).

Upton ZBA

- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Deana Reardon for a Special Permit to approve and existing accessory apartment at 51 Glen Avenue.
- Decision – Approved with conditions the appeal of Tracy Kennedy for an addition and carport to include an accessory apartment at 14 North Main Street.