



**NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD  
MINUTES  
TUESDAY, August 22, 2023**



Recognizing the presence of a quorum Rebecca Rushford, Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM, with the following other members in attendance: Michael Baker, Abdul Kafal, and Michael Wilkes. James Berkowitz was late (7:13PM). Barbara Kinney, Planning/Conservation Administrative Assistant was also in attendance. Andrew Howden, Associate Member, was absent and R. Gary Bechtholdt, Planning & Community Development Director was also absent.

Attendees of the Public: Michael Bangma; Bill Renaud; and Clarence Risher.

**I. CITIZENS FORUM**

Michael Bangma of 8 Spring Street was looking at the real estate listing for Winston Woods and it says the following: "Approved 9 duplex lots for a total of 18 units. Additional Parcel A which is a friendly 40B Development that will potentially add another 11 units and only 3 of those units will need to be slated affordable". He wanted to know if the Chapter 40B was already approved or if it had to go through Planning Board approval. From attending previous meetings and reviewing minutes of meetings, he did not recall seeing any mention of the Chapter 40B units. The Planning Office will check with the Building Inspector on official status of the nine (9) duplex lots, where previously the Owner/Applicant secured Special Permit(s) from the Zoning Board of Appeals allowing for two-family dwelling units for each of the nine (9) lots created (originally approved in 2009).

**II. FORM A's**

None

**III. 2023 HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN (DRAFT)  
Working Session -Review/Discussion**

It was noted that the census data needs to be updated.

R. Rushford explained that the purpose of the Housing Production Plan is to control and direct how and where affordable housing will happen. The definition of affordable housing is the biggest hurdle to educate the community about because affordable housing does not mean low-income housing (Section 8). Section 8 Housing Vouchers are typically tied to an individual and not to a unit. M. Wilkes stated that there is a state mandate to meet certain standards for affordable housing and this is how the town can control how and where in town affordable housing can be built. He suggested a public outreach to communicate/educate the public on affordable housing and why we're doing the Housing Production Plan and what the definition is. The housing needs assessment is important because the elderly population in Northbridge is likely to continue to increase. (*J. Berkowitz arrived*). A. Kafal commented that he believes that if two people are eligible for an affordable unit with one (1) person from town and one (1) from out of town that the person in town should be given first preference for the affordable unit. He wants to make sure that this can be done. A. Kafal suggested that the state would have to give the town money if the person is not from Northbridge

46 unless there is no one from town that is eligible and wants the affordable unit. It was also mentioned that  
47 grants may exist for homes that are older than 1939 to preserve the history of the homes and the character  
48 of the town. J. Berkowitz suggested that information on how residents can find assistance for the affordable  
49 units, grants, etc. be provided. J. Berkowitz commented that it is cheaper now to demolish these old  
50 buildings than it is to rehabilitate them. There should be some incentives to support rehabilitation of the  
51 homes rather than tearing them down. For example, 24 Cottage Street is a historic building with post and  
52 beams but heating, air conditioning, windows, asbestos in the basement, etc. need to be updated/mitigated.  
53 It is cheaper to knock down the building and put up a new one, per J. Berkowitz. The housing rehabilitation  
54 grant is currently out of money however, residents were told to still apply. It was suggested that the  
55 timeframe of how long before new grant money is received should be indicated such as six (6) months, six  
56 (6) years, etc.

57  
58 In looking at Chapter 3, Housing Development Constraints: Opportunities and Challenges, Bill Renaud,  
59 property owner, explained that the proposed development on Providence Road would have some good  
60 starter dwellings. Heritage Park also has good starter dwellings, and these starter dwellings are popping up  
61 everywhere. Bill Renaud explained that the idea on Providence Road was to purchase the town-owned  
62 property for access to the proposed development and provide some of the land that B. Renaud owns to the  
63 town. The town would get back +/-90% of the property that was sold but in another location. That property  
64 was proposed to have a pavilion, parking, and trails for open space. This proposed development would not  
65 have all the buildings built at the same time. They would be built as the market bears it.

66  
67 R. Rushford commented that the fact that the developer is allowed to pay the town in lieu of affordable  
68 housing is something that will need to be discussed at a later date. If the Planning Board always approves  
69 this, the 10% minimum of affordable units will never be achieved. Under potential housing development  
70 sites, the descriptions should be expanded to about ½ page for each one to include more details including  
71 the size of the property and a locus of where they are.

72  
73 J. Berkowitz explained that another concern is the flood overlay. The map(s) just show a circle and  
74 topography is not taken into consideration. The Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) has  
75 not come out and looked at/tested anything. J. Berkowitz mentioned that his property is in the flood plain  
76 but is near the dam so the Town Hall would flood before it gets to Berkowitz Trucking.

77  
78 The property at 2040 Providence Road was approved but has expired. There are environmental issues there,  
79 but the town could work with the owner to have affordable housing possibly there. J. Berkowitz believes the  
80 town should keep the old Northbridge Elementary School on Cross Street for affordable housing. However,  
81 the abutting residences may not want apartments there. The best use may be a senior/community center,  
82 but the problem is how would it be funded. Andrew Howden, Planning Board Associate Member, sent  
83 comments to the Planning Board Chair and his comments concern using the mill(s) for affordable housing  
84 and what the impact would be to the town services such as schools. The data that is presented now does  
85 not adequately address that affordable housing usually brings more children to town. "The Shop" on Main  
86 Street would be better for commercial use and not housing. "The Shop" is zoned Industrial and it is not in  
87 the Housing Production Plan for residential use. However, if residential use is considered a suggestion was  
88 made to have incentives to make things easier to change the zoning.

J. Berkowitz wants more information regarding Chapter 40R Smart Growth Overlay District including what it entails and what areas would be designated. A. Kafal thinks that the affordable units should be apartments and not single-family homes because there would be less land involved and the town would have more control. R. Rushford explained that affordable units cannot be put all in one building and must be mixed-in/dispersed throughout the development. Clarence Richer, 120 Hill Street, feels that the actual costs under Chapter 40S provisions for educating any school-age children who move into such districts be provided. R. Rushford is not in favor of tearing down massive amounts of greenspace such as the property on Fowler Road. There should be some kind of tax incentive to keep the land and greenspace and not develop it, for example Kroll's Farm on Hill Street. J. Berkowitz is concerned with the land on Benson Road that the town owns. He does not want to see it sold for development.

R. Rushford will prepare a summary of the key talking points for the next meeting. Also, more pictures and maps should be added, and R. Rushford volunteered to take the pictures if needed.

## **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

### Approval of Meeting Minutes -August 08, 2023

*Upon motion duly made (M. Wilkes) and seconded (M. Baker), the Planning Board voted 4-0 to approve the minutes of August 08, 2023.*

### 2023 Fall Annual Town Meeting -Warrant Closes August 25, 2023 (12:00PM)

Point of Information

### Planning Board -Vote to Sponsor Article(s) for 2023 FATM

No Articles submitted for the Planning Board to review at this point

### Master Plan (Update) -MGL Ch 41 Sec 81D

Tabled

### Site Plan/Subdivision Developments -Updates

Tabled

### 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 August 22, 2023; Draft Planning Board Agenda dated September 12, 2023; Draft Planning Board Agenda dated September 26, 2023; Citizens Forum Document; Draft Town of Northbridge Housing Production Plan; Draft Planning Board minutes of August 08, 2023; Memo dated July 24, 2023 to All Town Departments, Committees, Boards, Commissions, and Town Moderator from Executive Assistant to the Town Manager regarding the Fall Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday, October 24, 2023; 2023 Planning Board Meeting Schedule.

Other

None


**ADJOURNMENT**

Having no additional business, the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of Tuesday, August 22, 2023 at or about 8:27PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Planning Board:

*September 12, 2023*

  
Barbara A. Kinney

Planning Administrative Assistant

Cc: Town Clerk /File

August 22, 2023

Planning Board

FROM	DATE	SUBJECT

Grafton

- Public Hearing Notice –Application of Stephan David, 61 Maple Street Trust (applicant) and Chung Hee Chun Pak To Hyong (owner) for a Major Residential Special Permit and Preliminary Plan Approval for a 9-lot Residential Flexible Development at 61 Maple Avenue.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Willard House Clock Museum for a Scenic Road Permit for alterations to the stone wall for a driveway opening at 62 Wesson Street, Lot 1.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Willard Clock Museum for a Scenic Road Permit for alterations to the stone wall and tree clearing for a driveway opening at 61 Wesson Street, Lot 1.
- Public Hearing Notice – Application of 8 Millennium LLC (applicant) and Valiant Enterprises, LLC (owner) for a Special Permit and Site Plan Approval for a Major Business, Office and Industrial Complex of a 30,000 sf building with associated site improvements at 8 Millennium Drive.
- Decision – Approved with Conditions a Special Permit for an accessory apartment at 1 Meadow Lane for Lauren and Kathy Pardee.

Sutton

- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Matthew Kaliszewski to construct a garage and asphalt driveway within the Zone A Flood Zone at 90 Armsby Road.

Upton ZBA

- Public Hearing Notice – Application of Marluce Pereira for a Special Permit for an accessory apartment at 31 Shore Drive; Application of Marc MacNaughton for a Special Permit for an accessory apartment at 337 Mendon Street; and Application of Matthew Thompson for a Special Permit to construct an in-law accessory apartment at 100 Ridge Road.
- Decision – Approved the Special Permit to construct an accessory apartment within a proposed addition to the existing house at 9 Oak Lane and the applicant/owner is Andrea Baham.
- Decision – Approved the Variance from the minimum side-yard and rear yard setback requirements to construct a 2 car garage with an accessory apartment at 8 Stearns Road and the applicant/owner is Joseph Pelli.
- Minutes – ZBA Meeting on June 21, 2023.