

## SHARON MBTA COMMUNITIES ENGAGEMENT

### INFORMATION SESSIONS #1 SUMMARY

*Prepared by JM Goldson 2/14/24, revised 2/27/24.*

#### Overview

On February 13, 2024, JM Goldson and the Sharon Planning Board hosted the first of two Information Sessions regarding proposed amendments to Sharon's zoning to comply with the MBTA Communities Law. The session included a presentation by Senior Planner Laura Smead, who explained the requirements of the law and the changes to Sharon's existing Mixed-Use Overlay District (MUOD) that would help the Town to achieve compliance. 53 community members attended the session, in addition to staff and Planning Board members. There was strong participation from residents attending the session. Other residents will be able to watch a replay of the session on Sharon TV.

#### Key Findings

- Forty percent of attendees lived within a ten-minute walk of the station, and sixty percent lived more than ten minutes from Sharon's MBTA station.
- Seventy percent of attendees have lived in Sharon for more than ten years.
- Residents shared concerns regarding infrastructure costs, increased school attendance, decreased property values, tax rates, and changes to neighborhood aesthetics.
- Other residents shared support for the initiative, and its potential benefits to taxes, local businesses, affordability, and socioeconomic diversity.
- A second information session could continue to emphasize the likely incremental impact of MBTA zoning in Sharon, stressing existing limitations that prevent many forms of multifamily development from being market feasible. Also it may be useful to address questions about other communities, including both cities/towns who have approved and submitted plans as well as Milton and their recent vote to rescind town meeting approval.

#### Participants

Sixty-five individuals participated in the webinar, including staff, consultants, and Planning Board members--not counting these individuals, there were 53 attendees to the information session. Throughout the event, attendees asked questions via the Q&A feature, participated in several polls asking for their input, and shared additional comments in the chat. The event concluded after all participant questions had been answered.

#### Format

Senior Planner Laura Smead led the webinar, walking attendees through a presentation explaining the MBTA Communities Law, and the impacts it will have on Sharon. Smead explained the intricacies of the law, such as zoning capacity, excluded and sensitive land, contiguity, and unit density, and walked through how Sharon's proposed districts would meet those requirements. Planners Elana Zabar and Noah Harper assisted with engagement in the webinar, launching polls asking attendees about their connections to Sharon, as well as their thoughts on potential benefits and concerns for the required zoning initiative. The event ended with Smead fielding questions from the webinar's Q&A, answering all questions.

### **MBTA Zoning Concerns**

After Smead's presentation, attendees were asked to share their concerns about the implementation of the MBTA Communities Law in Sharon. Common concerns included the need to pay for additional infrastructure (such as wastewater treatment, or new school capacity), and whether that might contribute to an increase in taxes. The noise and aesthetic impacts of the new development on the existing neighborhood context were cited by attendees as well as the possibility of decreased property values. Traffic and parking were also mentioned by several participants.

### **MBTA Zoning Benefits**

In the final poll question, attendees were asked to share potential benefits from complying with the law. Many were mentioned, including a more vibrant town center, additions to Sharon's tax base, increased economic and racial diversity, more commercial activity for local businesses, and new affordable and attainable housing options for existing and potential residents.

**APPENDIX**

The following tables quantify responses from attendees to each question in the Zoom webinar, as well as questions asked in the Q&A feature.

**What is your connection to Sharon?**

Resident	100%
Board or Committee Member	12.5%
Town employee	3%
Work or own a business in Sharon	3%
<i>Number of Responses: 32</i>	

**How long have you been affiliated with Sharon?**

Less than 5 years	15%
5 - 9 years	11%
10 - 19 years	25%
20 - 29 years	17%
30 - 39 years	17%
40 - 49 years	11%
50+ years	2.8%
<i>Number of Responses: 35</i>	

**How close do you live to the Sharon MBTA Commuter Rail Station?**

<10 minute walk	41%
10+ minute walk	59%
<i>Number of Responses: 36</i>	

**What are your greatest concerns about MBTA Communities in Sharon?**

Greater density draining town resources; more traffic congestion
Related costs the town would have to bear
Traffic; Parking; Fewer businesses in Sharon center; School capacity
I have none... it is good for the town
Single family houses when they go on the market will be torn down to make multifamily houses
roads congestion, traffic backup
I'm interested in increasing affordable housing in Sharon and am interested in whether the district as designed will advance that or will only comply without actually advancing it.
* Will we need to build new school(s)?
* Given the septic/wetlands challenges, will the zoning change actually yield a substantial number of new residents and a reduction in average house cost?
won't actually provide significant affordable housing
That developer could attempt to build something larger than what either the zoning board or this overlay allows. Resulting in legal cost.
Whether or not Sharon will be overly restrictive, shirting away from providing the intended number of units in the spirit of the law
That community members will fight it, we won't comply, and will potentially lose out on vital funding as a result!
Changing the character of neighborhoods without any say
add to tax rates

We don't have any. We think this is good for Sharon and good for our larger community. We have a housing crisis in this region and this attempts to address this across the Commonwealth.
I want to ensure that any future development is size appropriate for our town.
Zero concerns - this is long past overdue.
Traffic, schools, housing values decreasing, construction, low income housing being brought into town, taxes going up
That 1) other residents don't see the need and benefits of more housing and mixed-use development; but also 2) we give developers too much latitude in building cheap, non-contextual housing
managing traffic and noise

**How do you think MBTA Zoning could benefit Sharon?**

People say that want their kids to be able to afford to live in Sharon - this would help.
more vibrant town center; compliance with law avoid consequences; bigger tax base;
I'm hoping this can expand housing options in Sharon, potentially increasing affordability and diversity of the population and helping to address the state's housing crisis.
Increase tax base and revenue for the town
Compliance will help to meet overall State goals and funding for housing.
* Increased economic, racial diversity in the town * Moral benefit of not walling the town off to poor people * Maybe more business would open in the town center if more people live in walking distance
More economic diversity; more thriving downtown with more foot traffic and clientele for businesses
Greater diversity, stronger tax base
Walkability/potential for more places to "commune" in town, more housing, more variety of housing type/housing for different stages of life, etc.
provide more rental options
Revenue
There would be no benefit. This is State Social Engineering to eliminate rural areas.
If units are truly affordable, it could increase economic diversity in Sharon.
There are two of us, representing two residences here:  Increased business in downtown. More affordable residential options. Allowing wider range of families to become residents of Sharon. Being part of the solution to a problem that the entire Commonwealth is facing. YIMBY instead of NIMBY Creating more economic diversity in a town that prides itself on broader residential diversity
It might improve the viability of town center business.
I honestly don't especially if we close the station
I don't see any benefits to the town.
Our downtown is very patchy, I think a thoughtfully planned district with design guidelines could create a real town center and benefit businesses
It cannot - not taking state money would be the correct answer. There is no available land in order to even contemplate the creation of such a district. This is one time where saying no mas is the correct answer. Lets stand up to the state and all say No.
More diverse community in terms of wealth and age.
Zero benefit. This is a horrible idea.

more vibrant downtown, with more diverse services due to increased density

**Zoom Q&A Questions**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Asker Name</b>	<b>Asker Email</b>	<b>Answer</b>
Does your organization feel the Town of Sharon is the same as all the other communities?	Kevin Haskins	khaskins@gmail.com	live answered
Does the district have to be contiguous? Can we use the MUOD/Pond St area then find the remaining acreage somewhere else?	Casey McLaughlin	caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com	Hi Casey, the state housing office has a few guidelines on this, districts must be at least 5 acres to count toward the goal, and at least half of the overall district must be contiguous. Here's some more information on the state's site. We'll also raise this for Laura to address at the end of the presentation. <a href="https://www.mass.gov/info-details/section-3a-guidelines">https://www.mass.gov/info-details/section-3a-guidelines</a>
Re: the % affordable target, what income level is affordability based on?	Tammy Fahey	tdeuse@gmail.com	Hi Tammy, I just looked at the bylaw on the existing MUOD district. Sharon requires affordable housing be built for households earning at or below 80% AMI, or Area Median Income. AMI is defined by HUD for our metro region each year. This year, 80% AMI for a household of 2 is set at \$94,800, so it would be affordable to households earning up to this amount. Here's some more documentation if you're interested: <a href="https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html">https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html</a>
Could you put the septic vs. sewer requirements for the MCMMOD in the chat?	laura	laurarussell2@comcast.net	Hi Laura, here's a link to the existing multifamily bylaw. It appears that wastewater requirements are covered by the Board of Health, who must approve a plan before a permit can be issued. Here's a link to the existing zoning: <a href="https://ecode360.com/29556396#29556396">https://ecode360.com/29556396#29556396</a>
looking at this color chart, which areas are which? please explain	MDozois	mdozois1@gmail.com	live answered

<p>Can you post/share all maps from this presentation on a larger scale so we can see specific streets?</p>	<p>Christine</p>	<p>ccrede1214@gmail.com</p>	<p>Hi Christine, I wanted to share the links that Laura just mentioned at the very beginning of the Zoom chat. The first is a draft map of the proposed zoning, and the second is the draft language. Also linking the Town site where the materials are hosted.</p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/sharonmbta_district_map_11824.jpg">https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/sharonmbta_district_map_11824.jpg</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/proposed_mbta_zoning_02.08.2024.pdf">https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/proposed_mbta_zoning_02.08.2024.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/planning-board/pages/mbta-zoning">https://www.townofsharon.net/planning-board/pages/mbta-zoning</a></p>
<p>this slide is unintelligible. the deck does not have slide numbers so i can't tell you which one</p>	<p>MDozois</p>	<p>mdozois1@gmail.com</p>	<p>Hi M,</p> <p>I wanted to share the links to the draft proposed zoning map and text language, as well as the Town site where they're all hosted.</p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/sharonmbta_district_map_11824.jpg">https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/sharonmbta_district_map_11824.jpg</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/proposed_mbta_zoning_02.08.2024.pdf">https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/proposed_mbta_zoning_02.08.2024.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/planning-board/pages/mbta-zoning">https://www.townofsharon.net/planning-board/pages/mbta-zoning</a></p>
<p>Can Elana speak up a bit louder?</p>	<p>laura</p>	<p>laurarussell2@comcast.net</p>	<p>live answered</p>
<p>Hi! Thank you for this presentation. I'm not seeing any links (or anything) in the chat - can you please direct us to where to go for those?</p>	<p>Caitlin Golden</p>	<p>cmgolden2@gmail.com</p>	<p>Hi Caitlin, sorry about that! Sending over the same links I just sent over to Christine. They're also hosted on the Town site, which will be the third link here:</p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/sharonmbta_district_map_11824.jpg">https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/sharonmbta_district_map_11824.jpg</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/proposed_mbta_zoning_02.08.2024.pdf">https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/proposed_mbta_zoning_02.08.2024.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/planning-board/pages/mbta-zoning">https://www.townofsharon.net/planning-board/pages/mbta-zoning</a></p>

<p>The link you posted went away</p>	<p>laura</p>	<p>laurarussell2@comcast.net</p>	<p>Hi Laura, sending over the links I just shared with Caitlin and Christine. If these happen to go away, they're all hosted on the Town website, which will be the third link in the list:</p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/sharonmbta_district_map_11824.jpg">https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/sharonmbta_district_map_11824.jpg</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/proposed_mbta_zoning_02.08.2024.pdf">https://www.townofsharon.net/sites/g/files/vyhli f3801/f/pages/proposed_mbta_zoning_02.08.2024.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.townofsharon.net/planning-board/pages/mbta-zoning">https://www.townofsharon.net/planning-board/pages/mbta-zoning</a></p>
<p>Can we close the Train station to avoid being compliant?</p>	<p>Kevin Haskins</p>	<p>khaskins@gmail.com</p>	<p>live answered</p>
<p>Is it possible that with more housing within close proximity of the Commuter rail, that we might see expanded evening and weekend hours</p>	<p>Kate Harrigan</p>	<p>kateharrigan@gmail.com</p>	<p>Hi Kate, I'm not sure if there will be a direct causation between the two, but I do know that the T is planning to expand regional rail service, here's a link to the plan: <a href="https://www.mbta.com/projects/rail-vision">https://www.mbta.com/projects/rail-vision</a></p>
<p>Are these units going to be owned or rented? Does "as of right" mean we even have a say in this?</p>	<p>Casey McLaughlin</p>	<p>caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com</p>	<p>Hi Casey, I believe that as of right would mean that the Town wouldn't have control over whether the potential new housing would consist of ownership or rental units. I believe it's part of the state's requirement that special conditions (such as bedroom count, age restrictions) not be attached to the compliant MBTA zoning.</p>
<p>If you do real modeling instead of that "every possible unit" modeling, how many new units and/or people do you expect in the next 5 years? 10 years?</p>	<p>Amir Karger</p>	<p>amirkarger@gmail.com</p>	<p>Hi Amir, that's a great question--it's likely a much, much smaller number (I recall seeing a study for LA involving a rezoning that only led to about 3 percent of the new zoned capacity). What's also interesting is that virtually every other Town in the area is also rezoning, likely meaning that the impact will be distributed across the region.</p>
<p>If you do real modeling instead of that "every possible unit" modeling, how many new units and/or people do you expect in the next 5 years? 10 years?</p>	<p>Amir Karger</p>	<p>amirkarger@gmail.com</p>	<p>Hi Amir - thanks for joining - no development model, tax impact model, or cost-benefit model has been developed. No organized analysis has been done. Sorry, I know.</p>

Does “as of right” mean that we have no say in requiring multi-use/commercial properties to be built as part of a development?	Casey McLaughlin	caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com	Hi Casey, the mixed-use requirements can get a bit thorny with 3A. Initially, the state wouldn't allow towns to require it, but then reversed and added a method by which to partially include it. I'll ask Laura to explain at the Q&A at the end, but here's the technical resource detailing that it can be included: <a href="https://www.mass.gov/info-details/summary-of-081723-revisions-to-section-3a-guidelines">https://www.mass.gov/info-details/summary-of-081723-revisions-to-section-3a-guidelines</a>
I see no benefit to the town	Kevin Haskins	khaskins@gmail.com	live answered
Wanted to add more to poll but already submitted it.	laura	laurarussell2@comcast.net	Hi Laura - feel free to pop things into the chat if you'd like to add more for the record!
What about those of us who deliberately moved our families into this town because it was small, spacious and OUTSIDE of the city??	Casey McLaughlin	caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com	live answered
I read that some towns are asking MBTA to assess their current number of housing units within the service area to see if our housing targets can be reduced. Considering the presence of Wilber Apts and other multifamily buildings near the train station, will our Planning Board be doing the same?	Sara Carr	sarajcarr@gmail.com	live answered
What are the loopholes that wouldn't force our hand? There has to be some. Who would be a fair person to ask about the potential loopholes?	Kevin Haskins	khaskins@gmail.com	live answered
Can we zone as much of the MBTA district to be part of the (unbuildable) wetlands to mitigate this disaster?	Casey McLaughlin	caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com	live answered
Let's not confuse the center of town with a traditional town center.	Kevin Haskins	khaskins@gmail.com	live answered



<p>A follow-up: can design guidelines (particularly enforcing street frontages, green infrastructure, or sustainability requirements) or form-based code also be a requirement for the new zone, and be included with the article that goes to Town Meeting?</p>	<p>Sara Carr</p>	<p>sarajcarr@gmail.com</p>	<p>live answered</p>
<p>How can residents who are supportive of increasing affordability and diversity in Sharon be most helpful in this process?</p>	<p>Caitlin Golden</p>	<p>cmgolden2@gmail.com</p>	<p>live answered</p>
<p>Does a developer have to locate septic and parking on the same lot as the proposed multifamily units, or can it be located off site and still benefit from this as-of-right zoning?</p>	<p>Judy Crosby</p>	<p>judster71@gmail.com</p>	<p>live answered</p>
<p>If we create this zone, it's going to increase the # of baseline properties so that we'll need to increase our % need of 40B, correct?</p>	<p>Casey McLaughlin</p>	<p>caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com</p>	<p>live answered</p>
<p>What's to stop a resident within the zone from selling their property to a developer who's going to tear down their single family house to build 15 units? Won't that create a domino effect for the adjacent neighbors (who don't want to live next to a monstrosity) from selling their properties next?</p>	<p>Casey McLaughlin</p>	<p>caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com</p>	<p>live answered</p>
<p>Does the Planning Board have any say in the design of a proposed as-of-right? Are there any standards?</p>	<p>Casey McLaughlin</p>	<p>caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com</p>	<p>live answered</p>

How much of the groundwater protection overlay is in the building zone?	Casey McLaughlin	caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com	live answered
How many gallons of water required is per unit.	Kevin Haskins	khaskins@gmail.com	live answered
How many gallons of water are required per new unit.	Kevin Haskins	khaskins@gmail.com	live answered
Will new development need to meet the stretch code?	Ellen Bordman	eesbordman@gmail.com	live answered
Could any of the new housing around the Costco be added?	Anonymous Attendee		live answered
Boy oh boy if I were a retired person and I knew this terrible plan was coming, I'd sell to the highest bidder, make a HUGE profit, and get the hell out. You really think people aren't going to capitalize on this opportunity to cut & run before this town is destroyed??	Casey McLaughlin	caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com	live answered
What's the likelihood of us needing to have to tie into MWRA with this huge water need?	Casey McLaughlin	caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com	live answered
I think the question around water might have been in regards to our natural resources and the large water treatment plan that is proposed to be built. Will that be enough?	Anonymous Attendee		live answered
What's the likelihood of the state absorbing the cost to put Sharon on sewer?	Casey McLaughlin	caseymclaughlin1@gmail.com	live answered
Thank you for your patience and clarity!	Amir Karger	amirkarger@gmail.com	live answered