

**HARVARD PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 21, 2020
APPROVED: APRIL 26, 2021**

Chair Justin Brown called the meeting to order at 7:02pm 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, Jane Biering, Gwen Leonard and Becca Kelley (Associate Member)

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

Prioritize and Scheduling Bylaw Amendments for 2021

The Planning Board has received a request to amend the Protective Bylaw, §125-13Y, to allow for a self-storage facility, which is prohibited by the existing bylaw. Kelley asked why exclude storage facilities. Leonard stated a simple trade off analysis would show if the taxes generated from such a facility are not enough to off-set the consideration to amend the Protective Bylaw. Nickerson would be interested in the design and how it would look for her to consider. Brown thinks this request does not rise to a high-level priority over existing prioritized amendments. Donahue believes Leonard made a fair analysis. Biering agrees with Leonard, but wondered if the applicant should go to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a variance. Ryan stated Harvard does not allow for use variances. Ryan was asked to inform the owner that this is not high priority, but they could go citizen petition route if they so chose.

A proposed bylaw from the Hazel's for the property they own along Ayer Road at the Route 2 interchange would allow for a similar development to that of Gibbet Hill in Groton. Planning Board attempts at a Rural Life bylaw has seen lots of opposition from the Agricultural Commission and residents. This bylaw is a low priority for Planning Board currently. It had been suggested to the Hazel's they draft a bylaw and provide it to the Planning Board for consideration at the spring town meeting. Ryan has glanced through the Hazel's proposed bylaw, which has minimal design criteria and is not as robust as the Agritourism or Rural Life bylaw previously drafted by the Planning Board. Both of those bylaws have been provided to the Hazels to perhaps amend what they have already submitted. It can not appear to be designated for only one property owner in Town as that would be considered spot zoning; an impartial bylaw has to be applicable beyond just this property. If the Hazel's are looking for Planning Board to take on the heavy lifting then Ryan does not think the Board could be supportive with the appropriate bandwidth to achieve this bylaw in 2021. Donahue stated the Hazel's have to reach out to the neighbors first before they even come to Planning Board at all. Ryan stated no map of this district has been created as of yet; creating an overlay district applied to multiple properties would be more successful. Biering stated the proposed bylaw indicates parcels of 25 acres; how closely does this mirror the rural bylaw? Ryan stated somewhat similar, but the main distinction being the Hazel's propose an overlay district while the Planning Board proposed a Special Permit. Brown stated it is valuable to engage the Hazel's with questions. As drafted, the proposal is too specific to their property, but further redirection to the criteria in the Rural Life bylaw may draw out more specifics needed to gain more support from abutters. Donahue stated the Hazel's should be alerted that not mapping the district could lead to failure at town meeting. The Planning Board agreed they did not have the ability at this time to take on this bylaw amendment.

Board Member Reports

- Representatives & Liaisons Update
 - Donahue stated the **Community Preservation Committee** is reviewing applications from the Conservation Commission for funding toward the Agricultural Preservation

Restriction on the Community Harvest Project land on Prospect Hill Road (former Westward Orchard) and a Parks & Recreation request for funding to add more software to kiosk as well as two studies for land under their management at Bare Hill Pond and at Harvard Park.

- Community Matters
 - **Ayer Road Corridor** – Select Board is supportive of this project, but wants the Planning Board to take the lead. The requested funding of \$300,000 is for a market study, vision plan and adaption of a form-based code. Due to the economic climate the project has been scaled back to the market study and vision plan. After briefly discussing, Donahue made a motion the Planning Board continue with the request of \$300,000 toward the development of the Ayer Road Corridor. Nickerson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor by roll call vote, Brown, aye; Donahue, aye; Nickerson, aye; Leonard, aye; and Biering, aye.
 - **Harvard Press Engagement** – The editor of the Harvard Press supports and encourages the Planning Board efforts to submit articles, letters to the editor, longer opinion pieces, a monthly Planners Corner and press release.
 - **Ayer Road Tip Project** - Public Input panel included Brown, Donahue, Ryan, Kilhart and Representative from TEC. Donahue asked if there is any nearby town to see visually what has been done elsewhere.

Director's Update

No report this evening.

Minutes

Minutes were unavailable this evening.

Chapter 125-57 Senior Residential Development Bylaw

- Review Schedule
- Residential Development Survey remaining open through the holiday
- Senior Survey Summary:
 - **Who are the respondents?**
 - 130 respondents representing an appropriate mix of Harvard's Seniors
 - 98% Harvard Residents
 - Most live with spouse, partner or at least one family member; only about 15% live alone
 - More than 70% of the respondents have lived in Harvard over 20 years; another 12% have lived in Harvard 10-20 years
 - **What they like about Harvard**
 - Rural environment - 87% of respondents
 - Engaged community - 34% of respondents
 - Small town atmosphere – 29% of respondents
 - Friends and Family - 13% of respondents
 - Institutions / Organizations -12% of respondents
 - Culture / History - 5% of respondents
 - Everything / Almost Everything - 4% of respondents
 - Large House Lots - 3% of respondents
 - Other / Miscellaneous - 6% of respondents
 - **What they don't like about Harvard**
 - Local Government and Services - 24 responses
 - Cost of Living, Housing Costs, Taxes - 22 responses
 - Commuting and Access to Shopping/Services - 22 responses
 - Homogeneity, Culture, and Social - 20 responses
 - Noise, Traffic, Safety, and Other Nuisances -16 responses
 - Growth, Progress, or Change -14 responses
 - Commercial or Business -13 Responses
 - Residential Options for Seniors - 6 responses

- Municipal Fiscal Issues - 6 responses
- Sidewalks and Pedestrian Environment - 4 responses
- Lack of Senior-Friendly Community - 2 responses
- **Their Thoughts About Moving as They Age**
 - Plan on Moving?
 - 50% of respondents YES
 - Within 5 years 19% of respondents
 - Beyond 5 years 30% of respondents
 - 40% of respondents NO
- **Prefer to Remain in Harvard?**
 - Two-thirds of all respondents would prefer to remain in Harvard as they age
 - The younger the survey participants, the more likely they are to move and the more they want to move wherever their needs are met.
 - At 55+ the overwhelming majority want to remain in Harvard
 - Approximately 25% in the 71-75 and 76-80 age groups reported a need to move within the next five years, together with a move to wherever their needs are met.
 - Most say they could stay or leave - it doesn't matter, as long as their needs are met (23% of total).
 - 10% of the overall respondents report they would prefer to leave Harvard
- **Reasons They Would Move**
 - Property taxes on my current home are too high. (42%)
 - My current home or yard is larger than I need or want now (38%)
 - My current home or yard needs too much maintenance or repair. (35%)
 - My current home does not have the accessibility accommodations I expect to need (27%)
- **Would They Consider Moving to Senior Housing in Harvard?**
 - 35% of respondents said yes. Adding in the "maybes" to this group brings it to 73%.
 - Only 27% said no.
- **What Type(s) of Housing Would They Consider Moving To?**
 - Independent Living Community Small Homes/Cottages (46% of respondents)
 - Independent Living Community Townhouses/Apartments (35% of respondents)
 - Small Homes/Small Lots (34% of respondents)
 - The next most-chosen option is a bit further down in popularity is CCRC (22% of respondents)
 - If they move, the overwhelming majority still prefers to own (37.8% own in simple fee, 33.3% own in condominium)
- **What they want in their new senior residences?**
 - 2 bedrooms (62.1%), extra bedroom for caregivers or guests (50.4%)
 - first floor living: all rooms on first floor (34.2%), master on first floor (54.7%)
 - between 1,00 – 1,500 sq. ft. (44.3%) and 1,500 – 2,000 sq. ft. (25.5%)
 - want to accommodate their needs as they age: universal design (48.7%), accessibility (28.2%)
 - a home that replicates their current home with: a washer/dryer (64.2%), a full kitchen (63.3%), private outdoor space (60%), and a common green or open space (52.5%)
- **What services do they want?**
 - Home maintenance services (52.7%)
 - House cleaning service, (44.6%)
- **Own or Rent**
 - The majority of participants currently own their single-family homes.
 - In a future move as they age, the majority would still prefer to own (71.1%) in either simple ownership or in condo ownership.
 - Renters are a minority, however the desire to rent as they age more than doubles, from approximately 4% to 12.6% respectively.
- **Monthly Expenses**
 - The middle mark was between \$1500 - \$2000 per month
- **Importance of Affordability**

- Participants reported it as being important
- Over 20% it was not an important decision maker
- **Affordable Housing**
 - 43% said affordability was important
 - would like more information about affordable housing a large number (46.3%) said “no
 - Many were undecided and the remainder did want more information on affordable housing (17.9%).
- **How Do They Think Harvard Should Balance the Need for Senior Housing with the Desire to Preserve the Town’s Rural Character?**
 - 41% of respondents say the answer lies in specifying what the senior housing can/should look like (building design + setback requirements + open space preservation).
 - 24% argue that where we put senior housing is the key to maintaining that balance.
 - 13% say that defining the types of buildings we allow is the key.
 - 13% say that size - limiting the number of buildings we allow in a development is the key.
 - More broadly -- 61% advocate some combination of “where”, “what type we allow” and “how many buildings we allow” is the key.
- **What Do They Think Could Be Done to Make Harvard More Age-Friendly?**

The following summarizes mentions in rank order of most mentions:

 - Want sidewalks or paths: Our seniors want safe, well maintained sidewalks and trails.
 - Want better transportation access or availability: van service weekends and evenings and public transportation to medical facilities and grocery stores.
 - Want housing alternatives to large single-family homes on large lots:
 - Smaller one-story homes on small lots
 - Low cost to reasonably priced homes
 - Mixed residential and shopping services village
 - Cluster type housing
 - In-law apartments
 - Senior housing in town center
 - Townhouses and condos
 - Affordable housing
 - Graduated facility – independent to assisted

The following categories received the same number of mentions:

 - Want a larger senior center and more integrated activities: more activities, larger groups and multigenerational activities
 - Stated taxes and cost of living were a problem
 - Want shopping and restaurants
- **Next Steps**
 - General Population Survey
 - Possible Article in the Harvard Press re: Senior Housing Type
 - Visual Preference Survey
 - Focus Groups

Adjournment

Donahue made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:01pm. Nickerson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by roll call, Brown, aye; Donahue, aye; Nickerson, aye; Biering, aye; and Leonard; aye.

Signed: _____ Liz Allard, Clerk

EXHIBITS & OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Planning Board Agenda December 21, 2021
- Senior Housing Survey – Summary of Findings, 12/20