

Town of Sharon Planning Board

Minutes 2/27/24

Meeting held via ZOOM

Planning Board Members

Shannon McLaughlin, Chair	Pasqualino Pannone
Xander Shapiro, Vice Chair	Peter O'Cain, Town Engineer
Rob Maidman, Secretary	Sonal Pai, Engineering and Planning Specialist
David Blaszkowsky	

Other Attendees

Brian Collins - Fin Comm, Eli Hauser, Jeffrey Schnipper, David Ellis Reich, Richard Kramer

Meeting Initiation

Chair McLaughlin called the meeting to order (via ZOOM) at 7:05 PM.

Meeting Minutes

None

MBTA Zoning

Chair McLaughlin welcomed all. She said the MBTA Zoning Law is based and signed by Governor Baker. It requires permissive zoning offering more housing. Remedy for non-compliance, towns non eligible for state grants. PB requires PB to come up with proposed zoning. Proposed zoning is where conversation starts. We need starting point. Proposal we looked at a few weeks ago does not go beyond requirements. We did not think going beyond requirements of law like more housing and density. That's not what's done through our process. 2 weeks ago consultants educated townspeople but due to weather not all could access the ZOOM format. Due to accessibility issues we decided to do meeting tonight and also next Tuesday like an open house with PB for free flow of info. Important to point out that draft zoning is not something we would have done if not for the law. Nothing is a guarantee. There are preexisting limitations. Developments will be quite difficult in this area. No sewer. Development constrained or costly. Underlying zoning allows for greater density than what MBTA allows. You have heard towns refusing MBTA zoning like Milton, but today the AG office filed complaint against Milton. A lot can happen between now and end of year. A lot more to learn. Important that PB had talked about MBTA zoning but she wants to ask all PB members input where we are right now.

Mr. Shapiro said he appreciates the engagement of the public and will do the best for the town. Some people have expressed frustration at this. The PB has to work on their recommendation based on the process. The Governor mandated this and the PB has to uphold the law.

Mr. Maidman said it's important to gain maximum public reaction/comment before the AG litigation against Milton. He wants the process in Sharon to be open and receptive.

Mr. Blaszkowsky said it's an outstanding opportunity for PB to hear the residents of the Town. We are sworn to uphold the law and will find a way to comply.

Mr. Pannone said we have been working on this initiative for a year. We have a consultant guiding us through the process. We are making sure to educate the public on the requirements. He thinks we are where we need to be. We need to follow state requirements.

Mr. Maidman said the AG action is sensitive to how to maintain housing inventory for Sharon. Need to define affordability. Maybe make only rentals. It has to meet minimum legal expectations.

Chair McLaughlin set the ground rules for discussion. On 3/5 she said we should ask Town Counsel to be present.

Mr. Pannone said we will need a 50% majority vote for the zoning article at Town Meeting.

Jeffrey Schnipper, resident said there is a housing crisis. He feels there is a moral and ethical obligation to help with the housing crisis. Keep focused on the goal to create more housing.

Eli Hauser, resident said what is the benefit to the Town? Has there been an assessment of financial penalties for maximum build out like increase of children in schools. He would like to know what grants and state funding will be held back if we do not comply.

Chair McLaughlin asked Ms. Pai what is the calculations of what is received from grants. Ms. Pai said 1.4 million dollars over the last 5 years was received for grants.

Ms. Pai said this is not a 40 B. It will follow setbacks in underlying zoning. We need to follow the dimensional setbacks.

Mr. Hauser said he thinks a financial analysis is needed.

Mr. O'Cain said the MCMMOD is different than 40 B project because the affordable unit numbers differ and this would be a by-right zone and not a special permit through the Planning Board. The projects would be required to follow local by-laws and regulations, unlike a 40B project which on requires compliance with State laws and regulations.

Mr. Blaszkowsky said it is all still up in the air as towns are resisting.

David Ellis Reich, resident said the property near him will be impacted. He asked what the methodology was for how the zoning spaces were chosen.

Mr. Shapiro said the requirements vary by town. 40 % has to be within ½ mile of MBTA Station.

Mr. Maidman said the map gets reviewed by the AG to make sure it complies.

Richard Kramer resident said draft zoning law 9.3.6 says minimum density is 15 units per acre. He thinks it should read as maximum. He wants the wells protected from nitrates. A portion overlays zone 2 which does not reflect what's underground. The law acknowledges excluded lands. We need to get protection for water quality and aquifers. What are financial impacts for schools.

Chair McLaughlin thanked everyone for their comments and said there will be an opportunity next week as well to participate. Since no more comments from public see if any comments from PB Members.

Mr. Shapiro values input of participants. His belief is the need to proceed even though uncertainty. Clearly law in place. Need to do our fair share. Limitations in septic will not be much development. Will listen and learn. March 12th final educational session. Incorporate feedback.

Mr. Maidman said the schedule is achievable. Input important to guide us to document that will appear in warrant. Holding this item in May Town Meeting is imperative. Review procedure for any plan we vote on then goes through AG Audit to be compliant. Steps will need to be taken to correct things if remiss.

Mr. Blaszkowsky said comments are important. Share what you learned with your neighbors. So many levels of impact to Town we have obligation to get word out and collect input. Nothing heard thinks we are ready. No compelling reason for this to be brought up in May. Thinks more analysis is needed. As approaching enactment times all of a sudden things not accounted for. Perhaps people don't like it might be reaction from legislators or residents. There are greater questions. This is all in motion suggest wait and watch legislature, AG and partner Towns in MBTA communities. No prize for finishing first. In terms of map where should 60% be. Why east of Main Street not train station. There is working draft of map. Need more input to identify optimal map for Sharon. Also there is a crying need for analysis of impact, cost, development, today, tomorrow, 5-10 years from now. Do in a smart way. No reason to rush. Impact schools, congestion in town etc. Comply right way. He said he doesn't think we are ready.

Mr. Pannone said no comment.

Ms. Pai pointed out timeline. If zoning goes to May TM and approved, then we need to submit to AG for approval by 12/24/24 then we are in compliance.

Mr. O'Cain would like to know how we respond to public questions, if staff cannot do it. The Planning Board can't make decisions outside of meetings. Peter or Sonal can write answers and send them to the Board for approval. Mr. Blaszkowsky has no issue with factual answers but opposed any editorial comments or project approval persuasion. Final approval of responses will be by Board.

Mr. Pannone said we have not had in-depth review of Business District A language. Need greater discussion.

Mr. Shapiro said we need to improve presentation for March 12th. Ask a few of us to do heavy lifting to improve document to make discussion more effective. Mr. Maidman volunteered as well

as Mr. Blaszkowsky. PB and staff with support of Laura will be doing presentation. This is PB lift as per David Blaszkowsky.

Future Topics

Meeting format - ZOOM/Hybrid

Next Meeting Dates

2/29 joint with Select Board, 3/12(Public Outreach)

Adjournment

Mr. Blaszkowsky moved to adjourn at 8:55 PM. Mr. Shapiro seconded the motion. The Board voted 5-0-0 in favor of adjourning at 8:55 PM.