

**HARVARD PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 19, 2020
APPROVED: MARCH 11, 2021**

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 7:05pm virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, under M.G.L. Chapter 40A and Code of the Town of Harvard Chapter 125

Members Present: Justin Brown, Fran Nickerson, Stacia Donahue, Gwen Leonard, Jane Biering and Rebecca Kelley (Associate Member)

Others Present: Christopher Ryan (Director of Community and Economic Development), Liz Allard (Land Use Administrator) Matt Flokos (Harvard Press) and Beth Williams (Counsel on Aging)

Review Bylaw Amendments from Strategic Planning Session

In July the priorities in regards to bylaw amendments were:

1. Open Space Residential Design
2. Senior Residential Development
3. Town Center
4. Scenic Roads
5. Multifamily District
6. Recodification of Protective Bylaw
7. Rural Life

After briefly discussing the Board agreed to change the priority order with Senior Residential Development (SRD) as the top priority and Open Space Residential Design as the second priority.

In regards to SRD, Nickerson suggested speaking with real estate agents to put them on alert as to what is going on for available land around Town. Ryan intends to have focus groups that will include realtors, along with asking regional agency to map available land area, which the members should start taking a look at too. Donahue stated while reviewing maps for SRD the Board should not forget about finding locations for the Multiple Residential District.

Discuss Chapter 125-57 Senior Residential Development Bylaw

Brown expressed the objective for this Bylaw, which is to diversify our housing production, since the bulk of the housing stock in Harvard are single family homes. The median number of rooms in the standard Harvard house is eight, whereas the State average is 5. In regards to number of bedrooms, Harvard has on average four, whereas the State average is less than four. This is what the Board is trying to address with this bylaw. Brown questioned whether public comment is constructive and what is the real motivation behind the comments. Those who comment should offer solutions to assist in the Board's effort. The Board needs to encourage public engagement through the public meeting process. Brown is excited about how the Board is engaged in the process, but not excited about late requests for information. Brown suggested as the Board moves forward try to ask questions early on. Brown is disappointed by people pretty much saying they do not want to have seniors in this community.

Biering feels strongly about one thing she learned, that was the Board should have started with input. That is the reason she believes the Board found ourselves scrambling at the end. Getting comments before preparing a draft is key. Kelley stated it is hard for someone to comment on something without actual language. Leonard believes concepts should be a first step.

Brown stated discussions in regards to a Bylaw of this type started in 2016 and is surprised by two former Board members being so against this Bylaw. Nickerson stated the 2006 and 2016 surveys by Council on Aging (COA) were comparably the same, as seniors were leaving Harvard because there was no where for them to downsize to. Nickerson stated until you are that situation you don't really understand what the problem is; adding, there is no question there is a major need in Harvard for this type of housing.

Donahue feels similar to what everyone is saying and the next steps should include a parcel that shows the different proposed types of SRD and to get that to the COA and others for feedback.

Beth Williams who has been in Town for over 40 years and on the COA since 2004, stated this is the first time she has seen these types of developments being purposed. Williams stated it is nice to see, as Harvard needs the diversity. Rich Maiore stated the Board has taken on something that past Planning Boards have not done and commended the Board for taking it on.

Ryan needs traction on getting the reserve fund transfer of \$2000 for further outreach associated with the SRD Bylaw. Brown will follow up with Maiore, who happen to have left the meeting. The Board really needs to start looking at the zoning map as to where they realistically believe the different types of development can be located. Kelley asked about the criteria on these proposed plans. Ryan stated the maximum standards are to be used, adding a selection of parcels having at least one for each type would assist in showing what can be done under this bylaw. Kelley followed up with what types of land are we considering; ones that are for sale. Brown feels the Board should have the property owner's permission to create these maps.

At this point in the discussion Brown suggested the following action items for the next meeting: reviewing plan and density.

Biering suggested revising the proposed next steps and framework into four parts:

- I. Reflection, Visioning, Questions and Merge the Visions (Steps 1-4)
- II. Input from Residents & Experts
- III. Revise Bylaw (Steps 5 & 6)
- IV. Outreach (Steps 7-9)

The Board discussed the time table and concluded Leonard and Biering would work it out better for the next meeting. Kelley will continue to work on the survey.

Update on Ayer Road Corridor Plan

Ryan reminded the Board that although funding for this plan was denied at the Annual Town Meeting, the recently received Request for Information provided a lot of feedback on the matter. Ryan is meeting with Capital Planning and Investment Committee (CPIC) tomorrow on a request to fund this plan. This funding would provide visuals for what would work here in Harvard along the corridor. The entire plan could be completed in three phases; if CPIC approved funding all three could be done by the same consulting group, ideally. If it is determined that any phase is a deal breaker then the Board would stop at that point and return the funds to CPIC. Ryan believes this would be a 10-24 months process from start to finish and receiving all of the funding now would keep the momentum going.

Leonard asked what could be completed with less money. Ryan stated Phase 1 could be completed with \$30-40k. Ryan noted these funds are dedicated for making improvements on the Town, and do not increase any burden to the residents, with the potential to create a better revenue stream out of the commercial district. It would be the Town investing in itself.

Biering made a motion to endorse the 3-Phase Plan of the Ayer Road Corridor as to be presented to the Capital Planning and Investment Committee. Nickerson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by a roll call, Donahue, aye; Nickerson, aye; Leonard, aye; Biering, Aye; and Brown, aye.

Board Member Reports

• Representatives & Liaison Reports

- **All Boards Meeting** – Brown attended this meeting, at which a level-funded budget across all departments is being required due to the major fiscal challenges; State budget is coming up \$4 million short this year, which means the money Harvard receives will be less overall; State is pulling \$900 million from rainy day fund; and the Town is looking to the Planning Board for Senior Housing Development.

- **Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (MAHT)** – Nickerson as a member of this committee was in attendance at their most recent meeting at which new members were brought up to date on matters facing the MAHT
- **Master Plan Implementation**
 - Biering has provided reports on Board of Health, Department of Public Works and Energy Advisory Committee, but still unable to connect with the Water & Sewer Commission
 - Members were reminded to review who they are liaisons to and to follow up with them
- **Scenic Road Bylaw** – Leonard feels the current bylaw lacks details in process and enforcement. She has researched 30 other towns' bylaws and feels improving Harvard's bylaw is another way Harvard can invest in their community. Leonard would like to include regulations on signs, fences, and standing solar panels to be included, but have not found any language in the other towns she has researched. Ryan will assist Leonard by reaching out to the MassPlanners listserv on this matter.
- **Transportation Committee**
 - Donahue made a motion formally approving the creation of a Transportation Committee. Leonard seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by a roll call, Donahue, aye; Nickerson, aye; Leonard, aye; Biering, Aye; and Brown, aye.
 - Ayer Road Transportation Improvement Project
 - ❖ Brown wonders if there is value in holding another public informational session to re-address the status of the project. Donahue stated yes in order to keep it fresh in people's minds. Ryan will update the website to reflect the choice of design number 3 as the final design. Kelley expressed concerns with crosswalks, she is looking for better plan detailing how many and where they will be located along Ayer Road. Ryan stated the plan is for two at beginning and end of the corridor. Brown requested as new information is added to the website that old information be preserved as well.
- **Community Matters**
 - **Bromfield House Follow-up** – Town meeting gave control of the Bromfield House to the Select Board, who must return to Town Meeting before making a final decision. The Board discussed the idea of this location for senior housing. Donahue would like the Building Commissioner to assess the building before the Board has any further discussions. Leonard would think that it would be up to a developer to bring the property up to standards as opposed to the Town. Brown suggested just sending a letter to the Select Board, as opposed to the previous voted upon proclamation. Ryan stated the house is located in such a strategic location, that care and thought should be put into the development of this property. Biering likes the idea of a letter to the Select Board. The letter can request a walk through as well. Ryan will work with Leonard on this letter.
 - **Open Hearings** – Brown detailed the roles of members during the application process and not creating conflicts outside of the public meeting. Encourage comments and questions be directed to staff. Recent comments in regards to a current application and the Select Board liaison have been resolved, as there has been found to be no open meeting law conflict.

Director's Update

Covered under other topics tonight

Approve Minutes

This item was passed over.

Adjournment

At 10:24pm, Donahue made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Leonard seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by a roll call, Donahue, aye; Nickerson, aye; Leonard, aye; Biering, Aye; and Brown, aye.

Signed: _____ Liz Allard, Clerk

EXHIBITS & OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Planning Board Agenda October 19, 2020
- Director of Community and Economic Development Update, October 19, 2020
- Senior Residential Development Bylaw Proposed Next Steps and Framework, October 2020
- TOWN OF HARVARD PLANNING BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION, JULY 18, 2020, prepared by Liz Allard
- HARVARD PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES, JULY 20, 2020, prepared by Liz Allard