

February 29, 2024 Minutes

Tri-Board Special Joint Committee Meeting – Minutes for the Finance Committee (other board minutes taken separately).

Present from Town Offices: Fred Turkington - Town Administrator.

Present from Finance Committee: Ann Keitner - Chair, Anja Bernier - Clerk, Brian Collins, Charles Goodman, Ira Miller – Vice Chair, Keith Morris, Chris Pimental, Olga Volfson, Jada Wang.

1. Call to Order:

Select Board Chair Kiana Pierre-Louis welcomed board members and attendees to this joint meeting of the Select Board, Planning Committee and Finance Committee.:

- a. Shannon McLaughlin, Chair, called the Planning Board meeting to order.
- b. Ann Keitner, Chair, called the Finance Committee to order.
- c. Kiana Pierre-Louis, Chair, called the Select Board to order.

2. Public Comment:

The Chair welcomed public comment. Judy Crosby, town resident, encouraged Committee members to help clarify this zoning article to Sharon residents, including the risk of potentially losing more than \$12 million dollars in funding from Chapter 70, etc. if not approved at Annual Town Meeting (ATM).

3. Discuss methods of collaboration between Select Board and Planning Board in areas of general planning and development projects:

The Planning Board and the Select Board discussed ways in which they could increase collaboration and communication in regards to Town projects.

Finance Committee members noted their ongoing efforts to improve communication with the School Board and other Town boards.

4. Discussion about master plan implementation in areas of housing and economic development:

Planning Board and Select Board members discussed that the Master Plan is a living document that can be updated if needed. It is meant as a guide and can be changed if conflicts arise.

5. Updates on MBTA Zoning by-law:

The state passed a law in 2020 stating that MBTA communities have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted. Planning Board members discussed that updates to the MBTA zoning district for Sharon has been worked on for many months, and they are now in the stage where education is being done to residents to give a fuller understanding of the potential impacts to the Town.

Held an open Planning Board meeting two days ago and are holding other such meetings this coming Tuesday and Thursday. This has been a controversial topic and thorough debates are taking place, and public input is very important.

Sonal Pai, Planning / Engineering Specialist, gave a presentation on the draft zoning changes needed to comply with this new law, including showing various maps indicating the different areas of the potential zoning around the Sharon MBTA station, Business District A, Subdistrict D, etc. This district is not currently feasible for construction based on the types of land in the area and adjoining properties.

Finance Committee members discussed the importance of the financial impact this could have on the Town if this article is voted down and funding is cut, and that this should be outlined clearly in the warrant article write-up. These boards agree they want to be in compliance with the Governor's MBTA zoning requirement but understand that residents will have questions. Each lot built would need to meet septic area requirements, etc. Purpose of the law is to have more housing within a short distance of the MBTA station – however, building new lots is not necessarily feasible currently.

Finance Committee members encourages that the boards should be prepared to answer in depth questions at the public hearing on March 21, such as was done at the water treatment facility meeting. When writing up the warrant article need to state clearly that compliance is necessary and what the penalties for non-compliance would cost the Town.

6. Updates on proposed changes to Business District A by-law:

There are proposed amendments to Post Office Square (Business District A). Currently there is conflicting language, and the upper limit for square footage development should be expanded from 5,000 for development. The new language will also state that the Planning Board will be given sole authority for the site plan and permitting, as having both the Planning Board and Zoning Board be involved is too time consuming. Will also add multi-family and commercial to the tables.

Finance Committee members encouraged the Planning Board to include the Historical Commission because they have two lots within District A.

7. Topics not anticipated with 48 hours of posting:

Select Board members said 'good luck' to the High School drama group at the upcoming state competition and the high school basketball team and encouraged everyone to stay tuned to all the upcoming meetings throughout this budget season.

8. Adjournment:

a. Planning Board motioned to adjourn their meeting, voting 5-0-0.

b. Finance Committee Chair, Ann Keitner:
Absent any objection, the Chair assumed unanimous consent to adjourn for the evening.

c. Select Board Chair motioned to adjourn their meeting, voting 3-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.